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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Associate Professor R. Stevens, member,
Professor G. McPherson, member,
Mr C. Williams, member, and
Ms J. Heinrich, member, School Music Action Group.
The CHAIR — Welcome to the School Music Action Group, to all of you. The evidence is being recorded by Hansard, and you will have the opportunity to review the transcript should there be any typographical errors. The evidence you are about to give is covered under parliamentary privilege, and that applies only to the hearing proper, not to anything said outside the hearing itself.

Thank you for coming, thank you for your submission and we will pass over to you for a brief introduction. I will stress that it should be brief because we are really keen to ask questions. If you have something written down, we can submit that so that it is all covered, or if you want to, just talk to it.

Dr LIERSE — I think I have submitted that already, but I will talk to it briefly.

The CHAIR — A couple of points, yes; great.

Dr LIERSE — On behalf of the members of the School Music Action Group, called sMAG, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to this parliamentary review of music education. Briefly in introduction, we were formed as an advocacy group immediately following the Victorian Music Workshop in 2007 when 100 or so people from all areas in music education and professional musicians examined the recommendations from the 2005 report for the National Review of School Music Education and the action points from the 2006 National Music Workshop and considered them within the Victorian context.

I should mention that a member of the reference group of the national review was my colleague, Associate Professor Robin Stevens, next to me, and that I was a critical friend of this review too, so we had a very personal interest in seeing that the recommendations were implemented in the Victorian context.

The Victorian School Music Action Group acknowledges that achieving the improvements would take a collective effort from the music sector. Also it indicates the fundamental role the Victorian government should play in addressing the deficiencies of school music education in Victorian schools.

We raised critical issues at meetings we had with the Victorian government and we offered recommendations — which we are going to put to you again today — so that the quality of music education in Victorian schools can be improved. Today my colleagues, Associate Professor Robin Stevens and Ms Jenni Heinrich, and also Professor Gary McPherson, will speak on the primary issues to do with both the implementation and the provision of music education in schools, and also the teacher training requirement which will be necessary to deliver the ACARA national curriculum for music.

Jenni will speak specifically on the issues from country Victoria with her research into primary schools. Both Robin and myself can offer you research data from primary and particularly myself in secondary music that has not been brought out today. Gary can talk about international models and also his amazing research background in music education. Carl and I will both speak on the secondary provision, Carl particularly on instrumental music, and the VIT. We will probably all contribute as we go, but that is the basic plan that we have for today.

The access and provision in primary schools: we will talk about the pathetic state of primary music education in Victoria, the need to ensure that trained competent teachers deliver the music curriculum, the negative influences on student access to music in some schools as a result of the NAPLAN, the need to develop a new model for preservice training for the delivery of the music curriculum in primary schools, upskilling of teachers and the pathetic situation in primary schools in country Victoria.

At the secondary level, again we have a very serious issue with access and provision and the needs for secondary level music education, and with the instrumental program we have got inequity in provision at the moment. VIT registration is plaguing the status for instrumental music teachers, and there is a need for a new model for the governance and administration of the deployment of instrumental teachers in government schools.

You have heard and you have read a lot about why we are advocating for more music in schools and why it should be a priority program. This of course comes from evidence supporting the powerful effects of music education on the personal and academic development of the child, which is compelling. Research shows the educational benefits to the development of the whole child in the personal, social and intellectual domains as well as in the acquisition of language, literacy, numeracy, creativity, social skills, concentration, teamwork, fine motor coordination, self-confidence and emotional sensitivity. The research also shows that learning an
instrument further benefits the gains from a class-based music program and therefore should be an essential part of every school curriculum.

We acknowledge the countries with the highest PISA scores for the OECD program for international assessment of 15-year-old boys and girls in reading, maths and science: they include China — Shanghai and Hong Kong — Finland, Singapore and South Korea. All children in Years 1 to 10 from these countries have approximately 2 hours of music each week. Thank you.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you for that. I am going to kick off. You were talking a lot about the state of primary music education, so I will flesh that out a little bit. What is your assessment of the extent and quality of classroom music education within Victorian primary schools? It is a three-part question: what is the current quality and extent of primary music education, what types of primary schools are missing out on music education and what are the key factors that impact the extent and quality of music education in primary schools?

