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It is indeed a privilege to pen the Chairman’s foreword for the Annual Report of NECOM’s 10th year. In doing so, I wish to acknowledge all those music devotees who for the past 50 years have developed Armidale’s outstanding musical culture. What a wonderful foundation that proved to be in the establishment of NECOM in 2004.

Against this background it is not surprising that in its first decade NECOM has exceeded the expectations that most people held for it. In the 2013/14 year the income was $1.265M of which $360,000 (28%) was provided as core funding by the Department of Education and Communities. This means that NECOM has to earn over $900,000 each year from its activities and services (such as instrumental teaching, choirs, concerts and special projects) in order to remain viable. This is a big ask from an arts organisation in a mid-sized rural community yet NECOM has been very successful in meeting its financial targets each year since 2004. I wish to thank my fellow Board members for their support, their ideas and their initiatives.

In addition to maintaining its core teaching program, NECOM dedicated 2014 to a year of celebration – a showcase of its diverse musical talent to the community which has supported it so generously. Activities included collaboration with Oz Opera in the staging of The Magic Flute, 4 Homestead Concerts, New England Sings!, various Armidale Youth Orchestra and Armidale Symphony Orchestra concerts, student workshops and Master Classes with visiting artists, Year 10 Music Day, HSC Workshop, Junior Orchestra Workshops, 16 Instrumental ensembles, Music Therapy, work with aboriginal communities and video conference teaching. This has only been achieved as we are blessed in having an enthusiastic and well managed team of teachers and administrators at NECOM.

I was delighted to see how enthusiastically the New England community embraced our 2014 activities. NECOM’s first decade has also been rewarding for those on the NECOM team. They have seen the Conservatorium grow to a critical size that allows it to be viable and make a material impact on music education and performance throughout the region. This means that in planning for the next decade we have the luxury of adopting a radical and adventurous approach to new projects while continuously addressing the quality of existing programs.

Dr Arthur Rickards OAM
CHAIRMAN
2014 was a truly remarkable 10th anniversary year beginning with the Australia Day Cultural Award from the Armidale Dumaresq Council.

The fact that NECOM was ‘only’ ten years old came as quite a surprise to many people as NECOM has become such an integral player in the cultural life of the New England that most assumed that NECOM ‘had always been there’.

However, NECOM only came into being in 2004 after two years of intense community consultation and lobbying by a group of community leaders and music supporters inspired by the leadership of Arthur Rickards. The government of the day finally approved funding in late 2003 due to the overwhelming support from the Armidale community - from the University of New England, Armidale Symphony and Armidale Youth Orchestras, AMTA (Armidale Music Teachers Association), Armidale Music Foundation, schools and private music teachers.

NECOM offered its first programs in 2004 and since then, its exponential growth has been remarkable. The determination and commitment of Arthur Rickards, the founding Board and the supporters who believed that Armidale was the perfect home for a regional conservatorium has been proven right!

In 2014 NECOM’s core programs continued to excel in best practice delivery and outcomes that contributed significantly to the community through a diverse range of activities including such programs such as our unique Music Therapy Program, weekly music classes in schools with large Aboriginal populations, and our school curriculum support programs.

We also presented Opera Australia’s touring production of The Magic Flute, sell-out Heritage Homestead Concerts and to top off the year, the sensational 2014 New England Sings! our biennial choral project that received national recognition when it won the 2015 Arts Music Award for Excellence in a Regional Area.

NECOM sincerely thanks the NSW Department of Education and Communities for its ongoing funding support, the University of New England, the Armidale Music Teachers Association and the many community organisations, without whose support we could not continue to operate our diverse range of programs.

2014 was an unforgettable anniversary year, a testimony to the commitment and passion of all those who care deeply about the value of education and music and its positive effect on our community. Thank you to the NECOM ‘family’ - the Board, management, teachers, students, families, schools, funding bodies and the concert going public.

Susanne James
Director
### A summary of NECOM’s 2014 activities and participants in core programs and special projects

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<td>In-house and public Concerts</td>
<td>131</td>
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<td>Public schools hosting weekly Instrumental Programs</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bursary and Scholarship recipients</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching Hours of individual Lessons</td>
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<td>Public school student enrolments in instrumental lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public school student enrolments in choirs/ensembles</td>
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<td>Non-government student enrolments in instrumental lessons</td>
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<td>Non-government student enrolments in choirs/ensembles</td>
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<td>Music Workshops for school students</td>
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<td>Aboriginal students in music programs</td>
<td>213</td>
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<td>Remote public school student enrolments</td>
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<td>Professional Development Workshops</td>
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<td>Early Childhood enrolments</td>
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<td>Enrolments from Adults learning an instrument</td>
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<td>Children with disabilities involved in Music Therapy Programs</td>
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<td>Adult enrolments in Music Therapy Programs</td>
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<td>AMEB and Trinity Exam enrolments</td>
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School Curriculum Support & Performance Workshops
Congratulations on a phenomenal choral concert this evening - it did not disappoint, living up to the reputation from 2013, and even my parents were rapturous and teary by the end! What talented and enthusiastic young singers, conductors and tutors!
Choral Program
NECOM’s first flagship program began in 2004 and continues to command an impressive reputation as a leader in choral development in NSW. In 2014, twenty choristers auditioned and were successful in gaining highly sought-after places in the Gondwana Choirs National Choral School – the highest number of students from any regional centre in Australia.

