

# Contrasting approaches to jazz education in regional communities: Findings from a study on Cairns and Mackay, North Queensland

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## Part-time Doctoral study 2015-2020

- Regional Jazz focusing on North Queensland
- Cairns and Mackay
- Applied Grounded Theory to data from 24 semi-structured interviews with community members in both regions
- Data collected from jazz audience survey in Mackay
- Investigated topics associated with performance, sociological, governmental and educational factors in both communities
- Through the grounded theory process, it uncovered three major influences: venues, regionality and education.

# Presentation focus

- Jazz education in North Queensland
- Contrasting approaches in Mackay and Cairns
- Regional communities developing educational opportunities





Figure 1.1 Map of Queensland showing the locations of Cairns, Mackay and Brisbane

(Google, n.d-c)

Cairns and Mackay provided differing environments with differing histories, which have shaped the development of their two regional jazz communities

## Cairns

- World famous tourist destination
- Doorstep to GBR
- Population 168,000 in 2020
- Cairns Jazz Club
- Restaurant placement on Esplanade
- Lifestyle attraction



# Mackay

- Population 131,000 in 2020
- Economy largely built on sugar cane and coal mining
- BMusic degree at Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music
- Alumni jazz musicians and teachers
- Local jazz groups



# Research Question

CRQ: What factors influence the development and sustainability of a jazz community in regional Australia? This central question has four associated research questions

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1. What performance factors contribute to, or detract from, the development and sustainability of a jazz community in regional Australia?
2. What sociological factors contribute to, or detract from, the development and sustainability of a jazz community in regional Australia?
3. What educational factors contribute to, or detract from, the development and sustainability of a jazz community in regional Australia?
4. What governmental factors contribute to, or detract from, the development and sustainability of a jazz community in regional Australia?

# Research Method

- Grounded Theory
- Inductive investigative process that involves using iterative strategies to collect and analyse qualitative data in order to construct a theory (Charmaz, 2014)
- Jazz is filled with symbolism and meaning for a community. Grounded theory is underpinned by the theory of symbolic interactionism.
- Semi-structured interviews
- Surveys

# Rationale for Grounded Theory

- Explored factors that influenced the development of jazz communities in two regional centres as a way to gain a deeper understanding of influences that are specific to those individual regions.
- The two regions selected in this study had different geographic, social, educational and performance factors, providing an opportunity to explore alternative approaches to building a jazz community.
- The communities of Mackay and Cairns were selected for this study, not on representational grounds, but because they provide an opportunity to learn. Stake (2005, p. 451) notes that “potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness”, adding “that may mean taking the one most accessible or the one we can spend the most time with.”

## Contrasting educational influences

- In regional areas, educational opportunities exist, but on a much smaller scale compared to metropolitan areas. Each individual music community is shaped by its own cultural, geographic, economic, and social influences, however, few studies have explored regional education influences, particularly in jazz
- One of the major educational differences between the jazz communities of Cairns and Mackay was the presence of the CQCM in Mackay



# Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music

- The CQCM has offered jazz training in Mackay since 1989, and according to the participants in this study, it has had a major impact on the local jazz community including school-aged students, community musicians, undergraduate jazz students and alumni who have stayed in the Mackay region.
- The CQCM Bachelor of Music is a three-year degree that is available to students on the Mackay campus as well as online.



## The 'Con'nection with Schools

- Several participants commented on the educational services that the CQCM offers to school-aged students in Mackay, and how those services enhance the profile of jazz within the community.
- The benefit of the CQCM's national and international networks also appear to have an impact on the high school students participating in the CQCM's programs
- One participant explained, "You often find teachers that have come from the Con tend to stick to their strengths in jazz, which makes for a stronger stage band than the concert band".

# Graduates Become the Teachers

- Several participants in the study mentioned graduates who stayed in Mackay and found teaching jobs after completing their degree. These graduates brought a specialised jazz educational skillset back into the high school system
- The nexus between the CQCM, high schools, teachers and graduates form a mutually beneficial support system that is unique to this regional music community.



# Community Musicians and Collaboration with the CQCM

- The CQCM has had positive collaborative projects with community musicians. The CQCM Jazz Orchestra (CQCMJO) played an important role for the jazz community of Mackay, bringing together CQCM staff, students and community players.
- Jazz instruction from lecturers in the course provided a professional development opportunity for music teachers in the community