**Assoc. Prof. STEVENS** — I may start off. Jenni will talk a little bit about the situation in country schools, but I might start off with a few very general comments. It is very hard to gauge with any accuracy, because there really is not a great deal of research data out there about the extent.

**The CHAIR** — Is that a problem within itself?

**Assoc. Prof. STEVENS** — It is. I think there is a lack of information available. I did a study for the Music Council of Australia back in 2002–03, and I must say it was extremely difficult to get from Victoria data about the provision of music in schools. I would like to have perhaps gone as far as a freedom of information request and all that sort of thing, but there was a timeline and I could not do that. So there is simply not the record keeping, there is not the data available from within education departments, and it is only Jenni’s study, I guess, that would reveal that sort of information.

I must say that just from observation and in my role as a music education historian since the 1970s and 1980s, as has been mentioned by Martin Comte and others, there has been — and I do not think it is overstating the case to say — a major deterioration in the extent and quality of music education. Back in the late 1970s we had a music branch, 107 staff and a supervisor of music. We had music staff going out into schools as itinerant teachers assisting classroom teachers (generalists) to develop music programs and also doing teaching themselves. Then the music branch was disbanded, and I think there were 236 specialist positions created, including 186 school positions and 50 music advisers. Then there was a change in policy so that it essentially became school-based curriculum development and implementation. I think over a period of time many of those specialist music teachers decided for reasons relating to promotion or whatever it may have been to shift from those specialist roles to becoming generalist teachers. I guess you are able to climb the tree a little faster that way.

I think the situation basically is that where schools have had a commitment to music education, they have appointed a specialist teacher. There are examples, but they are in a minority of primary schools. That teacher only has to leave the school and the whole program, usually, will fall in a huge heap because priorities change and the school decides it would prefer to have a teacher librarian, PE teacher or whatever it happens to be. So I think we really do have a very serious issue in the primary school sector. Another thing one might say — and I am not sure that this has been sufficiently mentioned from the evidence I have heard so far — is that there is a real issue in ensuring that there is continuity of programs and also that curricula are sequential, continuous and developmental. Unless you have that stream going through the primary school, by the time kids get to secondary school in many cases the class music teacher has to start from scratch.

**The CHAIR** — Is that because you have got passionate people leaving, creating the gap? What is the issue with the continuity?

**Assoc. Prof. STEVENS** — It will be that the passionate person will leave and that they will simply not be replaced because the school has changed its focus. There are only, as you would know, limited numbers of these specialist teachers who can be appointed to any school. Our impression basically is that because of the very poor training that generalist teachers have had, as has been mentioned previously, the generalists are simply not capable of implementing or maintaining a program that has been operating well.
Prof. McPHERSON — Do you mind if I add a couple of comments? My area is music education and musical development — that is what I research, and I am music educator. I am a professor at The University of Melbourne as well. I have seen a stark difference between what is offered in private and independent schools and the continual deterioration of what is being offered in music in government schools right around Australia, but particularly in New South Wales and Victoria. I think that is a disgraceful situation that we are not addressing; we are having continual inquiries but not really addressing it. In independent schools music education in primary school is usually successful because we have a specialist teaching that area. My wife is teaching in an independent school in Melbourne. She is a specialist music educator, and she sees the students at least twice a week for each of the grades from prep to grade 6. That is the North American model where you have a general teacher supplemented by a specialist coming in to teach certain areas.

In government schools we have never been able to address the problem of what we say in the literature is ‘knowing the child versus knowing the subject’. Knowing the child might involve one teacher teaching 14 or 15 discrete subject areas and probably not doing some of those subject areas well because of the sheer bulk of stuff that they need to get through and the skills needed to teach all of these discrete areas. That is compared to a specialist coming in, like you might be seeing in America, for example. They see 300 or 400 students a week for 30-minute lessons. They know the subject, but they do not really know the kids. We have never solved this in terms of music education in primary schools in Victoria.