NECOM sequential choral development program provides 5 tiered choirs (Minisingers, Cantilena, Cantilena Chorale, New England Singers, New England Chamber Choir) for 200+ K-Year 12 students. Led by Kodaly trained conductors Tammy Kilpatrick, Leanne Roobol, Rowena Tall and Amy Walsh, the choirs rehearsed weekly and gave 10 public performances, tours to Inverell, Kingstown and Walcha, and formed the nucleus of the New England Sings! primary and secondary choirs.

In 2014, the newly formed Side-by-Side Choir became NECOM’s 6th choir and ‘solo-ed’ at New England Sings! to rapturous applause – refer to the Music Therapy Program.

2014 also saw the creation of the Childrens’ Chorus to join the cast of Opera Australia’s touring production of The Magic Flute. 24 places were made available for our choristers from Cantilena and New England Singers. After four months of intensive rehearsals, the children performed under the lights with the cast of Opera Australia on Thursday 28th August and it was an unforgettable experience for them and their families.

Early Childhood Music - Mini Minstrels Program
200+ children attended early childhood ‘music in the lap’ classes for pre-school children and parents at NECOM Armidale, Inverell and Walcha, in addition to classes at Drummond Park Pre-school, Kindamindi Pre-School (Inverell) and Kurrawatha Ave Pre-School.
Ensemble Program
NECOM supported 20 ensembles comprising string quartets, recorder, guitar, string, wind bands, string chamber orchestras and symphonic orchestral ensembles in weekly rehearsals, tutorials, a music camp and concerts throughout the year.

**Foundation Ensembles:** 4 beginner violin and cello ensembles; Huff’n’Puffs Wind Ensemble; Guitar Ensemble

**Intermediate Ensembles:** Super Smart Semibreves (Strings); Armidale Youth Wind Ensemble; Armidale Youth String Orchestra; Flying Scales Quartet; Four to a Beat String Quartet

**Advanced Ensembles:** Armidale Youth Orchestra, Fonenerga and Ribatutta Recorder Ensembles, UNE College String Quartet

**School Ensembles:** NECOM teachers conduct or assist with school ensembles, including Armidale City PS Band, Ben Venue PS Orchestra, PLC and TAS string and cello ensembles

**Community Ensembles:** Armidale Symphony Orchestra, Sapphire City Band

As a member of the Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums, NECOM students were given the priceless opportunity of participating in London Symphony Orchestra Workshop at the Sydney Opera House in November.

Foundation & Instrumental Programs
NECOM provides an exceptional instrumental training program, particularly for its flourishing string program with over 156 students. NECOM enrolled a total of 290+ students each term to learn with NECOM teachers who teach in a wide range of venues across the wider New England region including NECOM campus and Armidale City PS, Ben Venue PS, Guyra Central School, Kellys Plains PS, Martins Gully PS, NEGS, O'Connor Catholic School, PLC, Sandon PS, St Marys Primary School, TAS, Walcha Central and Waldorf Steiner School. NECOM also provided woodwind lessons at the Inverell campus and schools including Bingara Central School, Gum Flat PS, Inverell HS, MacIntyre HS, Ross Hill PS, Warialda PS and Warialda HS.

**Foundation Program:** A sequential program for beginner students (K-Yr 6) in strings, woodwind and brass, offering individual or small group lessons, technique workshops, accompaniment coaching, ensembles and concert performances.

**Instrumental Program:** For senior students and adults, this program provides individual lessons and concert opportunities. NECOM teachers also give substantial support to their senior students by performing or accompanying in their Yr 11 and HSC recitals.
Indigenous Music Program

The New England region is home to a large Aboriginal population with many families living with economic disadvantage, unemployment, disability and isolation. Only 24% of Aboriginal children complete their schooling to Year 10 as many children are disengaged from their schooling.

To address this issue, NECOM held consultations with elders, Aboriginal organisations and schools in Inverell, Tingha and Armidale in 2013-2014 to help develop a specialised music program to enhance Aboriginal children’s pathway to improved learning, social and inclusion outcomes. This resulted in a weekly music curriculum for Early Stage 1-Stage 2; mentoring by Aboriginal musicians; and public performances by local Aboriginal musicians that included the music children have developed with their mentors. Incorporating workshops and performances in Inverell, Tingha and Armidale provided additional skills development and performance opportunities for local Aboriginal musicians and provided strong role modelling for young people.

