EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE
Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools
Melbourne — 27 March 2013

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Witnesses
Dr J. Haskell, President, and
Mr M. Dipnall, Vice-President, Victorian Music Teachers Association.
The CHAIR — Welcome. There are a couple of things to point out. Hansard is recording the evidence being provided today. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript and correct any typographical errors. I also mention that the evidence you give today is covered by parliamentary privilege, which is the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament, so feel free to speak your mind. However, that does not apply to anything that is said outside of the hearing itself. We will give you the opportunity to make a brief opening statement and will then go to questions and answers.

Mr DIPNALL — May I give copies of the opening statement to the committee? There are five copies of two pages.

The CHAIR — Yes, you can. You do not necessarily have to read it all because we will make sure that it all goes in, so if there are just a couple of key things that you want to point out, there will be more time for questions and answers.

Mr DIPNALL — Sure. This is the Victorian Music Teachers Association statement for the parliamentary inquiry and hearing into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools. The hearing is on 27 March 2013 at 55 St Andrews Place, Melbourne. This statement is made by Mark Dipnall, vice-president, VMTA; a former full-time principal musician with Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet and presently a full-time music teacher of 28 years for the Victorian government’s Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

My educational credentials in work experience, including my appointment as treasurer for the Australian Society for Music Education, are complemented by being the possessor of a graduate degree in music performance, a graduate diploma in education and two masters degrees, one in music performance and the other in educational research.

The Victorian Music Teachers Association, as an integral body of professional and collegiate music educators, welcomes this opportunity to attend and respond to the parliamentary inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools. The VMTA, established in 1928, represents a membership of 850 music educators engaged within the school and private studio settings. The membership engages in music pedagogy within the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of government schooling. The association has strict controls upon the registration and admission to membership categories, with full registration being granted to qualified graduates in music practice or music education and who have been nominated appropriately.

As such the VMTA is vitally concerned with the status of music teachers in Victoria. The VMTA strongly advises that music teachers are to be highly valued within the pedagogical circles of Victorian schools. VMTA teachers spend many years in graduate and postgraduate studies embracing music degrees in bachelors, masters and PhD research. VMTA teachers are specialist teachers imparting specialist knowledge embracing instrumental and multi-instrumental instruction, performance practice and appreciation, classroom curricula, research, musicology, special needs, ensemble direction, community involvement, career choices, adjudication, assessment, IT application, professional development, teacher mentoring and school music direction in policy and administration.

The CHAIR — I am going to cut you short there, because I can make sure that everything you have got right there will form part of the official record. It will give us more opportunity to spend time on other things. Everything that you said in your opening statement will be included. Thank you very much for that.

Mr DIPNALL — My pleasure.

The CHAIR — I am going to ask the first question. According to your experience, do you think there are enough instrumental music teachers available to meet the demand from schools? If not, which types of schools and regions are most affected by the shortage?

Mr DIPNALL — I have chosen to answer this question, in consultation with Dr Haskell. I believe there are not enough music teachers in Victoria simply because there is a very high demand for an exclusive product. The product comes from the educational training and we have limited numbers of
people who actually want to become highly proficient music educators. We have another core people who are experienced in music performance, but not necessarily experienced in the music education side of it. But, even with those two strains, there probably are not enough people available for the demand from all the schools in the state of Victoria. What is happening is that you are getting an imbalance of music teacher allocation between several schools. From what I understand, there are only four or five schools in Victoria which allocate a piano teacher through the DEECD. There is no allocation other than five schools in Victoria that have a piano teacher sent to them.

Some schools only have rock musicians being sent there, and some schools have brass, wind, singing, violin and the whole lot. The curiosity is why some schools have a very strong supply of music teachers and others do not have a very strong supply. It seems to be based around the budget that they are given to operate their program. If they are given a large budget that they can substantiate in their performance then they can employ more music teachers, but from my understanding there are not enough music teachers in Victoria.

The CHAIR — Are there any particular regions or areas that you think are affected more?

Mr DIPNALL — I would tend to think the rural areas, without specifying the regions. As I understand it, the regions have been put into four regions now and each region would comprise a rural area. From my understanding there is not enough supply of music teachers in the rural areas. The curiosity is, even in the urban areas, some schools do not have music programs at all. Why is that the case? It seems to be partly based on the whim of the ruling authorities in that school, as to what they really want. It is an exclusive resource that needs to be managed in a fairly exclusive way.

Ms TIERNEY — We understand your organisation sets the recommended rate for instrumental teachers; is that correct?

Dr HASKELL — Yes, we do have a recommended minimum rate. A lot of private schools follow our minimum rate. Government schools tend not to, for different reasons. I have read in one of the submissions that Nossal High School principal apologised for only offering $55 an hour, instead of our minimum $63 an hour. There are, anecdotally, schools that pay a lot less than that.