The only way we can solve this, I think, is if we rethink what a primary school teacher is in government schools. For me it is about what I observed when I was a Dean of Education in Hong Kong. Up there the students were trained as specialists in two, three or four areas — so they would do a couple of majors and a couple of minors. A typical school would have two or three classroom teachers across the week doing different sorts of activities, and they would be specialists in those areas. They have done five or six semesters of training in each of those areas. In a sense it is producing a teacher who does know the subject and knows the kids. For me, to get some movement, to get some change in Victoria that is the sort of transformative change we are going to have to have.

The CHAIR — Is that happening in Hong Kong at the moment?

Prof. McPHERSON — It is. I was a Professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, and that is what we were implementing. You will not see it explicitly in all the government documents and things, but that is the sort of teacher that the Hong Kong Institute of Education, which is the place that trains teachers in Hong Kong, produces. More and more the principals are now searching for and interviewing prospective teachers to fill these gaps and these holes. Over time that will work even better, because what we will have is this nice sense of matching for the subject areas.

We found when I was in Hong Kong that we went from very few students wanting to specialise in music or do music to about 30 per cent or 40 per cent of the incoming trainees wanting to do a little bit of music right through to a lot of music. That is the sort of change we need. I think we have to recognise that the structures and the way that private schools and independent schools operate by their very nature are quite different from public schools. Public schools are much more complex and are much more a statewide system. They are a different beast, and we probably need a different template for the teacher.

The CHAIR — We will move on. Do you want to briefly comment on this, Jenni? Before we do that, Gary, are you able to provide some additional information to the committee about that Hong Kong model?

Prof. McPHERSON — Absolutely, yes.

The CHAIR — Great. We might take you up on that.

Ms HEINRICH — The question you asked was basically what is happening in primary schools with provision. The research that I conducted was addressed to 847 primary schools in the country regions. I sent out a survey to the principals of state, Catholic and independent schools in those regions. There was a second survey forwarded to music teachers if there was one teaching a classroom music program. The survey was sent to all of the schools in country Victoria. The results were that 63% of schools were offering a classroom music program and 37% were not, which I was pleasantly surprised by, but nonetheless it is still a third of schools that do not have a classroom music program. Of the teachers teaching it, about 22% of the responding teachers were qualified music specialists. That was not surprising. I thought it would be a fairly small number, and it was.
There is a lot more specific information that I could give about that, and I am happy if people ask me to provide it. The study also looked at teacher education and what was available to teachers in Victoria to study. But there are a couple of general things that came out of the study that I would really like to talk about. Listening to the evidence provided today it is clear that you people are aware of the benefits of music education to children. It is obvious. The policy documents in Australia clearly support that. Everybody is aware of it.

But what is perhaps not quite so clear is that you do not get those kinds of benefits from generalist teachers teaching music programs; you get those kinds of benefits to brain development, coordination and self-esteem from specialist music teachers who are implementing continuous, sequential and developmental music programs. It does not come from singing a song each day in class. It does not come from putting on a concert at the end of the year. It comes from learning music over a long period of time and learning specific skills that are associated with that particular subject area.

I think it is very important to stress that we need specialists to do that. I am well aware — the statistics from the survey show — that there are not that many of them out there. Of the two reasons that principals gave for not having a music program, one was the lack of funding and the other one was the lack of availability of staff.

At the time I conducted the research it was because I was teaching undergrad teachers at La Trobe University in Bendigo, and I had been for 10 years, and the music electives were being axed. We had gone from a situation in the 70s and 80s — everyone talks about this rich period of time in music education in the 70s and 80s — where there were 14 full-time members of the music staff to, by the time I got there, one 0.5 part-time person. He was the only permanent part-time person and I was teaching sessionally the electives, and the electives were slowly but surely getting cut back, and that was a funding issue. The reason that was allowed to happen is because of the way music is representing curriculum within this umbrella, with five other subjects. It is so easy for schools to see it as just a little frill on the side that can be chosen or not chosen to be done.