In 2014, NECOM’s comprehensive program of activities included:

- Weekly music classes to 160 K-Yr 2 students at Ross Hill PS (Inverell) and Tingha PS
- The ‘Closing the Gap’ aboriginal mentoring project presented Rap Workshops and concerts by local Aboriginal performers to 124 students in Inverell and Tingha.
- ‘Sharing Songs’ intergenerational project in Armidale brought together 12 Aboriginal students from Armidale City PS, Ben Venue PS and Minimbah to learn and perform songs from local elders.
- Yr 12 didjeridu student Tyran Blair (Armidale High School) featured performer at the Deeargee Woolshed Concert and New England Sings!
- Yr 10 Music Day - Aboriginal Didgeridu & Dance Workshops

The ongoing support and success of the program is due to the commitment of the school principals and the generous funding support from the Becher Foundation and Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal.
Masterclasses
Some of Australia’s most outstanding guest musicians and Musica Viva artists gave a large number of masterclasses and lessons to students preparing for their HSC, AMEB and Trinity exams in 2014.

Louise King, Sat 15 March
Patrick Nolan, Sat 15 March
Patricia Pollett, Sat 15 March
Michele Walsh, 15 March
Erin Helyard, Wed 30 April, Thurs 1 & Fri 2 May
Hans Dieter-Michatz, Sat 10 & Sun 11 May
Goetz Richter Sat 14 June
Jeanelle Carrigan Sat 14 June
Genevieve Lacey 5 & 6 Sept
Cello, Ensembles
Flute, Clarinet, Recorder
Viola, String Ensembles
Violin
Piano, Early Music Performance Practice, Voice
Recorder, Early Music Performance, Ensembles
Violin
Piano, Brass, HSC and exam performance practice
Recorder, Early Music Ensembles

Music Therapy Program
NECOM’s Music Therapy Program was established in 2011 and has developed rapidly to fulfil a growing demand and need in the community. This unique program has earned overwhelming respect and support from the community for its innovative and diverse programs.

Presented by Natalie Nugent, the only qualified music therapist in the New England region, the 2014 program involved 217 children, teenagers and adults with disabilities in:

- Early Intervention and School Transition Programs in partnership with PEDAL in pre-schools and infants schools in Armidale and Uralla
- Individual/group sessions with clients from The Ascent Group (user-pays service)
- 15 Concerts for The Jacaranda Social Club, ADC Dementia Day Respite Care Program
- Side by Side Choir – Armidale High School Support Unit students and their peers
- Growing Through Song: Creative song writing with AHS Support Unit students
- Sharing Songs: Staying Strong: intergenerational project for Aboriginal children and their elders at Armidale City PS, Ben Venue PS and Minimbah Primary School.
- Project for Adults with Dementia in partnership with Autumn Lodge

NECOM’s work in this sector is extremely important as it assists some of Armidale’s most vulnerable and disadvantaged people - not only people with disabilities but their carers and family members responsible for their ongoing care.

The funding support from Adam Marshall (MP for Northern Tablelands), Armidale Central Rotary Club, Armidale City Bowling Club, Brighter Access, Integrated Living, and the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation allowed NECOM to present this vital program in 2014 – thank you.
Professional Development
NECOM is in partnership with AMTA, the Kodaly Association and Dalcroze Australia, presented 18 professional development workshops to school and studio music teachers in Alexander Technique, Choral Conducting; Early Childhood Curriculum; Early Performance Practice; Chamber Ensemble Performance Practice; Dalcroze Methodology, Piano Exam Preparation; and Stage 5-6 Composition.

Resource Hire
Instruments
NECOM provides best quality instruments for hiring (starting from $40/term) to give families and students the opportunity to learn a musical instrument when the initial cost of buying an instrument is prohibitive. Over 85 instruments were hired to students enrolled in NECOM programs, to students of NECOM Music Educator Members and to the general public (external) in 2014. The NECOM instrument library includes the following instruments:

- Violin, viola and cello (full and fractional sizes)
- Flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon
- Trumpet, French horn, trombone

Studios
NECOM supports local studio teachers by sharing its resources with Music Educator Members in Armidale and Inverell by hiring its teaching studios at very low subsidised rates. In 2014, teachers hired 2,956 hours of studio time. NECOM also hosts AMEB and Trinity exams for all regional students to ensure optimum performance spaces and in-tune pianos.

Scholarships and Bursaries
100 students of NECOM and Music Education Members were offered over $35,000 in scholarships and bursaries to assist their musical studies in 2014. Scholarship students also performed in masterclasses and workshops for guest musicians, an invaluable opportunity for regional students.
School Curriculum Support & Performance Workshops

Alexander Technique: Sat 1 & Sun 2 February
Greg Holdaway, a specialist renowned for his work with musicians, presented five separate workshops for piano, string and woodwind students.

Yr 10 Music Day: Wed 12 March
130 x Year 10 school students and teachers attended the annual Year 10 Day to attend 19 separate workshops in curriculum areas of performance, singing, aural and composition; in addition to Music of another Culture workshops including Aboriginal didjeridu and dance, African drumming and dance, Indonesian gamelan, Celtic Folk Singing, Hawaiian Ukulele and American Line Dancing.

HSC Music Workshops: Thurs 13 & Fri 14 March
NECOM, in partnership with AMTA, engaged NSW’s most experienced HSC teachers, examiners and composers for this invaluable curriculum event. 115 x Yr 11 and 12 students and teachers attended 25 separate workshop sessions in SATB choir and sight singing; aural and musicology; accompaniment; written exam technique; essays and vivas; and solo or ensemble performance.