Even our minimum rate is really based on the lowest rates, so experienced teachers with many years of experience are usually not offered a rise in pay as an instrumental teacher, if we are talking about contract or itinerant teachers, which is a shame. On top of that, a lot of schools charge them for using the premises, electricity and cleaning, and do not give them things like superannuation. Teachers will turn up to teach and find that students have not turned up. They have given their time, travelled, and then are supposed to give that lesson at another time. There is a lot that is not good in instrumental teaching, which is maybe also one of the reasons why there are not enough teachers because good teachers are not really prepared to teach in those circumstances.

Ms TIERNEY — In terms of hitting on the dot points, what are the key differences between an instrumental music teacher and a teacher employed by the department in terms of benefits?

Dr HASKELL — Benefits as in?

Ms TIERNEY — Rates, conditions ——

Dr HASKELL — A classroom teacher will generally be paid an ongoing salary, whereas an instrumental teacher is often just employed. They will be told in February, ‘You have six students this year. Oh no, there are eight. No, three have cancelled’, and then after six weeks, ‘They don’t really like playing, so you actually only have two’. There is no real contract or ongoing security, apart from anything else.

Ms TIERNEY — So is there an actual contract that is signed, or are they employed on a casual basis? Are they employed to teach on an annual basis or for a term?
Dr HASKELL — It varies totally from school to school. A lot of schools, especially primary schools, get teachers in, the teacher arranges the whole thing, and they are just allowed to teach in the school premises. Other schools subsidise it a bit and therefore have more control over it.

Ms TIERNEY — It is not properly regulated?

Dr HASKELL — It is not regulated at all, no.

Mr ELASMAR — In terms of government funding, are you happy with how the government funding for the instrumental music program is currently allocated between high schools? Are there any changes that you would like to see made to the current model?

Dr HASKELL — That is probably more your expertise.

Mr DIPNALL — As I said earlier, there seems to be an anomaly in terms of funding from one school to another. I have heard of cases of schools that have a managing budget of $1 million. In contrast there will be another school that has a managing budget of $1000. There are extreme anomalies between the budgets that are given to schools to manage their programs. It causes some resentment from one school to the other when they know that one school is getting largesse and another is not getting largesse.

I do not really know why this occurs. But I understand that the regions try to substantiate the budget from performance indicators. If a school returns good performance indicators, that will substantiate regional confidence in that school, and therefore I would assume the global budget that is directed towards that school would be greater. That is the best answer I can give.

Ms MILLER — I have two questions. The first is in relation to comments about budgets made in your submission and earlier today. When funding is allocated to a school, is it the principal who is actually responsible for allocating that funding? For example, if the school does not have a musical component to their curriculum, is that because they have chosen to allocate those funds to technology, computers and things like that?

Mr DIPNALL — That is right.

Ms MILLER — Following on from that, the committee understands that most instrumental music teachers teach across multiple schools but are assigned to a base school. Is your association happy with this system, and are there any changes you would recommend?

Dr HASKELL — It seems to be a rather good model to have a cluster of schools where the teachers are teaching in different schools, given that a lot of instrumental teaching will be a teacher teaching only a couple of instruments, so they cannot be based at one school full time. That model seems to work quite well, but it is obviously not employed throughout the whole state.

Ms MILLER — Do the teachers who are educated today, as opposed to the teachers who trained years ago in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, have more of an understanding of the importance of music in the curriculum?

Dr HASKELL — I think it is the other way around.

Ms MILLER — Do you?

Dr HASKELL — It would be interesting to research all of this and see the history of music in the state over the last 100-plus years. There have been these waves of school music. It has gradually diminished, then it has come up again and then it has diminished. I think we are in a time where there is too much that needs to happen. Looking even at what primary school teachers have to teach, they have to be able to teach everything. The curriculum has got bigger and bigger, and music is more and more being found to be a peripheral thing.
Dr HASKELL — Yes.

Ms MILLER — If the teachers who were trained, say, in the 1970s appreciate that more, is that the age group that today the principals of the primary schools predominantly belong to, or are the principals the younger ones? I am just trying to identify where the gap is or if there is a generation where there is a lack of knowledge of or insight into the implications and benefits that music can have.

Dr HASKELL — That is a good point. Certainly people from our organisation are not so much there. I know Mark is more in a school. I am actually new to the department of education. I have been an instrumental teacher. I have taught in private schools and in universities but not so much in state schools. I now teach at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School.

Ms MILLER — If you cannot answer, that is fine.

Dr HASKELL — No, that is probably a bit beyond me.

