CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools

Melbourne — 15 April 2013

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Witnesses
Ms T. Hurley, Community and Government Strategic Partnerships, and
Mr P. Hadfield, Chief Operations Officer, Australian Children’s Music Foundation.
The CHAIR — Thanks for joining us. For the purposes of the inquiry process, we will have the evidence today recorded by Hansard and you will have the opportunity to review the transcript and make any corrections that need to be made to it. The evidence is covered by parliamentary privilege, and that applies to only the hearing proper.

You are obviously aware of what we are looking at in terms of music education in Victoria and what we can be doing to support that. What we might do is kick off by asking you to provide a brief opening statement and then we have a number of questions we would like to ask you.

Ms HURLEY — We would like to put on the record that the ACMF is committed to equity in education and believes that music education is a right and not a privilege for all young Australians. The benefits of music education are well documented, with a vast number of academic studies cited in the submission as well as the personal stories of how music changes lives and provides a myriad of benefits to those who participate and for those around them. There is a consensus, again in the submission, that music education provides an individual with both music and non-music skills which are transferrable to other curriculum areas. It also develops creativity, which together with the other skills learnt can lead to employment pathways that may or may not be music related.

The ACMF believes that music should be a fundamental part of education and not just an add-on for curriculum. Given that, we would hope that all education suppliers would be able to provide music education across Australia for all children.

The CHAIR — Excellent. Did you want to add anything, Peter?

Mr HADFIELD — Not at this stage, but I am happy to answer the questions.

The CHAIR — I might kick it off, if I could. Could you provide an overview of the music program you deliver to the schools and how you deliver it? Further to that, do you provide any capacity building for teachers within schools? If so, could you provide an overview of the work that you do in supporting teachers?

Ms HURLEY — Can we actually reiterate some of what is in our submission, then, in answering this question?

The CHAIR — Sure.

Ms HURLEY — The Australian Children’s Music Foundation, which was established in 2002 by Don Spencer, who is the well-known singer/songwriter and children’s entertainer and is known to many Australians over a few generations for his work on Play School, wanted to provide free music tuition and free instruments to students in disadvantaged circumstances. He started with one program in a juvenile detention centre 10 years ago and we are now in nearly 50 disadvantaged schools and communities across Australia as well as remote and regional schools and remote Indigenous schools in the Northern Territory, and we are about to start in the Kimberley in Western Australia. We are in all 20 juvenile justice centres in Australia. I think we are the only provider of music programs in all of these centres.

The instruments that are required for all the programs are donated to the schools, and they become the permanent property of the school or the facility. In this way we hope that teachers in the school will join the program as they are always in the classroom when the program is operating, but we have encouraged them to participate and learn the skills along with the children if they do not already have musical background or aptitude and therefore will be able to continue the program regularly throughout the week when the music specialist is not there.

We have just this year engaged one of our ACMF teachers to come into head office and to develop more of the curriculum material for our ACMF teachers, who are not necessarily formally trained as teachers, but are all expert professional musicians in their own right. We are looking now at providing not only the music lessons but also video evidence of her teaching these programs so that even a teacher — an ACMF teacher or a regular classroom teacher — who does not have the skills can actually start from scratch with...
modules of music education and also the percussion and singing. In this way we hope to be able to go into schools for three years at a time and develop not only the teachers who are in the schools but also hope that the schools are going to be able to see the value of the program and work towards their own fundraising to be able to either employ an ACMF teacher or somebody else in the community who could continue the program.

The CHAIR — Predominantly you are funded by philanthropic funds at the moment. What roughly does it cost to run a program in a school?

Mr HADFIELD — It is approximately $30 000 a year, which is the cost of provision of the instruments and the cost of tuition. The model that we have created and are looking to move forward is to create a minimum three-year period if we can. Some of the programs we have had since our inception — I think the longest one is nine years — so we have an established program of longevity in a number of, certainly, the detention centres and in a number of the schools, but our model going forward is to look at a three-year cycle, so it will be a $90 000 commitment per school over three years. It is a good load capacity not only for the teachers at the school but also to provide a template and capacity for the local community to generate some revenue support to be able to maintain and continue the programs after our three-year period.