Woodwind Workshops w Mark Walton: Sat 3 & Sun 4 May
Mark Walton, one of Australia’s most inspiring teachers and leading wind pedagogues gave 2 workshops in Armidale and the Inverell Campus.

Junior Orchestra Workshop: Wed 25 & Thurs 26 June
95 Year 3-8 students from Armidale, Barraba, Bellingen, Bingara, Dorrigo, Gunnedah, Inverell and Tamworth attended this intensive 2-day workshop that provided 52 separate sessions and tutorials in ensemble performance featuring Australian and other repertoire.

New England Sings! workshops – May-Nov
Over 20 choral workshops were held in Armidale, Inverell, Tamworth and Walcha with NECOM conductors and accompanists, composer Harley Mead and poet Sophie Masson.

Composition Workshop – Tues 4 June
Australian composer Luke Byrne presented a composer workshop for 57 students in Yrs 7-12 who entered their compositions in the Armidale Eisteddfod.

Looping & Composition: Wed 11 June
Kristin Rule, the ‘Unconventional Cellist’ presented a popular workshop to 18 violin, cello and composition students.

Rap Workshops: Tues 21 October
Local rap artists visited Ross Hill PS and Tingha PS to work with 125 students from K- Yr 12
SPECIAL PROJECTS

New England Sings!
Opera Australia’s The Magic Flute
Sharing Songs: Staying Strong Project
Side-by-Side Choir
Transition to School Program
New England Sings!

Topping off NECOM’s anniversary year was the biennial choral project New England Sings! that promoted singing, composition and Australian music in schools across the region. It brought together 880 x K-Yr 12 students from 24 regional schools, 40+ classroom teachers, 80 orchestral musicians and a galaxy of Australia’s most inspiring composers, poets and writers. It amassed two Primary School Choirs, a Secondary School Choir and the Armidale Youth Orchestra joined by the Armidale Symphony Orchestra, Brass and Pipe Bands to perform two standing-room-only concerts to maximum audiences of 1600 in November 2014.

Twelve months in the planning, New England Sings! was created by Program Manager Corinne Arter and AMTA (Armidale Music Teachers Association) with funding from Arts NSW and the Armidale Decorative & Fine Arts Society. It premiered two new choral commissions from Australian composers Harley Mead and Christopher Gordon with lyrics by local poets Sophie Masson and Judith Wright.

Inclusion and Collaboration

- Open to all schools (public, Catholic, independent) in the region
- No competitive auditions – every K-Yr 12 student, including those with special needs, was welcome
- Schools from Armidale, Gunnedah, Glen Innes, Inverell, Tamworth and Walcha participated with students from as far afield as Barradine, Coolah, Deepwater, Duri, Hallsville, Lightning Ridge, Muswellbrook, Narrabri, Warralda and Warren.
- Side-by-Side Choir for Yr 7-12 students with learning difficulties, behaviour disorders or a disability were special guests and performed their own song ‘Colours in the World’.

PD and Curriculum Support

- Hands-on support from the grass roots with extensive PD and resource support over 8 months, particularly to primary teachers with no music education training or are isolated in remote schools
- Rehearsal scores and CDs (separate choral parts + accompaniment) recorded and given to all schools
- In-school visits by NECOM conductors and accompanists + NECOM’s Cantilena Choir and New England Singers helped ‘break the ice’ and gave teachers and students confidence and skills
- Conducting workshops for teachers presented by Harley Mead and Rowena Tall
- Composition Workshops to support music syllabus included Yr 10 Music Day and Composition ‘Eisteddfod’ (75 participants) presented by Luke Byrne

Rehearsals and Workshops

- Free bus transport for disadvantaged students and remote areas to attend rehearsals and concerts.
- 13 sequential ‘cluster’ school rehearsals led by NECOM conductors/ accompanists developed students’ confidence and vocal skills
- Composer Harley Mead led rehearsals/workshops in May, July and early September.
- NECOM choral and orchestral conductors, guest Lyn Williams and composers Luke Byrne, Elena Kats-Chernin, Christopher Gordon and local poet Sophie Masson during the final weekend of rehearsals
- Conductor Mentor Program - student conductor Oliver Bruhl tutored by Lyn Williams OAM

Repertoire & Programming

- An all-Australian program that was immediately accessible (eg You’re The Voice) inspired students.
- Commission of two works – New England Scenes for Primary Choirs by Harley Mead and poet Sophie Masson and Two Birds for Secondary Choir & Orchestra by Christopher Gordon (inspired by Judith Wright’s Black Swans, Magpies) were brilliantly composed for young voices, captured student’s imagination and inspired their love of singing new music.
- Composers Katy Abbott, Luke Byrne, Andrew de Teliga, Paul Jarman, Elena Kats-Chernin, John Peterson, Ben van Tienan and Dan Walker and Australian were featured in the program.
- Composer interviews on stage were extremely popular with performers and audiences
- The theme ‘Scenes from New England’ with local female poets inspired many teachers in cross-curriculum activities.

New England Sings! exemplified NECOM’s outstanding music education leadership within the community through its ability to bring together AMTA (Armidale Music Teachers Association), and regional schools to collaborate in the performance of Australian music - it not only achieved an outstanding artistic success but an enduring legacy that ensured that teachers and their students were empowered to continue their singing and creative music making long into the future.