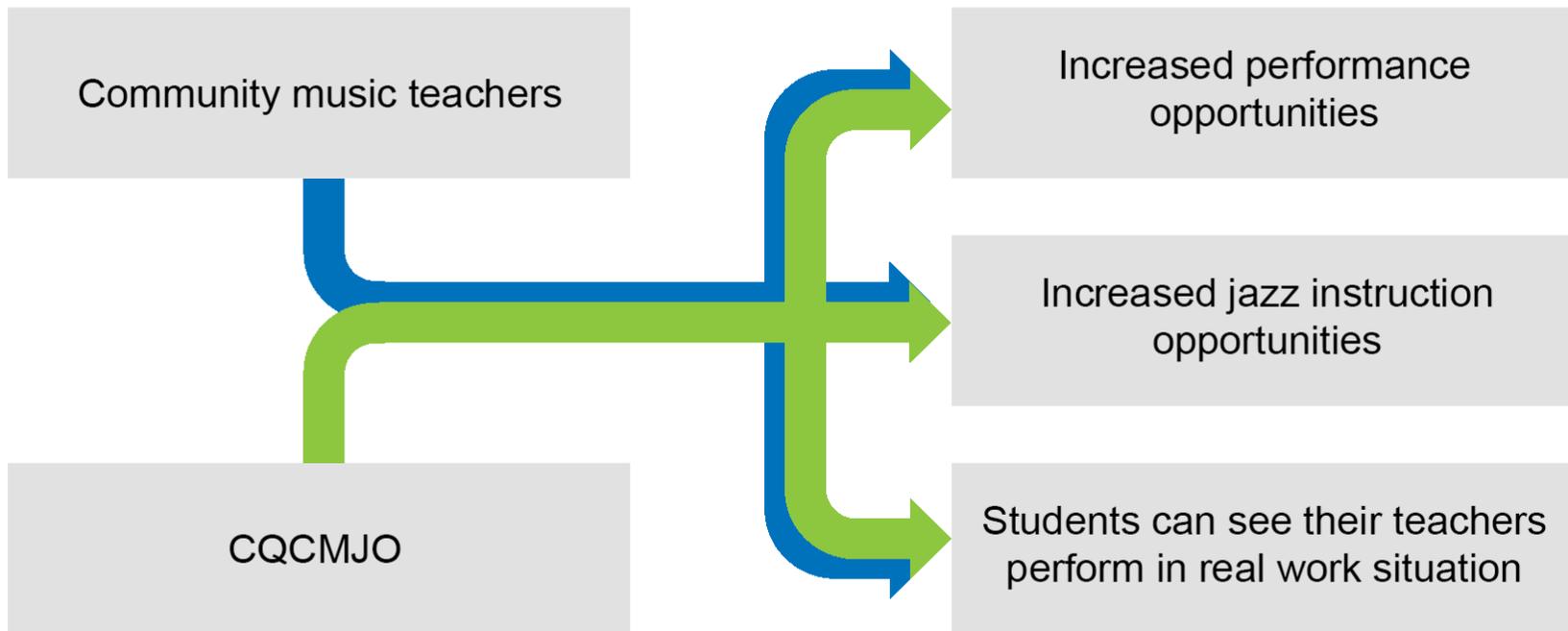


Figure 2. The CQCMJO/Community music teacher relationship

# Cairns and its Jazz Education Influences

- No conservatorium of music, and no local tertiary jazz courses are available
- Despite this, the study revealed a series of interlocking influences from key individuals and groups in the community that contributed to the performance and educational opportunities in Cairns.



# The Cairns Jazz Club Community Impact

- Community group made up of musicians and local patrons demonstrated a passion for jazz in their region and took an active role in its preservation and future.
- From actively seeking gigs for musicians, to developing connections to school music programs, this community group was found to be a key mechanism in bringing the smaller factions of the local jazz community together.
- One of their major collaborations of the CJC was with jazz students from the Jazz Academy at Smithfield State High School (SHS). The CJC provided opportunities to perform at Sunday afternoon events
- Participant stated, “They are our future, and we must do everything we can to nurture them”
- According to the staff of Smithfield SHS, this input from the jazz community has helped to lift the musical standard of their program and has encouraged students to learn how to improvise.
- Visiting musicians contribute to gigs and CJC events

# Lifestyle and Tourism – Members of the Jazz Community

- The Cairns region is home to many high-quality jazz musicians who provide private jazz tuition in a range of instruments
- The North Queensland lifestyle and tourism industry has attracted many quality jazz musicians to Cairns over the years. While some musicians moved to the region looking for gigs, many came looking for other job opportunities or to live in the tropics.
- In Mackay, the CQCM has been chiefly responsible for funding visits by high-level national and international musicians to that region. In Cairns, no local organisation has provided similar opportunities, but quality artists and educators continue to travel to the region attracted by the local lifestyle, employment and educational opportunities. One study participant commented, “Cairns is that sort of town where it can attract anyone for a variety of interests”

# Jazz Musician Attrition

- One of the biggest challenges to the sustainability of the Cairns jazz community has been the attrition or loss of young jazz musicians
- With no options in the local region to study jazz beyond a high school level, graduating year 12 students are forced to relocate
- Cairns did not enjoy the positive influence of a local tertiary degree that attracted students and supported their transition to graduates, teachers and performers.
- This situation suggested that Mackay's jazz community had greater potential for nurturing a sustainable community of upcoming jazz musicians.



# Conclusion

- Unique regional attributes in both regions offer differing approaches
- Understanding the unique educational attributes of a region can unlock the different ways a music community can function, and these findings may be useful for other regional and non-regional communities in the development of their own community music education.



# Conclusion

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