



The success of the Just Brass program will be highlighted in an ABC TV documentary series about how a culture of music can impact a school community and change children's lives.

Just Brass to hit the small screen

14 AUGUST 2018

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BY FAYE MICHELSON

John Collinson knows very well that when you put an instrument in a child's hand, more than just music happens.

The Territorial Just Brass consultant has seen time and again the many benefits for youngsters who take part in The Salvation Army's Just Brass program – and it's something TV audiences around Australia will also discover later this year.

Just Brass is one of three music programs taking part in ABC TV's documentary series "Don't Stop the



Music". The series, which takes place in Challis Community Primary School in Armadale, WA, shows how a vibrant culture of music can impact a school community and change children's lives.

John says Just Brass came on board after Artemis Media approached Salvos Stores last year to be a collection point for instruments as part of the program.

"They'd contacted Salvos Stores, who told them about our Just Brass programs –and that's how we got involved in this huge project," he says. "Just Brass is always attached to a corps, so I looked up to see where the school was – and Armadale Corps is literally across the road."

That was the start of a great partnership, with a music teacher employed through Armadale Corps to teach weekly brass lessons to 40 children, who then every Wednesday after school walk to the corps for band practice. It was a busy time for Melbourne-based John, making numerous trips to Perth to organise the new Just Brass group.

"Artemis filmed us from day one. We have film of the kids coming into the building and getting their instruments for the first time and sitting down in the band to play their first note together – their journey has been tracked from the instant of them seeing an instrument to the finale concert in the Perth Concert Hall in May."

Groups of children have also been involved in choir and strings programs, with high-profile mentors James Morrison and Guy Sebastian providing inspiration and workshopping song with them. The program started in third term last year, culminating in the finale concert showcasing the student musicians, James Morrison and special guests including The Salvation Army Perth Fortress Band, conducted by John.

"It's been wonderful to see the amazing impact the program has had on the kids, leaders and volunteers," he says.

"To see the children's musical advancement, their socialisation and level of confidence grow is lovely. In the series you'll see one little girl who was so shy and couldn't get a note out at first –now, nine months later, she is bubbly and self-confident. It's great. Just Brass is a band program, so it's about doing music together and learning to work in teams. The educational benefits of doing music are extraordinary and that's what the program shows.

"When Just Brass builds a connection with a school, all sorts of other things can come from that as we see how else we can work together. And a corps that had very few children attending now has 40 coming through their doors weekly."

Salvos Stores will provide a collection point for people to donate instruments when the series is aired in November, to be distributed to corps to set up more Just Brass programs.

The series has joint funding from Screen Australia and Screenwest and is backed by Musica Viva and The Salvation Army.