Footnote: New England Sings! received national recognition in August 2015 when it won the very hotly contested Arts Music Award for Excellence in Regional Music.
What NECOM can offer and bring out in children has not ceased to amaze me. The privilege of having our children participating in New England Sings! in their first year in town is a reflection of this - what an amazing event.
Opera Australia’s *The Magic Flute*

NECOM’s special ‘gift’ to the community was its first ever presentation of Opera Australia’s *The Magic Flute* in August. The logistics of staging a touring production were challenging and NECOM thanks the Armidale North Rotary Club and the Armidale Drama & Musical Society for its support. The OA’s initiative in establishing the Children’s Chorus to perform on stage alongside professional opera singers was the highlight for NECOM. Twenty four choristers from Cantilena and New England Singers were the stars on the night and enjoyed an unforgettable introduction to the world of opera. Chorister Christopher Tall went on to successfully audition for the OA’s permanent children’s chorus and has since performed at the Sydney Opera House in Carmen, Tosca and Turandot.

**Side-by-Side Choir**

One of NECOM’s most successful initiatives, the socially inclusive Side-by-Side Choir brought together 32 teenagers with disabilities or classified as ‘at-risk’ from the Armidale High School Support Unit with their neuro typical peers. In addition to mainstream choral repertoire, the choir performs its own songs composed in the *Growing Through Song* project. The immensely successful outcomes of this project are ongoing and have received recognition throughout the region.
Sharing Songs: Staying Strong

Funded by Integrated Living, this intergenerational project brought together elders and children from the local Aboriginal community. Facilitated by NECOM’s music therapist Natalie Nugent, children from Ben Venue PS and Armidale City PS had the opportunity to learn songs from the elders, including those with local heritage. The songs were performed at assemblies and several were made into recordings.

Transition to School Project

‘The best part of the project was seeing the children build social skills for school readiness including turn taking, sharing, and listening carefully to and following instructions’.

In collaboration with Pedal Early Intervention with funding from Brighter Access, this early intervention music therapy program targeted children in the pre-transition stage to school. Held at Uralla Pre-school and Minimbah Aboriginal Corporation Pre-school, the project combined children with disabilities and their neuro-typical peers to engage in group music work involving playing instruments, music and movement, vocalising and sensory activities.

The Transition-to-School program targeted children in their first year of school and was held at Sandon Public School with groups of 8 children aged 5–6 years. Participants were engaged in group music work involving playing instruments, music and movement, vocalising and sensory activities. There were many opportunities for imaginative play in the activities and the development of gross and fine motor skills through movement activities and playing instruments.
NECOM presented 131 concerts in 2014, averaging 3 concerts weekly. Alongside its extensive in-house student concerts, NECOM engaged top quality musicians and NECOM staff members to present professional concerts to increase its community profile and reputation.

The student and professional concert program forms an integral part of NECOM’s annual performance program and special projects. They receive significant family and community support attracting 5,000+ audience members in 2014 in a diverse number of concerts including:
Armidale Symphony & Youth Orchestras concerts, Heritage Homestead Series, HSC and Exam Recital Concerts
Jacaranda Social Club concerts, NECOM Choral & Ensemble Concerts, NECOM Student Soirees, New England Sings!

Heritage Homestead Series
Sun 16 March, 4pm Aether Ensemble @ McCrossin’s Mill, Uralla
Sun 4 May, 2pm Erin Helyard @ Perrott’s Chapel, Kellys Plains
Sun 15 June, 2pm Goetz Richter & Jeanell Carrigan @ Chevy Chase
Sun 19 Oct, 2pm NECOM & Friends @ Deeargee Woolshed, Uralla

The runaway success of the 2014 Heritage Homestead Series firmly established NECOM’s reputation as the innovative and go-to presenter of professional concerts in the New England region. Based on the concept of presenting imaginative and unique chamber ensemble concerts in the New England’s prestigious private homesteads, the concerts feature NECOM musicians and acclaimed guest artists. Each concert booked out well in advance and received national media coverage due to their unique connection of repertoire to poetry, history and architecture. The series extended NECOM’s community engagement and profile considerably and attracted diverse audience members, many of whom were not traditional concert goers.
NECOM Concerts
NECOM’s comprehensive and busy program of in-house concerts provided important performance training to its choral, instrumental and ensemble students, from beginner through to advanced levels. In 2014 NECOM presented Solo Soirees, Ensemble and Choral Concerts, Christmas Concerts, the AYO Garden Party and Gala Concerts and Jacaranda Social Club concerts. In collaboration with AMTA, NECOM also presented the Armidale Eisteddfod Choral Night, Band Night, and Composition Night.

