CORRECTION VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools
Melbourne — 15 April 2013

Members
Mr P. Crisp
Mr N. Elasmar
Ms E. Miller
Mr D. Southwick
Ms G. Tierney

Chair: Mr D. Southwick
Deputy Chair: Ms G. Tierney

Staff
Executive Officer: Ms K. Riseley
Research Officer: Ms A. Madden

Witnesses
Assoc. Prof. J. Southcott,
Dr P. de Vries, Senior Lecturer,
Dr L. Jenkins, Lecturer, and
Dr R. Crawford, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University.
The CHAIR — Welcome to our inquiry into music education. I do have to mention just a couple of things as part of the hearings of all committees. Your evidence today will be recorded by Hansard and you will have the opportunity to look at the transcript of that and make any corrections that need to be made to it. Your evidence is covered under parliamentary privilege, which is the same privilege as is afforded to members of Parliament. That applies to only the hearing proper, not to anything that is said outside these four walls.

Thank you for appearing and for your submission. We will throw it over to you for some opening comments and then we have a number of questions for you.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am delighted that three of my colleagues could join me. Another colleague apologises; she has had to go to teach in Singapore.

Just as a preamble, I suppose the first thing is that we are all totally committed to the notion that music should occur in primary schools, it should be good music, it should be well taught and it should be well taught by specialists, for various reasons which we can go into at greater length. Having given that preamble or statement, the other thing is that between us we have all taught primary, secondary and tertiary music education and in early childhood, too. So between the four of us there is a wealth of experience. I have already put into the written submission I have sent to you a range of some of the things we do. I omitted my colleague Peter’s research, a lot of which is into intergenerational music education and early childhood and primary as well.

I suppose there are a few things I would like to say to begin with, most of which I am sure you have heard repeatedly. The first thing is that music is the right of every child. It is how we carry our culture, it is how we carry our heritage, it is how we carry ourselves and our self-identity. Music is one of the intelligences, if you use the multiple intelligence theory of learning. It is a stand-alone intelligence; it is not verbal linguistics, it is not numeracy and so on. You are aware of that. It is not omittable; it is not something that can be left out for a year or two because the class teacher is not comfortable teaching music. We do not skip maths for a couple of years because the class teacher does not feel wonderful about maths; for some reason, though, we think it is appropriate to do this with music, which is one of the ways in which we all function. I think it is the right of every child to have a holistic music education and a holistic education in schools.

Music is also societally valuable. We mark all the rites of passage in our daily lives by music. Most of us have a playlist going on in our heads or at least that accompanies things. Music is evocative. Music is cultural, so for a multicultural state like Victoria — we are the most multicultural in Australia, I think, although Sydney will argue with that one — music is an essential way of being who we are and identifying with our groups and with our wider society.

Music answers all of the needs of a complete education in that it enhances the emotional, the intellectual and the psychological. There are all sorts of different ways in which music enhances the child and the child’s learning and developing, and I think we have chronicled that in our statement. Many people will have chronicled that to you, so there is any amount of evidence that you are welcome to find about how music is beneficial.

Regarding the longer term, I have just been reading *Music as a Natural Resource*, which has been put out by the United Nations. Has someone brought that one to your attention? It talks about multiple global case studies of how music is economically and socially essential in reinvigorating societies across the globe at all ages and so on. I can easily give you that reference. It is really good. I only just came across it, so I will send that through to Kerryn and Anita.

The CHAIR — That would be good. Thank you.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — That is the first thing: music just is, and it is essential. The second thing is, when we look at schools and also teacher education, which we will talk about more fully in a minute, music is not or does not appear to be essential. When one of my students, who recently completed a doctorate, and I went looking for a state school that has an excellent music program, it took us a very long time to find one. We found one that has a stunning music program. Music is taught throughout the
primary school by a music specialist who is employed for four days a week and teaches every child in the school. She is a fully registered teacher as well, and she is also a very good musician and music educator who is trained in primary and secondary. The principal, two principals ago, realised just what she could bring to the school, and she has been there now while the last two school principals have come and gone, so she is the fixture in the school. The school principal values her, and when you turn up in the school he says things like, ‘NAPLAN is essential, but music is even more important because these are the ways in which we enhance engagement by the children in their learning’. It is a magnificent school.

The CHAIR — Could you tell us which school it is?