The CHAIR — Just comparing Victoria to some of the other jurisdictions you work in, could you elaborate a bit further on where you see we are up to in Victoria? How do we rate, and are there any similarities or differences that may apply in the various areas that you work in?

Ms HURLEY — That is a big question. Peter and I have not visited every single program. We have a program director and fundraising coordinator who has been with the organisation a lot longer and who has been to and seen more programs. In terms of a comparison, Victoria has 13 schools, we have 11 in New South Wales, for example, and only one in Queensland because of their strong music program already in that state. In South Australia we have two schools. In the Northern Territory it varies, because we actually teach in a number of group schools, so it can be anything from 10 to 20 schools at a time, depending on the wet season and the dry season and the number of schools that we can actually get to.

In terms of what we are doing, as you know, we focus on low socioeconomic areas, so we are going to schools that need the programs for one reason or another. A lot of the suggestions for Victoria came from the Ardoch Youth Foundation. They do not support us with any funds. In fact most of the funds that go into the Victorian schools are from DEEWR. You would have heard that in Peter Garrett’s submission he mentions the Australian Children’s Music Foundation as one of the organisations that DEEWR supports, and strongly supports.

Mr HADFIELD — One of the focuses from the Victorian perspective was that, after 2009 and the bushfires and floods went through Victoria, we were approached to look at how we might be able to improve the wellbeing of the kids who were directly affected by schools being caught up in the bushfires, so we had a number of schools that were engaged in — —

We had six schools in those — Strathewen Primary, Kinglake Primary, Kinglake West Primary, Haven Primary, Yarra Glen Primary and Marysville Primary schools. Unfortunately due to a lack of ongoing funding we were not able to maintain or keep those programs running, which was a bit unfortunate. That was one of the driving forces behind a number of the school programs in Victoria.

The CHAIR — Sure. Thank you.

Ms TIERNEY — Trish and Peter, when did that funding cease?

Ms HURLEY — It would have been at a different time, but generally towards 2011, and some of them finished up in 2012. It started in 2009 after the bushfires. Actually I think it is in the submission there when each of those programs started. Have you got it?

Ms TIERNEY — Yes, we have got it.
Mr HURLEY — The actual dates are at the end of each school.

Ms TIERNEY — Okay. Thank you. My other question is in relation to the challenges faced by low SES schools. Can you spell out the challenges that low SES schools face in trying to deliver quality music education?

Ms HURLEY — I guess the first one is if they do not have a specialist music teacher it is up to the regular classroom teacher whether they have music educational ability, aptitude or interest even. Some schools obviously have some teachers who have that background and are able to contribute, and some schools do not have any teachers who have that inclination. Where a school has a teacher who is musically inclined, we work with them to try and maintain and sustain the program.

A lot of the issues that we found in the low socioeconomic schools — particularly the ones I had experience with in Sydney — are the lack of continuity for children attending schools. We found that on the ACMF music days there had been an increase in attendance, and the school was very grateful for that change in behaviour. There is also a change in the culture of the school. Many of the children learn new skills that are transferred to other subject areas, their behaviour improves, and they learn other social skills that can be transferred to the classroom as well.

We see an enormous increase in parent participation when there are performances that the ACMF teachers organise for the schools at either assemblies or in presentations. That is another very positive benefit.

Mr HADFIELD — I think one of the other major benefits too is that in lower socioeconomic schools provision of instruments or access to instruments is a real problem, and in some of the more wealthy areas it has not been a huge impost to be able to get parents to provide the musical instruments. Certainly in lower SES schools the need to provide all of the musical instruments to be able to conduct an effective music program is important.