UNE Graduation Ceremonies
Fri 21 & Sat 22 March; Fri 28 & Sat 29 March
Fri 24 & Sat 25 Oct

NECOM provided live music performances to enhance the six prestigious Graduation Ceremonies of the University of New England in the grounds at Booloominbah. Steve Tafra (classical guitarist), musical director Warwick Dunham (piano), Georgie Chorley (trumpet) and Ruth Strutt (vocalist) performed traditional graduation ceremony repertoire including processions, anthems and hymns.
Armidale Youth Orchestras

Armidale Youth Orchestra (AYO), Armidale Youth Wind Ensemble (AYWE), Armidale Youth String Orchestra (AYSO), Armidale Symphony Orchestra (ASO)

2014 saw the continuing growth of enrolments to 109 across all ensembles with increased enrolments in the AYO and AYSO conducted by Warwick Dunham and April Kelson respectively. Nick Negerevich retired as conductor of AWYE in Term 1 and Benn Tracy was appointed Conductor in Term 2. In consultation with the committee a revamped program of rehearsal time and organisation was initiated. The annual Sawtell Music Camp is a key component in building the ethos of the organisation as well as being an important element in building technique and skill within our players. Sawtell Public School became the rehearsal and concert venue that eased spaces issues at the caravan park.

The Garden Party continued to be a highlight of the program with a sold-out event. The Committee is always highly appreciative of Rosemary Leach’s generosity in the use of her grounds for this highlight of our calendar year. The Gala Concert held at Lazenby Hall finished the year with outstanding performances by all ensembles.

An all-consuming part of the 2014 calendar with a contemporary all-Australian program featuring Christopher Gordon’s commission Two Birds for the AYO and secondary choir and Elena Kats-Chernin’s Deep Sea Dreaming. The AYO also had the opportunity to work with both composers although the works were very challenging, it was rewarding to see our young players grapple with and surmount the musical test of contemporary Australian works. The musical and educational worth of this event was recognised in national Art Music Award for Excellence in a Regional Area in 2015.

There was a newer composition to the committee for 2014 that allowed all office bearer roles to be filled. There was a renewed focus on branding and marketing with the launch of our new logos and advertising, and new uniform designs for AYO and AYSO unveiled at the Gala Concert.

AYO still boasts a robust membership with active parental involvement in AYO events and is benefitting from the partnership programs and extension opportunities offered by NECOM.

Cathy Archer, President
Armidale Music Teachers Association (AMTA)

The Armidale Music Teachers’ Association (AMTA) is an organisation of secondary music teachers from the Armidale region whose aim is to promote music education in the wider community. In 2014 AMTA and NECOM presented:

- New England Sings! concerts
- Year 10 Music Day
- HSC Music Workshop
- The Armidale Eisteddfod

2014 saw the third biennial New England Sings! concerts at Lazenby Hall. New England Sings! is one of the largest choral events in Australia, involving 800 school students and 40+ teachers from 23 schools. AMTA was pleased and proud to be able to assist NECOM with the organisation and running of this event and congratulates NECOM for being awarded the prestigious APRA Art Music Award for a second time for this event.

The Year 10 and HSC Music days have been running in Armidale for many years as an initiative of AMTA. These days attract a large number of students from across the region and expose students to a variety of musical activities that may not necessarily be available in their own schools and communities.

AMTA continued to support the Armidale Eisteddfod, particularly with the band and choral events as well as sponsoring and organising the composition event and presentation ceremony. We were fortunate to acquire the services of the composer, the late Harley Mead as adjudicator in 2014 and his feedback to participants was greatly appreciated.

AMTA continues its role as an advocate for music education in the region and across Australia and continues to be a unique organisation in that its music educator members represent both private and public sectors.

Bruce Myers, President AMTA

Armidale Symphony Orchestra

The Armidale Symphony Orchestra (ASO), comprised of 50+ community musicians and NECOM teachers, rehearses weekly in the NECOM Orchestral Room. The ASO enjoys a unique position in the musical life of Armidale and has been described as The Jewel in the Crown of Armidale’s performing ensembles. Not many regional cities can boast of an ensemble of the ASO’s consistency and quality. The ASO enjoyed a most successful year in 2014 with four outstanding concert performances at Lazenby Hall and NEGS.

10-12 March Armidale Music Foundation March Choral Workshop: Conductor Paul Holley
The ASO performed in the annual Armidale Music Foundation’s Choral Workshop on March 10-12 with a performance of Stravinsky’s Symphony of Psalms.

18 May Concert: Conductor Graham Maddox
The ASO featured outstanding pianist Deidre Rickards performing Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 3, the world premiere of the Flute Parody by resident composer, Peter Maddox and Schuman’s Symphony No. 3, the Rhenisch. This concert continued the orchestra’s policy of fostering performances by local musicians and composers.

7 August Concert: Conductor Nick Negerevich
A debut concert for conductor Nick Negerevich and violinist Margaret Butcher performing Barber’s Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. The program also included C. P. Bach’s Overture to La Clemenza di Scipione, Peter Warlock’s Capriol Suite and Haydn’s Symphony No. 31.

7 December Concert: Conductor Peter Maddox
This concert featured Mozart’s Overture La finta giardiniera, Mendelssohn’s Symphony No 4 and Peter Maddox’s Oboe Concerto No. 2 performed by his brother Graham Maddox.