Mr DIPNALL — Could I add to Julie’s comments? My perception of the base school is that it is a good system for administration. I do not believe it is actually a good system for the educational administration of music teachers. It is a good system for the resourcing of the payment, the salaries and the management, but in terms of education I do not think it is a good system. In some cases you will have a person who has a school where they are based, but they will actually be teaching in three regions — the southern region, the eastern region and the northern region. In educational terms you are travelling huge distances from one school to another, yet you are being administered from a base school. The base school model is good in terms of administration but not necessarily music education.

Julie referred to clusters. In fact the notion of a cluster is not very apparent in Victoria. It is more apparent in Western Australia, Queensland and to some extent New South Wales, but a cluster network is essentially a base school with what we call feeder schools — primary schools and other participating secondary colleges. I do not believe that network is particularly in the structure in Victoria at all. There are some schools that have identified that as a very manageable way of creating a strong music program, but a lot of secondary colleges are not working cohesively with a feeder primary school network music program.

The CHAIR — Do you think that model would work better if it was implemented properly through the system as opposed to what is currently happening?

Mr DIPNALL — I believe so. I would argue very strongly for that. It makes a lot of sense to me educationally.

Mr CRISP — I would like to take us back to talk about teacher registration requirements. Do you have any concerns about how the current teacher registration requirements are applied to instrumental music teachers?

Dr HASKELL — I do.

Mr CRISP — I can see that Julie wants to talk about this.

Dr HASKELL — I can give you my personal experience on this one and certainly from the Victorian Music Teachers Association members coming to us with a problem. Instrumental teachers are different to music classroom teachers. You are talking about two totally different things. The current requirement is to be registered with VIT. It was brought in a couple of years ago that instrumental teachers had to have that registration. It was a pain for everybody to actually do it, and then it was dropped again. There are two aspects to this. One aspect is that the schools often now consider that instrumental teachers, if they do not have to be registered with VIT, are not even teachers, so they can pay instrumental teachers even less. That is one side.

The other side of it is actually getting VIT registration, and I have personal experience in this. I have a Ph.D. in music. I have an international career in performing. I have taught at the tertiary level, at the school
level, in private schools — everything. Last year I was employed by the Victorian College of the Arts secondary school. The school has a lot of specialist teachers in dance as well as music, and a lot of us have not done classroom education, Dip. Eds and things like that.

And I had great difficulty. I was teaching there for three months before I got my VIT permission to teach, in which time I could not even be paid but they needed me. I was then offered it for three months until December. It expired before my contract even expired. They had to advertise again because that was a contract. They wanted to take me on ongoing, but I had to get VIT registration again. With great difficulty I got that again. I am concerned now that next time they give it to me for three years I will have to go and get the Dip. Ed., or by then I might not be able to teach in a position that I am totally qualified to teach in.

I am not doing classroom. I am working within my skills of teaching piano accompanying chamber music, and there are a lot of instrumental teachers like that who have this problem. Mine is even worse. It is quite comical really. Everyone in my situation just laughs when I tell them. I cannot even do a Dip. Ed. at this stage. My musical training is typical of 30 years ago. I studied a bit at Melbourne University, I went overseas, I studied in conservatoriums in Europe, did performing training, had a performing career but never got a piece of paper because it was not relevant at that time. Then later on, actually several years ago, I thought I would get a more formal qualification in Australia. I applied to do a masters. On the grounds that I was teaching masters students and my professional experience, I was let into that and converted it to a PhD, but I cannot get into a Dip. Ed. course because I do not have a bachelor of music.

I have spent several months trying to get some sort of bachelor of music quickly, and I have finally found one institution — only one in Australia — where I could actually do it without living there and attending a whole lot of things. I can teach every subject in it, but I have to go and do a year and pay thousands of dollars and spend lots of time to get a bachelor of music so I can then go and do a Dip. Ed. No wonder a lot of good musicians and music teachers would not bother with all that. It is just that I love the job where I am working and I want to continue to do that, so I am prepared to do it, but it just seems ridiculous to me.

The CHAIR — Where is it?

Mr CRISP — Yes, that was my question.

Dr HASKELL — Where am I doing that?

The CHAIR — Yes, where is the bachelor of music?

Mr CRISP — Which institution?

Dr HASKELL — It is a small one that is called the Australian Guild of Music Education. I only came across it because in my role as Victorian Music Teachers Association President we have to accredit teachers with degrees and give them accreditation. This one came up a couple of times and we did not know much about it, so I looked into it in December and I saw that they will allow performing diplomas and give credit for things like that. No other institution would do it. Back 30 years ago European conservatoriums did not offer you a statement saying what subjects you had done, so I could not get credit for a single subject.

Mr CRISP — Which state was it in?

Dr HASKELL — In Melbourne. It is just a small institution. I think they are onto a good thing.

The CHAIR — Just in terms of music programs, your views on these programs — whether they should be beginning in primary schools, and if so when?