The only way that universities are going to prioritise music for their teachers is if it is compulsory. That is what takes place in Queensland, and 87% of its schools have a classroom music program. We have 63% Victoria country. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that perhaps there is a similar or less number in the metropolitan area.

If we are going to have enough music teachers we have got to train them in the country, and the universities are saying, 'We do not have the money to train them, we cannot justify having classes of 7 to 12 students', which is what we were having in Bendigo. We have a wonderful scenario there where we have instrumental music from 7 to 10 and then we have this great big Bendigo senior secondary school with 2000 students with full music classes happening.

It is a beautiful feeder situation for La Trobe. With 7 to 12 students that were going through, qualifying as music specialists every year, it does not sound like many, but they were all going out to the area. When I broke down the stats in the survey, in the Bendigo region 83% of responding schools had classroom music programs.

I set that up as a comparison for Ballarat, where the music electives in the university were axed in the early 90s and 31% of the schools in the Ballarat region had a classroom music program operating in their area.

The regions that were struggling most with getting the staff were the northern regions: the Hume region, the Grampians region.

**The CHAIR** — Jenni, in terms of that research, was that the provision of music program in Victoria in 2011? That part of that research that you did?

**Ms HEINRICH** — That research was called the Provision of Classroom Music Programs to Regional Victorian Primary Schools.

**The CHAIR** — Do we have a copy of that?

**Ms Madden** — Yes, we do.

**Prof. McPherson** — Do you mind if I make another comment about that, about rural schools? I grew up going to a rural school myself — and I think there were less than 10 000 people in the town. We had two specialist music teachers in high school. I would not be sitting in this room without that education. I would not
swap it for any education, but that is long gone, 20 or 30 years ago. There is nothing in that little country town now.

The thing that needs to be mentioned about this is that these teachers in these primary and secondary schools in rural communities are not only teaching music to the kids in the school but they are interacting more widely across the community. They are the ones who are playing the organ at the church, preparing the town band or the choir, the community band and the musicals and things. More than any other subject, or at least as much as any other subject, they have this really important role for bringing communities together.

**The CHAIR** — Yes, good point.

**Ms TIERNEY** — I have the same questions as David, but in relation to the secondary area — so your assessment of the quality and the provision of music education — and key factors that impact on the extent of quality of music education in high schools.

**Dr LIERSE** — I will start that one off. We are very concerned that the majority of children in government schools and Catholic schools are missing out on music education at secondary level — I have some bad news for you, to mention in the minute, too — or are only being offered token programs. Figures coming from research suggest that only 33 per cent of schools are able to offer a music education that would meet the recommendations for the National Review of School Music Education; many do not offer music at all.

In contrast, the figure for independent schools is 88%. Not surprisingly, these schools use their music programs as one of the main selling points to attract students away from the public system. In view of the fact that an extensive survey by the Australian Music Association revealed that 87% of Australians over the age of 12 believe that music should be mandatory and that every child should be offered the opportunity to study music, it is not surprising that there are long waiting lists for students to get into our leading government secondary schools such as Balwyn High, McKinnon High, University High et cetera which all offer great music programs.

Anecdotal evidence shows that an increasing number of schools are placing music and the arts within a package of elective subjects which also include food technology subjects, sport, photography and perhaps the arts as well. If there are not 15 students or more who elect to do those subjects — we are talking about years 7 and 8 here — then the school cannot run the subject. I was quite shocked to hear that at one of the newer schools that has opened, one that was supposed to be quite a model school for the government, music is only an elective in years 7 and 8 and students have this long list of electives they can choose from. So it will be possible for those students to go right through their six years of secondary education without touching arts or music at all because they will have these other subjects they can choose from if they wish.

**Ms MILLER** — What school is that?

**Dr LIERSE** — Albert Park.

**Ms MILLER** — Okay.

**Dr LIERSE** — That is a big, disturbing fact. There is another factor. I just realised that there were some revisions in the latest ACARA revised curriculum from about four weeks ago. I did not look at the beginning of the statement until just a few days ago and found that all statements referring to provision have been omitted. If I can just share this with you.