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — Gladstone Park Primary School, which I cannot recommend highly enough if you wish to see a really good music program. The music teacher’s name is Rosalie Birney. I think that is about all you need to know.

Another school we found when looking for a school with a good multicultural music program — again we looked far and wide — was Footscray Primary School, which has a stunning music program purely by accident. An enterprising local community musician turned up wanting to rent the school hall for his after-school teaching. The school principal at the time said, ‘You can have it for free if you teach our music classes’. He is not a registered teacher, so the other teachers must always be in his classes with him. He runs a magnificent music program — not a conventional one, but a great music program. Peter will talk about Trafalgar as well.

Dr de VRIES — Trafalgar Primary School is a regional or rural school.

Mr CRISP — In Gippsland?

Dr de VRIES — It is in Gippsland; that is correct. The reason we focused on Trafalgar — this was with another colleague of mine down at the Gippsland campus of Monash — was that we wanted some examples. We were looking for examples of quality music education in primary schools outside of the metropolitan Melbourne area, and we were really only able to identify one school that fitted that brief. What we found in that school was that they were absolutely on board in terms of employing a full-time music specialist, even though the size of the school population is only high 300s. An incredible amount of money went into resourcing the music studio, the music room.

The school had been collecting data over a 12-month period on things like student engagement and student absences, and one of the telling things that came through the school data and the data that my colleague and I collected was that, on the days when children knew they had classroom music, attendance was up from around the 65 per cent mark on any other day to pretty close to 100 per cent, and the kids were telling their classroom teachers and the specialist, ‘We’re here because of music’. Music was making a significant difference in terms of engagement with the school. That is one example, and we published that. I am quite happy to forward that research paper to you.

The CHAIR — That would be good if you could do that.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — Part of our problem, as you see, is that when we go looking for examples of really effective school music programs in the state school system we have to look for a long time, and we find the unusual; we do not find the commonplace. What distresses us considerably is that we never find it to be consistent.

I will finish up. I have two more points to make. One is that part of this is related to the dwindling of the inclusion of music education in general primary teacher programs and the lack of ability to gain specialists to teach in primary schools. We — that is, Louise, Renee and I — have over many years taught secondary music educators, and they all have music degrees and so on. They are empowered by the VIT to teach right throughout primary schools, and quite a few of our graduates, although secondary trained, are primary music specialists. We always include primary music education within the secondary program on the assumption that these teachers might get jobs between two nearby primary schools and have what used to be called a connection — they will start a program where they teach in two schools — or might be
employed by the independent school system as well where the school is P–12, which is what happened to me, to Louise and to quite a few of us in our own teaching careers.

When I started teacher education, I remember that I had two hours a week for three years for the general people who came in, some of whom already loved music and had some skills, and they were fine. They were probably going to be okay anyway, but the rest of them who had little music after two hours a week for three years could all play the guitar, the recorder and the keyboard. They could plan a curriculum, they could sing and they could use music as the base of integrated arts programs if they wished to do so. They had long enough to develop their sense of self as musician, to develop their musical ears and to apply some skills. They were not all brilliant, but they were better than they were when they started, so I had enough time.

Over the course of my career I have seen it dwindle down to where we have half of one unit over the course of a four-year degree, and that unit is called ‘integrated’. Our problem is that you cannot integrate what you do not know. If they never get a chance to learn about music, particularly for people who have not been lucky enough to have a music education in their own lives, then they are in deep trouble. We will never improve the quality of school music education unless we improve the quality of school teacher education, particularly for generals and for secondaries. At the moment the only solution we can see is putting specialists in every school.

I suppose what we would like from this committee is a statement. With the dwindling amounts of music in pre-service primary teacher education, we need a strong statement arguing for the necessity of effective primary school music education that is sequential and taught by music specialists. We need that argument to be made. As we go through countless course designs and watch programs get whittled away, they go, ‘Music isn’t as important as other areas’. I am not arguing that we are more important, but I am saying that we are as important in the development of the whole child.

Ms MILLER — In terms of training for primary classroom teachers, submissions overwhelmingly argue that pre-service teacher training courses do not equip primary classroom teachers with the skills and confidence to deliver quality music education. There are two parts to the question. What is your view about the readiness of graduate teachers to deliver music education in primary schools, and what are the strategies you can suggest for improving the musical skills and confidence of pre-service primary school teachers?

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — If we are talking about generalists in particular, Peter, do you want to take this one?

