EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE
Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools
Melbourne — 27 March 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
Mr K. Kelley, Executive Officer, and
Ms M. Stefanakis, member, Association of Music Educators (Victoria).
The CHAIR — Thanks for joining us. Welcome to this hearing of the Education Training Committee. We are inquiring into music in schools. I will cover off a few important things. Firstly, the evidence you give is protected by parliamentary privilege, which is the same privilege afforded to MPs, so say what you feel. That only applies to the hearing proper, not what you say outside of the hearing. You will have the opportunity to view a transcript of the hearing — Hansard is recording everything today — and if there are any typographical errors, they can be corrected. We will give you the opportunity to make a brief opening statement and then get into some questions.

Mr KELLEY — You are going to detect an accent, so I thought I had better explain a little bit about myself and why I am here. I do not know if you recall back in the 1970s there was a massive teacher shortage. There was a group called the Victorian Teacher Selection Service that operated out of California that trawled the teaching colleges of America and got us practically straight out of teaching rounds to come over here and fill much-needed vacancies. Well, I am one of those, and I am still here after 36 years.

Mr CRISP — I am old, because I can remember.

Mr KELLEY — I was brought over here, and my first appointment was to Moe High School, which is rather interesting. I ended up spending 13 years there developing a program from the ground up, from nothing. We began with singing and developed band instruments. It now runs as Lowanna College and has a fully functioning 7 to 12 — — It does all the VCE subjects. It is really thrilling to see that something that started in 1976 with the ABC Songbook has developed into such a great curriculum.

I spent a couple of years at Wangaratta. Interestingly enough, I replaced Helen Champion in her position there. Then it was my very great privilege to move to the Victorian Schools Music Association, also replacing Helen, who moved back to teaching after a period of three or four years in the role.

I spent quite a great deal of time in working with teacher professional learning, and that really is my area of expertise and why I am here today. A few years ago a colleague of mine asked me to step in at Trinity Grammar School to take the choir on a casual basis. I am now still there one day a week at Trinity Grammar School, and for this year only I am a replacement teacher at Melbourne High School in charge of all the singing activities that are going on there. It is a good mix to do teacher professional learning and to sort of jump back into the chalkface, so to speak, and actually see what is going on personally.

Anyway, my very quick statement! We first of all want to acknowledge the extensive work that has gone into these submissions. I printed off just a few of them, and I was overwhelmed with the amount of data, research and references that were in there. That certainly really helped me get my head about what I really wanted to say today to you in addition to what is in our submission.

The collective of community educators that I represent are really grateful for this rare opportunity. As I have said, I have been working in teacher professional learning for 20 years. We have never had this opportunity to come forward and speak to a parliamentary committee about something that we are really passionate about.

My association, the Association of Music Educators, is a not-for-profit organisation, and our members are drawn from all education sectors, from early childhood to tertiary. Our funding comes from a number of sources, mainly membership fees from the course fees of the professional learning programs that we offer and also from project grants. We are a participant in the strategic partnerships program with the department of education, and we receive an annual grant of $26 000 to run a small professional learning program there. Occasionally we receive money from the Music Council of Australia to provide professional learning support for the Music: Count Us In program.

Financial sustainability is always a difficult thing for not-for-profit organisations, and because of that we only had enough budget to employ one person, so we have split the job between myself and Sue Arney, our project officer, who is running a particular professional program at the moment. That has freed me up to go and do some teaching as well, so that is our current situation.
However, our core business is the provision of teacher professional learning, and one of our key concerns is of course the state of music provision in the primary school.

A current theme that I found that occurred throughout the submissions was the decline of the provision of music programs by specialist music teachers in the state of Victoria in the primary school. It is by and large delegated to the classroom teacher, often on an annual basis — for example, ‘This year you are going to be the music teacher, and here is the curriculum’. They go into it without training and without experience, and quite a bit of trepidation because of that. This is not the norm in our independent schools, who have fully developed P–6 music programs that feed into their senior schools, but in the government primary schools it is not the norm to have a developmental, comprehensive and sequential music education program from P–6.