We at ACMF have been able to overcome that to a degree by being a little innovative. We have run a percussion program where we have used the plastic hall chairs, turned them upside down and just through the provision of some drumsticks we have actually been able to run a really effective percussion program without the need to purchase drums — we just tap the bottom of the school chairs. In fact one of our schools just did a performance with the Royal Australian Navy Band and did a percussion accompaniment, and the only instruments they were using were the drumsticks and the bottoms of their school chairs.

The CHAIR — Do you remember the name of that school offhand?

Ms HURLEY — Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Waterloo, or was it Matraville Soldiers’ Settlement Public School? The program with the upturned chairs is also in Hillston, which is one of the remote schools in New South Wales, and we are actually videoing that as a starter pack for all schools that do not have instruments and who are in a remote region with our ACMF teacher Rachel Scott, to be able to put that out online for teachers to learn how to do it and also to be able to then talk to Rachel via videoconference to be able to start that program.

The CHAIR — Excellent, thanks.

Ms MILLER — Peter and Trish, it is Elizabeth speaking. I notice that in your submission you have a section on the juvenile justice centres. Can you talk to us about the work that you do in those juvenile justice centres and the benefits of music to young people in those centres?

Ms HURLEY — Certainly. As you are aware, the detainees in juvenile justice centres across Australia come from very difficult circumstances, generally speaking, and Indigenous youth are very much overrepresented. They have mostly not had an opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument and consequently have not had the chance to discover any talents that they might have in that area. The benefits that we see, which are annotated over and over again by both the ACMF teacher and the principal of the school within the unit and by the unit supervisor, are that music in the centres is a way of re-engaging very disengaged, disenfranchised young people.
It can ultimately result in a pathway to employment. As they become interested they find out more about learning to play an instrument and also about music production, because we have laptops in some of the centres where they can look at music recording and the production of music, the sound recording. It fosters the development of a very positive life leisure choice which we hope they would continue once they leave the detention centre. We provide instruments for those detainees who show a particular aptitude and who are committed. It also provides positive male mentors, generally, for these young people who are not in a position of authority. They build up a very high level of trust and can relate to the ACMF teachers in a way that they cannot necessarily relate to their carers in that circumstance.

Ms MILLER — So do you see these programs as a way of re-engaging with them in order to engage them back into the community?

Ms HURLEY — Absolutely.

Mr HADFIELD — Yes. I think one of the things, anecdotally, that has tended to happen too is that it has removed the youth who are in the detention centres away from a negative gang mentality, if you like, and put them into a positive gang where they have a formed a music group or a choir or whatever it might be. That is having a very positive effect of getting them into a positive group environment where they have a common interest of playing music. We have had some wonderful support from the juvenile justice magistrates, particularly Hilary Hamam, who is now the Northern Territory Chief Magistrate. She has provided a glowing report on the effectiveness of the programs that ACMF has been conducting. She has really been instrumental in being able to develop our spread from just the one juvenile justice centre to all 20.

Ms HURLEY — It has also had an impact particularly for young women in detention, with regards to the level of self-harm. It has been found that in those who participate in a music program the self-harm has decreased. That is a very positive aspect of the program. Our aim with the juvenile justice centre program is to provide a post-release program for these young people. We are in discussion with the PCYC, particularly in Taree, which is in regional New South Wales; The Smith Family; St Vincent de Paul; and Mission Australia, to try to find somewhere that, once these young people have left, they can continue their music journey, and also so it can be in a very positive way that they can continue that.

Mr HADFIELD — One of the offshoots, too, has been an engagement in the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court program, where we are looking to get to children who are not in detention yet but are in the system and have been earmarked with potential problems. By instigating music programs with those children we are again having a positive impact and looking at trying to keep them out of the juvenile detention system.

Ms HURLEY — Can I just finish off on that one? What has happened in the high school programs, particularly in areas of great need — the ACMF programs are worked out and designed directly with the school for their particular focus. For example, in our Taree process, which now involves five schools and will probably be up to about 11 in the next year to 18 months, we are targeting young people at risk who have either come out of detention and back into the school system, or they might be specifically a Koori group that a principal has decided needs to be motivated to come to school, so we are providing a program for that. This is not to do with the JJS, but we are also providing music programs in high school for children in education support units who are physically and intellectually disabled. So it is quite a spread, and we are really targeting young people at risk at the high school level to try to prevent them from going into detention.