Dr HASKELL — We have both been discussing this. My personal opinion is that first of all the greatest instrumental study for students, young ones, is singing. I do not think there is enough of that happening in primary school. A lot of you probably remember the ABC programs on the radio, things like that. Children just do not sing anymore. I examined the AMEB. Kids come in and they cannot pitch a note.
There is no singing happening in the families, and there is not enough in the schools. In general classroom music, whether it is just in the class or with a specialist teacher, I think that is where it should start — a lot more singing, and then the instrumental classes can maybe start from about Year 4 or so.

Younger than that, of course there are a lot of young children who play violin and piano at a younger age, but there is probably not a place for that in school. You need parental guidance and things like that. But definitely from Year 4 onwards, and even starting with things like recorder is a good start to lead in to wind instruments and brass instruments.

**Mr DIPNALL** — I will just quickly add that we are in agreement that we would like to see music teaching become more of what we call a core subject in schools — less of an elective subject and more of a core requirement, where you are identifying that one of the main curriculum subjects is music education, starting in year 4 to year 10. We would like to see that as an essential core subject. We feel that that would then solve a lot of problems with staffing, teacher training and quality of music and also be a very good feeder to the tertiary sector.

**Ms TIERNEY** — Do you think parents should make a contribution to instrumental music education?

**Dr HASKELL** — Yes, I do not have a problem with that, although I must say I heard the previous people saying that there are some parents who just cannot afford that. Maybe there can be ways of funding that. But I think sometimes that if some money is paid towards it, it becomes more important — that it is not just free, but they are putting something in. And it is expensive. One-on-one or even small groups of instrumental training is costly.

**Mr DIPNALL** — I support that statement. If you have a student and a teacher and parent involved in the music education, you are going to get a good result. Part of the commitment often comes by providing some remuneration towards the expenses. When it is totally free it is my experience that there is no commitment to the program, but when there is some monetary value attached there is a lot more commitment and respect for the subject.

**Dr HASKELL** — If you try to make it too cheap by putting it in groups, then you tend to lose the quality of the teaching.

**The CHAIR** — We had Kevin from the Association of Music Educators today. He said that all of the various groups should unite under one association in some way. It has been a plan of his for many years to do that. What are your views on that?

**Dr HASKELL** — These things would all be nice, except that we all have slightly different agendas.

**The CHAIR** — Or potentially a peak body that brings together the — —

**Dr HASKELL** — Yes, I imagine that that would be a good idea. I have been trying with the other states also for all our state ones to have a body. But there are always difficulties, especially when they are all voluntary organisations anyway.

**The CHAIR** — Yes, sure.

**Mr DIPNALL** — My perception is that the organisation, the peak body, should be done through government — that we have a separate department that delegates the export of music teachers, where they go, the funding et cetera. It is a peak body that is solely devoted to the teaching of music. We used to have something like that in the DEECD. We did have a central administration operating centrally for the allocation of music teaching, but it has disappeared and become a regional resource. I think it should become more a central resource.

**Ms MILLER** — Do teachers have to have an annual accreditation?

**Dr HASKELL** — No.
Ms MILLER — Just from hearing what you are saying, I may have missed it, but it seems to me that teaching is sort of going through this transformation, and it is like what nursing did. I have a nursing background. We had hospital trained versus institutionally trained, and if you had a hospital versus a university trained, the university-trained nurse with the piece of paper, or the academic if you will, would actually get that job. Obviously I have a degree, but I went back and did a masters. When I was doing that the nurse unit managers, in order to have their job, had to have a masters. Some after that would then work towards a PhD. I just wondered if, in a way, when we talk about musical specialists versus generalists and improving the curriculum for the primary school kids, that is where things are going.

Dr HASKELL — If you are talking about instrumental teachers, is your question with them?

Ms MILLER — Yes.

Dr HASKELL — With instrumental teachers, when they had to be registered with VIT, yes, they did have to do PD training every year. Now there is no requirement. Our organisation, one of the things we do is we offer PD training because there are very few other places, like universities and training courses, for instrumental teachers to get accreditation. There are not really the facilities for that. There are for classroom teachers but not for instrumental teachers.

Ms MILLER — If there were facilities, do you think that would change the situation?

Dr HASKELL — It probably would if there were easier things. But bodies like ourselves do offer different training. Things like Suzuki association, Dalcroze association, Kodaly association — they all have them and a lot of teachers do them, but it is not mandatory. To stay as a Suzuki teacher, for instance, yes, you do have to do training every year, but that has nothing to do with teaching in a school.

The CHAIR — Is there anything else that you wanted to say that has not already been covered?

Dr HASKELL — I do not think so.

Mr DIPNALL — I believe we have made a good case —

The CHAIR — I think you have.

Mr DIPNALL — for music education and music teachers, to value them and to create additional value. Thank you for hearing us today.

The CHAIR — Thank you for your work, thank you for your submission and thanks for coming along today.

Witnesses withdrew.