Most schools cite budget issues as one of the reasons they have to divert their funds to other specialist areas, and teacher competency is the other reason that we have not seen music specialists and indeed implemented music curriculum programs in primary schools.

Dr Richard Letts, who is sitting behind me, in his submission has provided several strategic options for long-term cultural and systemic change to improve the quality and equity of provision of music programs, which I am sure he is going to speak about.

Because of this gap we have responded to this need for the development and implementation of a special professional learning program aimed at encouraging classroom teachers to sing regularly with their students. We felt that singing was the most accessible activity for all schools, because it does not cost anything to implement; it just needs a voice.

The 2005 National Review of School Music Education clearly identified singing as an essential skill and activity for all school students, so we launched the Singing Classroom program in 2012 as a pilot program. We ran 69 workshops, and these were presented by a team of three specialist teachers. We reached a total of 630 teachers, 375 pre-service teachers. We felt that by empowering generalist teachers with the skills, resources and, most importantly, the confidence to sing with the students, we were able to claim back some of the cultural losses encountered by the decline of music programs in primary schools.

We are happy to report that the Singing Classroom is being presented in 2013, and we are hoping to develop further levels. At this stage we can go out to schools and teach a teacher how to teach a song, and that is a real basic level of pedagogy; it does not have much more depth to that. We want to develop a little bit further so that it may eventually develop into quite complex pedagogy so that a full music curriculum can be delivered. At this stage it is not a long-term proposition; it is a short-term filling the gap that currently exists in the ability level and the confidence of primary generalist teachers.

I have a report here that has some excellent anecdotal evidence and responses from teachers that makes for very interesting reading. Quite a lot of them felt completely intimidated at the start of the workshops, but within an hour and a half felt quite confident to be able to go away, work on it for a week or so and then try to do this with their students.

Another issue which I have been foreshadowed to deal with is clarifying the technical changes to the VIT registration for instrumental teachers. That is a very complex and complicated issue, and I think I might leave that to your questions. I did not actually write anything here because it is such a long, convoluted story. I started to get twisted in my explanation and I just left it blank. I thought it would be better if I just explained it.

In our submission we made two recommendations. One was to try to find further resourcing with finances to deal with improved key professional learning across all levels but specifically at the primary school level, and the other one has been a 20-year-old dream of mine to unify all the existing disparate music associations into one working unit that can actually produce and deliver a coordinated and strategic professional learning approach across the entire calendar year. At this stage we sometimes work at odds with each other because we all have our own board of directors, our own calendars and our own goals and objectives, and we are not always working in synchronicity with each other.
The CHAIR — Excellent. I am going to pick up on that very last point you made. How would you go about actually bringing those groups together?

Mr KELLEY — That is a really difficult question because each one has their own historical and cultural reasons for being — for example, there is the Kodaly Music Education Institute of Australia, which uses a specific approach to teaching; the Orff Schulwerk Association, which uses a very holistic approach to music education; the Suzuki method; the more commercial Yamaha, which is not really an association but more of a product, and then all the different instruments have some kind of an association that represents them as well. Bringing them together would require a cultural shift in the way we think about ourselves as professionals and organisations and to be able to maybe subvert the organisations to become members of a bigger one that would look after the professional learning aspect while retaining their individual identities.

Ms STEFANAKIS — It is as though you need an administrator for everything but with the individual associations retaining their own philosophies because it will not work any other way.

Mr KELLEY — This discussion has been going on for 20 years and we have not come to an agreeable situation on how we can possibly do this.

The CHAIR — You mentioned earlier the problem with the gaps and the registration element, which you had not elaborated on. Do you think that having an organisation or someone who administers teaching and learning that is accredited and has a more consistent standardised approach could be something that could be done within this group or that needs to be done anyway? What approach would you prefer?