Dr de VRIES — I can talk a little about the programs we currently have at Monash. I believe they reflect what is going on in generalist primary pre-service teacher education in general in that there has been a gradual erosion of time that is devoted to music education for generalist primary teachers. I can give you the example of our undergraduate four-year bachelor of primary education degree. We have until recently had an entire unit devoted to music education, which students have done in their first year of study. That is gone as of our new course.

What we have instead now is very much like other institutions, where we just have the one unit which is focused on teaching the Arts, often from an integrated perspective. Then if you unpack that, the 20 to 30 hours we have face-to-face with students, you are having to cover music, dance, drama, media and visual arts and also focus on integrating these areas, and you are left with maybe three or four hours devoted solely to music. As Jane was saying, how can we have these future teachers teaching music if they have only experienced four hours of music? This is unfortunately where teacher education programs are going — and it is not as if we are not advocating, believe you me. We are lucky, we have strength in numbers at Monash, but even so the dwindling of music — —

Ms MILLER — So what strategies do you think we could take on board to actually turn that around?

Dr de VRIES — I think there needs to be a very strong recommendation to deans of education that music be reinstated to where it was 10 years ago in terms of generalist primary training. There needs to be more hours devoted to music education.
Ms TIERNEY — In your view, how much time in the curriculum do you think schools should allocate to music on a weekly basis?

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — Two hours a week.

Ms TIERNEY — And the basis of that?

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — I am actually cutting it down from some of the most expert schools with music programs I have visited. I think in Hungary they have special music schools where the children do probably an hour of music every day. It is a selective school, but these children are incredibly advanced in terms of music and all their other subjects, and there is a lot of Hungarian research to support that. They do an hour a day. I know that would be unreasonable. I would like one hour a week and ideally two hours a week, but I know that is unrealistic. A lesson a week at least, just for music, not integrating it.

Ms TIERNEY — That is my next question. What do you think is the optimum balance in terms of music and other forms of the Arts?

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — Okay. This is where my colleagues in the other disciplines will crucify me, but that is fine. If I like Howard Gardner’s theory that we have different ways of being intelligent, there is numeracy, there is literacy — I am not arguing — there is music and there is visual literacy. There is also kinaesthetic, which is movement based, which can be dealt with by either dance or physical education. Drama education draws on a whole lot of other discipline areas which I think are catered for in the primary schools. If I am going to be really ruthless, I think music is the subject that must be taught. I think visual art should also be taught, so I would argue for an hour a week at least per child for each of those two disciplines.

Ms TIERNEY — We heard evidence earlier today that said exactly that, too.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — Good. It is not just me; there are two of us on the planet! My colleagues do not have to be responsible for that one. The silly thing is I had actually been trained for 10 years in a form of music education that uses the body as response called Dalcroze. That would also be a way if you wanted to put kinaesthetic in, but it is actually music education that uses both voice and body to respond to the music. It is not dance, it is a different understanding, but there are very few practitioners of that around anymore. That is sort of a dwindling method.

Dr CRAWFORD — Could I also just add something to Jane’s earlier comment?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Dr CRAWFORD — Just to give you some more evidence base, the education authorities acknowledge that music is actually mainstream and mandatory in countries with the highest PISA scores — the Programme for International Student Assessment testing — and that is children from Years 1 to 10. They are involved in a mandatory music program and have some of the highest reading, science and maths scores in the world. That is obviously of interest in what Jane was saying.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — There is evidence — any amount of it — to support everything. Thank you for that. That is very up-to-date evidence as well.

Mr CRISP — My question is around the training of instrumental music teachers. We are looking at the pros and cons of what training they should have, if they should have it and how you engage to make those specialists interested in being trained.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — My colleagues Louise and Renee have taken over teaching that part of the course — what we call methods teaching — particularly for those students we have who have come in as specialists. They would all be instrumentally expert. They all have a music degree or a major sequence in music from university, so it is a graduate program they come into. A lot of those teachers coming in to do the Grad. Dip. Ed. really would just like to be instrumental teachers in schools, but because of the VIT stipulations and what Neryl was talking about they must have a classroom qualification — the more general kind.
I cannot say how strongly I would advocate for that to remain the standard, because we often get people who have spent three years locked in a practice room with their instrument and for whom teaching more than one child at a time, or even teaching, becomes quite a challenging event. I think it is essential that instrumental teachers gain a broad sense of what education means — what is implicit in the notions of, as Neryl said, assessment. Those teachers will often be given Year 12 classes and Year 12 students to teach, and they must have a working knowledge of the curriculum. Louise, do you want to say something?