As we expected, point 9 says:

| The Australian Curriculum for the Arts will be based on the assumption that all young Australians are entitled to engage with the five arts subjects and should be given an opportunity to experience the special knowledge and skills base of each. |
| All students in primary school will study the five arts subjects … |

I am not discussing that at the moment. The next point says:

| From the first year of secondary school (year 7 or 8), students will have an opportunity to experience some arts subjects in greater depth and to specialise in one or more arts subjects. |
| That word ‘experience’ has replaced the word ‘will’ in the previous documents. |
Ms HEINRICH — ‘Opportunity’ is the word.

Prof. STEVENS — Yes, ‘opportunity’.

Dr LIERSE — ‘Opportunity’ has, yes.

Schools may continue to offer all arts subjects. This will be determined by their state/territory jurisdiction and/or the school.

In years 9 to 12, students will be able to specialise …

I have no issue with that. I have an issue with the substitution of the words ‘will have an opportunity to’ with the words ‘will study’ because schools are already setting themselves up for next year with arts as an elective, so students may be missing out on an arts education. We are particularly concerned about music education. The directive is not clear. I would really like clarity to be —

Mr WILLIAMS — Clarified.

Dr LIERSE — Clarified, particularly by the government. As states have the jurisdiction to make calls on the delivery of the ACARA Arts curriculum I would like these directives to come very fast before schools get too entrenched in their plans for next year. I was wondering how soon we can talk about that with the ministry. I realise you do not have to submit your report until —

The CHAIR — I would be taking that up directly with the minister now. Do not wait for our inquiry to finish.

Dr LIERSE — You can have a look at a word like that, but it is so important when the principals see it and start responding and acting on it. When school principals see the words ‘opportunity to experience’ rather than ‘will study’, they will interpret this as meaning that students can have the opportunity to choose the subject or not to choose it.

Prof. McPHERSON — The problem here is that we have some states mandating 100 hours or whatever it is in Year 7 or 8 for music and other states that do not, so we continually get this watering down of a national approach. The point that I think needs to be made is that it has happened over decades, to the point where we really need clear statements about the value of music in schools and clear directions from government. Unfortunately the rhetoric — although there are some nice statements — is not matched by the reality of what is happening in schools. That is because of a few instances like that, where it just keeps getting —

The CHAIR — Sure.

Mr WILLIAMS — Anecdotally there are a couple of schools in the eastern region that are already allocating classroom music to Year 7s purely on the basis of the timetabling software, so 7ABC might get classroom music in Year 7 and 7EFG will get visual arts. Therefore 7EFG have lost their classroom music allocation for secondary school. Secondly, we are already hearing stories of students who are already privately learning instrumental music outside of school electing to do other subjects where they have the choice at school because they are getting their music education outside of school, so ‘All the arts are equal; I do not need to do music at school’.

Dr LIERSE — If you would like to know a bit about the figures, Robin and I have both done some research into figures of the time needed to deliver on the curriculum and also what is being offered. I did my research in 1996 and the results of that research are why I am here today. I found that 88% of schools in the state offered a classroom music program, and music was one of the Arts key learning areas offered in Victorian schools.

The reality was that most of these schools were in fact offering a very limited program, with most schools giving a sample of music along with the other arts. The Year 7s and 8s were given the opportunity to experience a number of the arts strands — which is what is now going to happen in primary — either as a core or an elective and then had the opportunity to elect one of these strands in Years 9 and 10.

Although 20% of schools offered music as a core in Year 7, and 11% in Year 8, the necessary knowledge and skills required to take the subject through to senior levels was generally missing. The instruction was mostly
offered for a term or a semester and for one or two periods a week. Figures dropped dramatically in Years 9 and 10, showing there were up to 80% of schools without a music program in some country areas.

With time pressures on the schools to deliver the curriculum there is an increasing trend to modulise music into units and blocks that occur for one semester or so, which was what we were hearing a minute ago. So they block subjects together for electives. That is what I found back in 1996. At that time though there was a 20% cut as part of the Schools of the Future reforms to the teaching force. My findings were that 50% of schools had reduced or lost their music programs because of that.