Mr KELLEY — I think both of what you said. It could be done and I think it actually needs to be done. It would be entirely possible to have discussions with VIT to establish teacher-training courses for instrumental teachers, in conjunction with universities, to get these instrumental teachers qualified on paper. I am not saying they are not qualified in reality for what they can actually deliver, but according to VIT they do not have the correct documentation in order to be a fully qualified teacher in the state of Victoria.

The CHAIR — Are there any other gaps in terms of professional learning activities available to teachers in Victoria that you would like to mention?

Mr KELLEY — I guess the gaps are caused by whether there is a professional learning budget available to the teachers. There is lots of provision; there are loads and loads of different things that teachers can go to. We run a huge range of professional learning activities for teachers, as do all the other organisations. It is whether or not the teachers have to fund it themselves or whether there is money available in the school budget for them to be able to attend things. A lot of times teachers will say to me, ‘This is the only one I can come to this year, and I’m so glad I came to this one because it was really worthwhile’.

Ms STEFANAKIS — Access is the other thing too, I think, particularly for regional areas. In the good old days in the 70s there were budgets available for people to travel and things. That is not as prevalent now as it was, although there are still lots of people attending regional workshops, for example, the song project, where people go out into the regions, which is really good. But that is where the whole notion of online delivery of professional development becomes really important, and, as Helen mentioned, as the technology gets better that will become more realistic.

Mr KELLEY — If I could just follow up on that, we are actually experimenting with online delivery via the Polycom system, which is in a lot of the government schools. The practical issue that we are grappling with is that when you are doing activities where you have the presenter at one end and the group at the other there is a time lag of about one musical pulse. It takes a little bit of manipulation of the mute button — back and forth at each end — to make sure that we are only hearing one thing at a time. You can imagine if the leader is singing, wanting the group to follow, it takes a pulse to get there. They are singing the same thing and they think it is in the same time, but by the time it gets back to us it is actually so far out of time that it gets very frustrating. We are grappling with those sorts of issues; they are not
insurmountable. We are pleased that the technology is there and that there are so many of these units in the
government schools that we can use. Teachers can come together collectively in a room like this and
participate in a professional learning program without having to leave their own schools.

Ms TIERNEY — Are you happy with the way funding for instrumental music is allocated to schools?
If not, what would you suggest in terms of changes to the current model?

Mr KELLEY — That is not really our area. I do know a little bit just from my two teaching positions
about how it is actually allocated. I think at this stage it is a sufficient amount of money but I certainly
would not want to see it reduced in any way whatsoever. The issue is that although instrumental teaching is
considered co-curricular for the greatest part, there is a point along the continuum where the instrumental
music teacher starts delivering curriculum. For example, if you are going to do VCE music on a flute, all of
the preparation by the flute teacher leading up to year 11 is leading towards that curriculum. A student
cannot do VCE performance just by participating in classroom music. They have to come in with
significant instrumental skills in order to be able to deal with solo performance. That is not so much the
case if they choose the group performance option; there is the possibility that they can get through that
way.

There is a point where instrumental teachers are actually delivering that curriculum, and certainly once
they are taking and instructing VCE students they definitely are delivering the set curriculum of VCE. I do
not know if I answered your question accurately enough.

Ms TIERNEY — You have made mention of the fact that you do not want it cut, but in terms of the
model as it stands at the moment — —

Mr KELLEY — The way it runs in the government schools?

Ms TIERNEY — Yes.

Mr KELLEY — As I said, I am not completely clear about how that is actually organised. I know a
certain amount of money is allocated to each school and it is up to them to decide how they want to spend
it. I would probably leave that question for one of my colleagues behind me who actually is one of the
instrumental teachers.

Ms TIERNEY — Sure.

Ms MILLER — A number of submissions note that specialist music teachers can feel professionally
isolated within schools. What strategies can you suggest to address the issue?