**Dr Jenkins** — I was just going to add that Monash actually does cater in terms of family commitments and other commitments that instrumental music teachers often already have. They are quite often older people with children and family commitments in that way, so we actually enable them to do the training — the teacher education — through our off-campus teacher training so they can do the work at home and they can engage with online materials that we provide and tutorial activities. They have access to all the work we do in on-campus classes, and they can engage with those but in their own time and in a flexible manner, apart from when they actually go out on practicum to the schools. So we do provide that opportunity for them to do that.

**Mr Crisp** — On a full-time-equivalent basis how long is your course?

**Assoc. Prof. Southcott** — The Grad. Dip. Ed. is a one year course. We are phasing that out and replacing it with a master of teaching, which I think is a one and a half year course full time but can be done part time while students are working in other capacities. A lot of teachers have in fact already been working in various schools. They are already instrumental teachers who need to upgrade, and they come back to us to do the courses. We have the most amazing musicians come through our courses in all styles and genres. I remember one guy turned up from America. He had two degrees from the Juilliard School. He is a world-class oboist and had been their concert manager. He had more than a sea change. He came to Australia to become, basically, a teacher in his 50s, and he had wanted to go and teach in disadvantaged schools in Frankston. He had a stunning transition into the ways of teaching, both in schools and wider groups, and he also maintained his instrumental practice.

We can all tell horror stories of the instrumental teacher we went to as a child — and I do not mean me; I was lucky and had a good one — but of strange people with rulers who hit children on the knuckles and so on. We like to think we actually, in the teacher education programs, educate our instrumentalists in how to be a more effective communicator of all of their musicianly skills and a more effective teacher, and I think it is actually valuable. Do you agree?

**Dr Crawford** — Yes, absolutely, but the other thing, too, is that instrumental is a completely different model of teaching and learning compared to a classroom. There are things instrumental teachers will not normally be in situations or environmental contexts to think about. I draw on an example of one of my students whom Louise and I have at the moment who is from the US Berkeley College. She is a very educated musician, classically trained, but has recently been put in a year 10 classroom to teach generalist guitar and has come back after a week, saying, ‘Please help. What do I do with these students?’ We were able to give her some high-level advice and debrief as a class and, obviously, advice from Louise and me as to how to handle music education in the classroom, which is clearly a different model of teaching. You are not one on one, and you are not necessarily teaching students who have picked or chosen music as an elective subject. That is a completely different model.

**Mr Crisp** — The casual instrumentalist that roves from place to place is where I see an issue, that they are not going to take on that sort of postgraduate — —

**Assoc. Prof. Southcott** — I think they should. The quality control — and I do not mean this unkindly — on the casual instrumentalist who wanders from school to school is where we can get a lot of problems, in that those people are not part of the wider life of the school. I understand the needs of schools in finding their staffing, but without a home base or without a wider sense of what is involved in education they can create more problems for other teachers. They may not behave appropriately with students. There are all sorts of reasons, and I have got all sorts of stories about why instrumental teachers should have a firm understanding of teacher education. I would recommend that the course take no longer than a year full time, but we have all been moving to a master of teaching model, which is a model of more than a year.
In the old days the Grad. Dip. Ed. that we did was fine, and it helped a lot of teachers transition. We were probably graduating 60 a year between the off-campus and the on-campus versions of those courses, and we were doing that probably for 15 to 20 years. I have taught that. There were places and there was the ability to change instrumental teachers over. I understand the needs of staffing and I understand the needs of a musician not to want to spend time out of a career doing that, but it is to their advantage to have a wider understanding of what education is all about, rather than replicating the model of instrumental instruction that they would have received themselves, and being in the position of understanding what a music education can be.

Also, often those teachers, if they show expertise in conducting, are then asked to take the school choir and the school orchestra, which is a large group of kids, so all the skills that they need for teaching classroom are replicated in conducting, because it is all about planning, presenting and evaluating an extended teaching episode. We consider that taking a large rehearsal is the same as taking a lesson. All the same thinking and reflection needs to go into it and the same quality of planning, expertise and know-how. The thought of having someone who is not qualified taking these large groups, often without other teachers in the room, can be problematic. Chaos can ensue; I have seen it ensue many times in many schools.