The CHAIR — Obviously you are doing a lot of work in the juvenile justice area. Specifically in terms of your program, can you point out for us how your program would differ in its approach to those of other external music providers like The Song Room and Musica Viva?

Ms HURLEY — I do not know all the specific details on their programs but our programs, once they have started in a centre, have not ceased. They have used professional musicians, who take with them, I guess, a sense of opportunity for employment after release. So they have been able to develop and tell the young people what it is like to work as a professional musician. We generally have programs with guitar,
which is what suits a lot of the young men in detention, but it can be across the board and they can use other instruments as well. It really does depend on what the centre identifies as their needs and how we can match in with what they want to do. I am not sure, unless you can give me some feedback, on their particular programs. Sometimes I think some of the programs are only for short periods of time.

**Mr HADFIELD** — Yes, I can comment on that. I talked to The Song Room representatives last week and primarily their programs have been short in term, on a six-month turnaround, with a big focus on primary schools. I think that is probably one of the major differences — we try to take a longer term program into the schools. We have, I guess, an impact from kindergarten right through to Year 12 and through the juvenile justice system. And the fact that we are using professional musicians, not necessarily teachers, is having a greater impact on the engagement with the kids who are involved in the programs, to have professional musicians who are absolutely passionate about improving the way of, or educating these young Australians. It is also having a positive impact on the musicians as well. It is helping to fund professional musicians, to keep them in the occupation that they have chosen as well, because it is pretty tough out there for musicians at the moment just to get sufficient work to make it a viable occupation.

**The CHAIR** — You have mentioned in your submission and also today that you do a lot of work with other not-for-profit groups in identifying schools to work with and on other collaborative efforts within the not-for-profit area and working with disadvantaged youth. That has obviously been a deliberate strategy of yours. Could you elaborate briefly about that?

**Ms HURLEY** — Essentially if we are able to find a like organisation or someone who is working in the area that we are also working in, obviously co-funding agreements are very helpful, and we have been very successful in doing that. But it does not necessarily mean that we need them to contribute funds. If they have other resources, say for example a studio or instruments that they can donate, we can then provide the teacher. So wherever possible we just find the best way to provide tuition and instruments to young people who need it.

**Mr HADFIELD** — We are looking at a collaborative approach. We have had two meetings so far — I have only been in one of them because I have only joined ACMF five weeks ago — and we are looking at a collaborative approach with The Song Room. We are working together with two schools in the Northern Territory. We are also looking at how we might be able to pool our resources. The Song Room may cross over all five of the curriculum areas in the new national arts curriculum. We have a specific drive in one of those areas. We are assisting them with the provision to fulfil the curriculum. I think one of the major, I guess, differences is the fact that we foster a fairly broad range of age groups, even in areas outside of the schools or juvenile justice centres. We are also working in hospitals. A problem we have at the moment is that we have a waiting list now of 200 schools around the country who want to participate in the ACMF programs, and we can only get to them when we are able to raise the funds.

**The CHAIR** — Sure.

**Mr CRISP** — I want to talk about partnerships, if I can, and the benefits of partnerships between schools and external music providers. We have looked at the juvenile advantages, but we are interested in how you go about those partnerships and the benefit you see in them.

**Mr HADFIELD** — The beauty of it is that what we are able to do is create greater participation in general community and school events. Part of the process of the conduct of the music lessons is that there is normally a performance element that is associated with that. One of the benefits of this partnership — not only does it create a great partnership between the Australian Children’s Music Foundation and the teacher and the students there but also the other teachers are being engaged, and then the parents of the children at that school are being engaged by being encouraged to attend performances by the children, and the general community is being engaged.