Mr KELLEY — I know this because from personal experience it can be a devastating experience to be
the only person in a school, and sometimes in an entire region. Quite recently we held our annual VCE
conference at the college of the arts and there was a new teacher to Victoria; she has just moved here. I
think she has just moved here recently from India, and she has been sent to Rainbow. She is there all on
her own and is feeling completely on her own — virtually on an island. She teaches at Rainbow and also
teaches at Boort; I think that might be the other school where she teaches.

Mr CRISP — That is a fair drive.

Mr KELLEY — She teaches at two of them. She has accommodation in both places. For her, coming
down to Melbourne to this conference put her in contact with about 200 other teachers of VCE music. We
have an established mentor program for VCE teachers, so that if there is a new teacher who has never
taught VCE before, they can get in touch with someone who is highly experienced. They meet at the
conference, they develop a professional relationship and they keep that mentoring going through the whole
year. For this particular teacher that was the strategy we employed to alleviate the feeling of isolation.
Nothing is going to stop the fact that she is living in Rainbow, but she now has a professional connection
through our association, through our electronic communication and through the mentor that she has set up.
She does not feel quite as isolated as she did before.
Ms Miller — What about teleconferencing? Would that facilitate this particular woman?

Mr Kelley — Yes, we are going to establish a regular fortnightly Polycom discussion between my colleagues on the committee and this teacher in Rainbow — some face-to-face contact, rather than just on the telephone, to be able to see who you are talking to. It is really wonderful technology for that sort of thing. As I said, we are still grappling with the time issue of actually performing music on it, but for teleconferences it is a superb way of keeping teachers in the loop and connected.

The Chair — That links a bit into your question, Mr Crisp.

Mr Crisp — It does, and we have already talked a little about this. I will put the question to either of you. You said that you have 85 teachers on staff. What I am interested in is how you came to have that number of staff, and how you work that through with teacher registration requirements when you have that number of staff who are moving around. Are there views about how you get music teachers registered, particularly those working in specialist instrumental areas?

Mr Kelley — If an instrumental teacher has a music degree and a teaching qualification, that is the easy part. They go straight through and they are registered, and they get into the pay structure within the department. That is the easiest part. It is when the instrumental teachers have a tertiary qualification in music and no teaching qualification, or some historical teachers who have performance experience but no tertiary music qualification and no teaching qualification. That is where it gets really complicated into getting them registered. At this stage, according to the institute of teaching, instrumental teaching is not curriculum and therefore it is not teaching; it is called ‘instruction’. Therefore instrumental teachers who do not have a qualification are not required to have VIT registration; they just simply have to have a working-with-children check.

Ms Stefanakis — But I think with independent schools, if the independent school decides that that is acceptable, then they can employ people. But my understanding is that if a position is advertised in a government school, it is incumbent upon the school to accept someone who has VIT registration over someone who has not, despite their level of experience or whatever.

Mr Crisp — Are you comfortable with those arrangements?

Mr Kelley — No.

Ms Stefanakis — No.

Mr Crisp — Your suggestions are?

Mr Kelley — My suggestions are that I think we need to sit down with VIT further and have a good long talk with all of the stakeholders about how this can best work. Because we realise it is an act of Parliament. We cannot get away from that; that is just the way it is. We have to make it works. We had one discussion with VIT last year, and my colleague Sue Arney has just met with Don Paproth yesterday to further discuss the issue of instrumental teachers. She is going to report the outcomes of that discussion at our next committee meeting. It is an ongoing issue. There is no clear-cut solution, because the work force is so rare and varied.

Ms Stefanakis — There are people who are teaching instruments in tertiary sectors who cannot get VIT registration because they do not have education qualifications.

Mr Crisp — It is a problem. I am from the country and we see that, that someone who obviously has a lifetime of being a skilled instrumentalist has some time, and schools want to engage them to assist. It can be a challenge.

Mr Kelley — And they can engage them. It is just the whole issue of registration, which has follow-on effects — about their pay rate and their status in the school amongst the other teachers. It has all
those sorts of professional implications of ‘I’m a teacher; you are not a teacher’. It can create some divides. That is one of the issues.