Ms TIERNEY — So I can be clear on this, are you advocating that an instrumental teacher-instructor without an undergraduate degree but who has a wealth of experience — a lifetime of experience — even on the international stage can now walk into, or potentially walk into, a masters one-and-a-half-year qualification without an undergraduate degree?

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — It would be very unusual if you do not have the undergraduate degree; however, it is possible to put in a portfolio. They are assessed on a person-by-person basis. If someone comes in with 30 years experience of choir, conducting, ensembles, doing PDs, teaching a broad curriculum, I think a case could be made. I do not know; I am not involved in that level of evaluation. However, in the past I was in charge of the masters programs, and we had people coming into a masters who did not have the prior qualifications necessary but could present a portfolio of life experience. For example, we had a very senior member of the police come in to do a master of education without an undergraduate degree, but a lifetime of upgrading his skills and training and undertaking research projects. He got a Fulbright scholarship and studied overseas, so he could present things that we could equate to an undergraduate degree. I do not know that we still do that for the teaching, because the problem is then we hit the VIT regulations. They are looking for a major sequence or an entire degree in the discipline that you wish to be a teacher of.

Ms TIERNEY — Do you think there is scope to explore, because we do have quite a tranche of people in this category, more of an RPL approach to an undergraduate degree qualification?

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — I would think there is scope to explore that, but we need to be very careful. The fact that this senior policeman had got the Fulbright and he had presented a research project — he had toured America looking at gang violence and strategies to deal with gang violence — having had that experience I could easily say as the person who was the gatekeeper at the university that he had met the requirements of all the knowledge, the lifetime experience and skills with all the things that he had done. I could equate that to an undergraduate degree. It is very different to, but I could say that there is the same amount of merit, rigour, depth and so on, but that would really need to be worked through very carefully, and we would need to be very careful about who was doing the scrutinising of the portfolios, the RPLs.

Ms TIERNEY — Absolutely.

Mr CRISP — Some submissions suggested that more singing programs need to be present in primary schools, and these programs could be delivered by a generalist classroom teacher provided they had received the necessary PD. Do you believe the idea has merit? What type of PD and learning and support would a generalist teacher need?

Dr JENKINS — The first thing I would like to say is that, as music teachers, we all believe very strongly in singing in primary school. One of the reasons is that we all have a voice; we can all sing. That
is particularly important in Victorian schools, because we have such a diverse community — culturally, racially, et cetera. In relation to schools in low socioeconomic areas, all those children in those schools can be involved in the singing program; it does not matter who they are or what sort of background they come from. Being involved in a singing program is developing their sense of belonging, being part of something in that school, that sense of achievement — singing in a classroom concert, singing in a school concert, going out and creating links with the community. You might go to the shopping centres and sing as a choir. You might go to the elderly citizens homes. There are all number of places you can go to as a school, so it is also providing links to the community. For all students it is providing a sense of achievement and a sense of belonging. It is that communication that comes with singing as well not only with each other but communicating with an audience and getting that reciprocity back from the audience in terms of the clapping and the appreciation of what they are doing. From that perspective, singing is particularly important. We are trying to develop the future citizens of tomorrow who feel that they belong to the community and they are going to be active citizens. If they have high social capital, a sense of belonging, trust in others, then singing should be part of that whole-child development to create that adult.

Singing can be done at any time. It is a very easy thing to do; you just need a DVD player, a piano or a guitar. It is incredibly accessible, it is very cheap, and for a lot of schools that is particularly important. They do not want something that is going to be very expensive in terms of having to buy a whole range of instruments. It is a communal activity that brings the whole school together and brings the class together.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — It also assists in the teaching of listening and hearing, which are advantages in languages education in all forms. If a child can learn to focus and listen, you have given them a gift for life.

The CHAIR — We are going to have to finish there, unfortunately.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — Can I just say one quick thing?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Assoc. Prof. SOUTHCOTT — There is no such thing as tone deaf. Otherwise the Chinese who speak a tonal language would have a significant group of the population who do not say a word. It is actually to do with our culture and the way we do not encourage singing and we do not encourage people to have confidence in their own personal voice.

The CHAIR — A great place to finish. Thank you very much for your submission, for appearing before the inquiry, but most importantly for your passion. Keep up the great work and good luck.

Witnesses withdrew.