

**OWNERSHIP, EFFICIENCY AND IDENTITY:
THE TRANSITION OF AUSTRALIA'S SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRAS FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS TO
CORPORATE ENTITIES**

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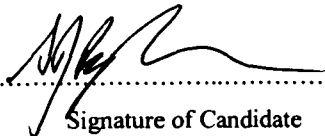
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This thesis represents a major part of the prescribed program of study.

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ABSTRACT

In 1932 the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) was created by an Act of Federal Parliament, with a charter to provide free-to-air radio broadcasting on a national scale. To provide musical content for their activities the organisation created a number of musical groups, ultimately leading to the creation of a network of six fulltime professional symphony orchestras. Between 1950 and 1996 the orchestras were structured as a government department but between 1997 and 2000 each was corporatised into individual corporate entities.


This study explores the development of the Australian symphony orchestras with particular focus on the changes in organisational structure from the mid 1980s to the present. The fundamental inquiry is to explore how factors such as organisational structure and ownership have impacted on the orchestras' activities and the professional identity of the musicians, as they have made the transition from a government department to separate corporate entities.

The general hypothesis proposed is that change in organisational structure will have a positive effect on the ability of the orchestras to achieve both cultural and economic objectives. This is empirically tested by capturing and analysing relevant data from the activities of the orchestras around the times of these changes and from surveying the views of those most affected by the changes – the musicians employed in the ensembles.

Results show that, in the case of economic objectives such as revenue generation, the process has been moderately successful. The orchestras have also been successful in developing stronger links with their own communities and achieving some levels of artistic success. However in regard to increasing attendances and maintaining high artistic levels, the results are not so clear. In particular, the orchestras of the smaller States have had greater difficulty in maintaining their levels of operation under the new structure.

STATEMENT FROM CANDIDATE

This thesis is submitted to fulfil the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Economics) at Macquarie University, Australia. This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. Ethics approval was granted for this research by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Ethics) on 7 October 2004, Reference: HE27AUG2004-D03094.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SJB', is written over a horizontal line.

Stephen John Boyle

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