The Kerry Hawkins Award
Kerry Hawkins was a committed member of the ASO for 35 years as a violinist and then as a French Horn player until her untimely death in 2012. Kerry was also the ASO’s efficient and dedicated librarian. The award is in recognition of Kerry’s lifetime of service to the ASO and is made annually to a playing member who shows outstanding dedication and commitment throughout the year. The recipient of the award in 2014 was Chris Cunningham.

David Gee, ASO Board Representative, 2014
The support and encouragement from the NSW Department of Education, local service organisations, community leaders, audiences and funding organisations provide crucial funding to NECOM in 2014.

This funding ensures the ongoing sustainability of our social equity programs (Music Therapy Program and Indigenous Music Program), it provides bursaries and scholarships to 100 talented students who work diligently in their music studies and deserve our support, and it enables NECOM to provide professional development support to many teachers and remote schools across the New England region.

Special thanks to artist Hilary Pollock who donated her painting ‘Serenade to a White Waratah’ to NECOM for its 10th anniversary – it hangs proudly in the Western Common Room and enjoyed by many concert goers. Thank you to all our donors and supporters as we could not have achieved such an outstanding 10th anniversary year without you.
Inverell Campus

An exciting initiative came into being in early 2014 when NECOM welcomed the Sapphire City Concert Band to take up residence in the Campus. It is now the home of the Band and provides permanent rehearsal and instrument storage space, in addition to performance venues.

The Sapphire City Concert Band committee is to be congratulated for its initiative and commitment to making the Campus their new home. Committee members, led by Geoff and Nicky Croft, have spearheaded the spruce-up of the Campus with many volunteer hours spent on painting and repairs to the buildings and demountable. The Committee successfully applied for a Community Building Partnerships Grant (with support from Adam Marshall MP) mid-year to make significant improvements to the campus including an upgrade of security lighting, reconnection of water and toilet facilities in the demountable, painting and sound insulation in studios.

The Campus received a surprise donation of an upright piano from Holy Trinity School during the year and with the assistance of piano technician John Hadfield, the piano was wheeled up the road to the Campus.

Amanda Pearse, Campus Co-ordinator stepped down from the position mid year and appointment of Maria Stafford was appointed formally as Administration Officer.

In 2014, NECOM hired 800+ hours of subsidised studio space to Music Educator Members including Peta Blyth, Stephanie Marshall, Colin McKinlay, Nathan Pearce and Helen Robinson.

Woodwind peripatetic teacher Wendy Champion provides flute, clarinet and saxophone lessons (individual and group) in a variety of locations including the Inverell Campus and many schools including Bingara Central, Gum Flat PS, Holy Trinity Primary School, Inverell HS, Macintyre High School, Ross Hill PS, Wariaralda HS and Warialda PS.

NECOM and the Sapphire City Band were co-presenters of the Mark Walton Woodwind Bootcamp on Sunday 4 May that was attended by Wendy Champion, her students and band members who had an inspiring experience working with Mark, one of Australia’s leading woodwind teachers.

Each year NECOM offers bursaries and scholarships to students of woodwind teacher Wendy Champion and Music Educator Members. In 2014 NECOM awarded $6,245 in bursary support to students from Inverell and surrounding districts.

Ros Oliver, NECOM’s early childhood music teacher had a very busy year teaching Mini Minstrels classes at the Campus and Kindamindi Pre-school. Ros is an outstanding teacher and her Mini Minstrel classes were very popular so we were very sorry to say goodbye to Ros in December. However, we congratulate her for her new career as a full time primary teacher starting in 2015.

Inverell Shire Council

The Inverell Shire Council has been a supporter of the Campus since its inception by giving an annual grant to help cover operational costs of the Campus. Unfortunately the Council resolved to withdraw its support from July 2014 onwards. NECOM gives sincere thanks to the Council for its support in helping the Campus bring music and education to the Inverell shire over so many years.
Conservatorium Support Group – Inverell

2014 saw the volunteer Steering Committee focus on its future directions for the Campus, including fundraising and increasing concert presentations. The Committee successfully applied for incorporation in late 2014 with the new name Conservatorium Support Group – Inverell. The Group is continuing discussion and negotiations to determine its autonomy and financial independence under the leadership of the new Committee:

President: Bobbie Wigg
Vice-President: Narelle Kennedy
Secretary: Chris Newbiggin
Treasurer: Linda Pratt
Events Co-ordinator: Helen Robinson
NECOM Board Representative: Geoff Croft
Committee: Peta Blyth, Ros Oliver, Michelle McLachlan, Sarah Jones, Nikki Croft, June Turner, Neil Eigeland
The ongoing financial costs of operating the Campus are a challenge and NECOM looks forward to further discussions with the new Support Group to increase its support and ownership of the Campus future in 2015.

School Services

NECOM’s school curriculum support in public primary schools continued in 2014 with Ros Oliver teaching weekly music classes to over 110 K-Yr 2 students (many from Aboriginal backgrounds) at Ross Hill PS. Sincere thanks go to Deb Baker, Principal of Ross Hill PS, and staff for their commitment to the program.

Tingha PS joined the NECOM school program in 2013 when Ros Oliver commenced weekly music classes for 60+ students and this successful program continued into 2014. This was made possible due to a ‘Seeds of Renewal’ grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and funding from the Becher Foundation.