**Mr CRISP** — That has come through your professional contact?

**Mr KELLEY** — Yes, I will leave this behind. There is a spreadsheet of some comments gathered from teachers last year. I am sorry that the printing is very, very small, but you can read through some of their comments about the way they are feeling about the current situation. The situation previously was that they were granted a registration with what is called ‘permission to teach’, which is now gradually being phased out. It is being replaced with ‘You are not required to have teacher registration’.

**The CHAIR** — Nazih, I know you have a question about The Singing Classroom.

**Mr ELASMAR** — It does not mean I have got a nice voice! Could you describe how your association’s program, The Singing Classroom, improves the confidence and skills of primary classroom teachers to deliver music education?

**Mr KELLEY** — Just by practical means. The three teachers in the team that we have running this are highly skilled presenters and musicians themselves, and highly infectious individuals. That is why they have been chosen to do this; they are great motivators in themselves. The activities in The Singing Classroom get them going straightaway — for example, one of the first activities that Sue Arney does is that she has little pots with song titles on them and she gets everyone to draw one, depending on the size of the group. She tells them, ‘Start singing the song that’s on your sheet of paper until you find the same person who is actually singing that song’. So they begin singing in the workshop automatically without actually being told to.

Everything in these workshops is of a practical nature. So they are feeling confident about their voices. That is a really huge stumbling block, getting teachers to stand up in front of their classes and actually get out of their teaching voice and turn on their singing voice. It is a huge hurdle for them to get over. These are the activities that we provide in The Singing Classroom. I would not say that it solves it overnight, but it certainly helps them move in the direction of becoming more confident and to actually deliver some activities.

**Ms STEFANAKIS** — As Kevin said before, by the end of a session students have learnt to sing a song. It is not an entire way of being able to deliver the music curriculum in any way, shape or form, but it is an in; it is a starting point.

**The CHAIR** — How common is it, from your understanding, for state government primary schools to employ specialist teachers in programs?

**Mr KELLEY** — This would not be very accurate, but I would say about 1 in 10 would have a specialist. As Helen said earlier, we do not have the data on that; we do not really know. It changes from year to year, particularly if music specialists go off on maternity leave or long service leave. Oftentimes they are not replaced, and that curriculum is taken up in some other form within the school. So it is really hard to keep track of all that data.

**The CHAIR** — Just extending on from Peter’s earlier question about technology, do you think — and I am not saying instead of — a bridge might be to use technology to be able to put some of these specialist teachers in a collaborative environment with kids in schools, through online — —

**Mr KELLEY** — Entirely possible; yes, completely.

**Ms STEFANAKIS** — I think one of the things that people do not think about — and I trained as a secondary music specialist and ended up in the primary system — is that a lot of specialists are of that ilk. They actually started off or trained in secondary schools and went into primary schools, because there is not a lot of specialist training for educators in tertiary institutions. It is a big problem. So there is still not the recognition that you need to equip classroom teachers not only with the skills to feel comfortable with
the whole discipline of music, which is a language unto itself, but also with the pedagogical approaches to
teaching it.

I think someone previously mentioned, ‘I am a teacher, so my problem is only not understanding music; it
is not actually implementing a music program because I know how to teach’. But the reality is that
teaching music requires very different pedagogical approaches from that of teaching English or teaching
maths. There are those two things that need to be covered. It really is, for a lot of people, starting at the
base level of not feeling confident, not only with music; they might play a musical instrument to a degree,
but that does not make them feel confident about how they can deliver a developmental music program in
a classroom.

**The CHAIR** — We might leave it there. Is there anything that we have not covered that you want to
briefly mention?

**Mr KELLEY** — No, I think we have covered just about everything.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much for coming and presenting to the inquiry and also contributing to
your submission. It has been excellent.

**Mr KELLEY** — Thank you so much. We look forward to the outcomes.

**Witnesses withdrew.**