The Taree model Trish referred to beforehand is where — we are in consultation at the moment with about six or seven different community groups. We have the Police Citizens Youth Club. We have the TAFE
there and the local council there, and there are a number of other charity groups, one that is specifically for preschool children. Then we have the school groups from K–12, so right through the school spectrum, and then there is the juvenile justice program. So there is significant opportunity to create some long-lasting and productive partnerships.

Ms HURLEY — Peter, we also have the partnership with the Royal Australian Navy band. I am not sure whether that is relevant to your question. Also there is the Australian Chamber Orchestra. They visit the schools we have our teachers at and do performances. They also do masterclasses for the children. They now have a strings program for our inner city schools in Sydney who are mentored by members of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and we have a fledging rock band at Soldiers Settlement School in Matraville that is mentored by the Australian Navy band. We are hoping the New South Wales Police Band will become involved in that. They are also involved in our ACMF Connect program, which offers videoconference lessons for students and for teachers who are in remote areas. We have just started that this year, and it has already had enormous success. Does that help with that question?

Mr CRISP — Thank you.

Ms MILLER — In terms of specialist music teachers, what is your view on whether specialist music teachers or classroom teachers should be teaching music in primary schools?

Mr HADFIELD — I think the Queensland model is probably the perfect example, where you have somebody who has music training able to impart that knowledge. The benefits of having music in children’s lives have been pretty significant right across the board. It should not just be an add-on, it should be an integral part of the curriculum. It is really our view. On some of the figures that have come out of that — 75 per cent of primary schools not having a designated music teacher — from ACMF’s point of view they are not only missing out on the joy of music but then all of the benefits we have talked about beforehand about improvements in numeracy and literacy and self-esteem. As we said, there are a range of benefits that have been documented, both overseas and here in Australia. Not having specialist teachers is certainly — if we did not have to operate as an organisation, it would be wonderful if there were a specialist music teacher in every school in the country.

Ms HURLEY — It was actually Don Spencer’s dream. We would say that would be fantastic and that organisations like ACMF would not necessarily be required.

Mr HADFIELD — But in the shorter term we are more than happy to fill that gap.

Ms MILLER — Are you saying 75 per cent of the schools nationally do not have a specialist teacher?

Ms HURLEY — I think 70-ish per cent. I think it has been cited in the Song Room research that they may have music in the school but it may not be with a specialist music teacher, so that the generalist teachers may or may not, depending on the structure of their programs, involve the children in music.

The CHAIR — You have mentioned that you are trying to expand the program and you have further schools on a waiting list. Are your future plans fundraising, or friend raising? What are the main things you would like to see that your program gets to more kids?

Mr HADFIELD — Primarily the fundraising is the major component of that. Obviously we are getting some support from DEEWR, and support from the Northern Territory government. I know there are not any programs funded by the Victorian government at the moment. We would love to be able to change that. We believe there are a lot of holes that can be filled in government funding — federal, state and territory — across the country, because we cover such a wide variety of ministerial portfolios. Obviously we will maintain our approach to the non-government organisations. We continue to conduct events and concerts where we generate funds to keep our programs going.

We just had a board meeting last week and we have a strategic plan whereby we are looking to increase corporate engagement in our programs to almost create an adopt-a-school program whereby we can create our first engagement of the staff and the school programs so that we provide an HR benefit to the particular
organisation that is sponsoring. We are again looking at how we might continue to improve individual donations as well. It is really an across-the-board attack on fundraising. The unfortunate part is that if we are not able to do that, we are not able to expand the programs. We are currently generating $1.5 million a year to maintain our current program, so we have to at least have achieved that to maintain what we are doing. As I said, most of the programs are about $30 000 per school, so we have a short-term goal of a top 40 schools list. The maths just indicates the sorts of figures we are talking about to be able to expand the program.

The CHAIR — Excellent. We will have to leave it there, unfortunately, but thank you very much for appearing before the committee today and contributing with your submission. Good luck with the rest of the work that you continue to do.

Ms HURLEY — Thank you.

Mr HADFIELD — Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.