Rap Workshops were held at Ross Hill and Tingha in October as part of our ongoing ‘Closing the Gap’ aboriginal mentoring project and were attended by 124 students.

Inverell High School participated in New England Sings! supported by class music teacher Dorothy Lee who also hosted a choral workshop on 27 August with NECOM conductor Leanne Roobol and accompanist Robyn Bradley.

Events

Fri 25 April: Anzac Day with Sapphire City Concert Band
Sun 4 May: Mark Walton Woodwind Boot Camp
Sat 21 June: Meet the Band with Sapphire City Concert Band & Mini Minstrels
Tues 21 Oct: Rap Workshops at Ross Hill PS and Tingha PS
Sun Afternoon at the Con: 6 Nov Inverell Teachers Studio Concert w 29 students, 100 audience
Sun Afternoon at the Con: 13 Nov Wendy Champion Studio Concert w 37 students, 85 audience
Sun Afternoon at the Con: 30 Nov Junior Clarion Singers & students, 85 audience
Tues 18 Nov: Tingha Student & Family Concert
Sat 22 Nov: Tingha PS students concert at Tin Festival, Tingha
Sat 6 & 20 Dec: Sapphire City Concert Band concerts
Sat 13 Dec: Christmas Carols w Sapphire City Concert Band
NECOM’s Music Educator Member program is unique to NSW regional conservatoriums and it provides many opportunities for private studio teachers and their students to take up benefits and activities on offer from NECOM. These include:

- Scholarships and/or bursaries for students (NECOM awards over $35,000+ annually)
- Masterclasses and workshops for students
- Free concert venues for studio concerts, examinations (including administration support)
- Referrals to parents or community members seeking music lessons
- Discounted hire fees for teaching studios at Armidale and Inverell campuses
- Employment opportunities to teach or perform in NECOM projects and events
- Access (free or discounted) to NECOM masterclasses and workshops
- Advertising – free inclusion in NECOM’s quarterly newsletter ‘Take Note’ distributed to 500+ individuals and organisations + promotion on the NECOM website
- Access (free or discounted) to NECOM professional development workshops and events, including open rehearsals or sessions with visiting guest artists
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Partner Forsyths B.Comm ACA

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Regional Manager, Fairfax Media (Retired)

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CEO, Armidale Business Chamber; Dip Project Management (AIPM)

David Gee  
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B.Ed (Mus), M.Ed (Hons), M.Ed Admin, AIE (London), Dip.Spec.Mus. Ed,  
FACEL, MACE

Rosemary Leitch AM  
Director  
Retired Councillor & Mayor (Armidale Dumaresq Council), UNE  
Foundation, President Armidale Nationals Party Branch

Bruce Myers  
Director  
President AMTA, Music Teacher Duval HS, President Armidale City  
Brass Band B.Mus Ed

NECOM Management

Director  
Susanne James
Program Manager  
Corinne Arter
Finance & Administration Manager  
Deborah Jenner
Office Manager  
Rachael Edmonds
Administration Assistant  
Heather Pavel
Inverell Administration Officer  
Maria Stafford

Teaching Staff

NECOM provides selected instrumental, ensemble and performance training in its campuses to complement the teaching services  
provided by the NECOM Music Educator Members.

String
Marian Barford  
vioin and viola
Suzie-May Camm  
vioin, string ensembles
Laura Curotta  
vioin and viola
Robert Jackson  
cello, string ensembles
April Kelson  
vioin, viola, ensembles
Alex Negerevich  
vioin, viola

Woodwind
Wendy Champion  
flute, clarinet, saxophone (Inverell, Warialda)
Nick Negerevich  
flute, piccolo, clarinet, saxophone, oboe, bassoon
Caitlin Pengilly  
flute, wind ensemble
Kristal Spreadborough  
wind ensemble
Rob Woodhouse  
flute, clarinet, saxophone

Brass
David Brown  
all brass
Benn Tracey  
trumpet

Early Childhood
Peta Bale  
Armidale and Walcha
Tammy Kilpatrick  
Armidale
Phil Oxley  
Armidale
Ros Oliver  
NECOM Inverell, Ross Hill PS, Tingha PS

Choral
Mini Singers  
Tammy Kilpatrick
Cantilena & Chorale  
Rowena Tall
New England Singers  
Leanne Roobol
New England Chamber Choir  
Leanne Roobol
Side-by-Side Choir  
Natalie Nugent, Rowena Teege

Accompanists
Robyn Bradley, Warwick Dunham, Nicole Mackson

AYO Orchestral Ensembles
Armidale Youth Chamber Strings  
April Kelson
Armidale Youth Wind Ensemble  
Nick Negerevich, Benn Tracey
Armidale Youth Orchestra  
Warwick Dunham
Music Therapy  
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We were absolutely blown away at the Junior Orchestra Workshop’s concert yesterday and fighting back tears the whole time. The fact that our nine year old daughter had the opportunity to play in a ninety-piece orchestra in our home town is just astounding. She came home full of enthusiasm and on such a high, she said to me last night “Daddy, I’ve found my forever instrument”...... what better endorsement could you get.