Since then we have been trying to pull up. We did pull up for a little bit, but I think we are going down again, according to anecdotal evidence. Teachers who work at my school and also my friends are telling me sad stories about their school and that their school no longer offering music, or only as an elective. I am talking about Year 7s and Year 8s. I think this is a critical issue for future Year 7s and 8s, and one which we need to seriously address.

Ms MILLER — How much time in the curriculum do you think schools should allocate to music on a weekly basis? What is the optimum balance in the curriculum between music and other art forms such as visual arts, drama, performing arts, et cetera?

Dr LIERSE — Yes, traditionally up until the 1990s it was always two 50 minute periods per week in Years 7 and 8. That has now dropped significantly to one period for a term. You need approximately that much time if you are going to deliver what we believe is a rigorous music curriculum for Years 7 and 8.

The CHAIR — Can I just pick up on that point: are you suggesting that some schools are only doing one period per term?

Dr LIERSE — And that is it.

Mr WILLIAMS — One period per week for a term.

The CHAIR — Okay, one period per week for a term. Fine.

Ms HEINRICH — And similar sorts of things are happening for primary schools.

Dr LIERSE — Yes.

The CHAIR — Okay, sure.

Ms HEINRICH — Ideally you need 40 minutes to 1 hour per week. In some schools they might get that for one term or they might get it for two terms, but they will not necessarily get it for a whole year. A lot of the time in primary schools the music or specialist time is linked to the release time for the classroom teacher. I have had a lot of feedback from teachers who I have worked with in professional development saying that that is something they are battling. They are just being given the children to babysit for terms 1 and 3 and there is no opportunity for them to implement any kind of sequential program because of the nature of the face-to-face time they get with the kids, or lack thereof.

Dr LIERSE — I would just add that where I teach we are very fortunate. Entry level is in Year 9 and all students take music as a core subject with a time allocation of seven 42 minute periods in a two week cycle, in addition to a weekly singing session. This is quite different from what most schools offer and we are an academic school, not a music school as such. Our entry survey found that two-thirds of our students have had little to no music in primary school. Our argument is that a crowded curriculum does not have to stop music and the arts — particularly music — being a core subject.

Ms MILLER — What would be the ultimate today, though, between the two?

Dr LIERSE — Between the two, yes. I would say two periods a week — everyone would think that two periods a week?

Ms HEINRICH — Two, yes.
**Prof. McPHERSON** — I think I could make some comparisons with what is generally happening in independent schools. It is usually an hour a week. My wife teaches a minimum of an hour a week, and I think that is typical if they can find the time to do this and they are still getting the really good scores and putting on everything else.

To answer your question, you have to say why would we want to have music in schools? For me, my answer would be that we live in a very visual world — about 65 or 75% of what we actually learn and integrate into our knowledge base is through vision. Music is aural; we only learn about 10 to 15% of what we learn overall through aural, but if we do not develop that modality, that intelligence and that way of operating and working, then the child is not educated, and we need to maximise all of their potentials.

**The CHAIR** — Just to elaborate on that point earlier that we can still do this in a creative curriculum — because that is obviously the counterargument that is always put — are you suggesting that we can do that because independent schools currently do that, and if they can operate in a creative curriculum, why can’t government schools?

**Dr LIERSE** — Yes.

**Prof. McPHERSON** — Yes.

**The CHAIR** — That is the argument?

**Dr LIERSE** — Yes.

**The CHAIR** — Okay.

**Prof. McPHERSON** — Obviously you need to work within the structure and the type of teachers you have. Primary teachers are being relieved with a specialist coming in occasionally. That is why you are looking at transformative change in the type of person we have in a primary school. But irrespective of that, I have seen some excellent examples overseas where students are given intensive training in music for six weeks — like four periods a week — and for the next six weeks they do not get any music because they are doing another subject area, and then they get another six weeks of music. But the point is that it has to be consistent, and it has to be across each of the year groups and across each of the years that the children are studying. There are some really innovative pockets that you can work around the complexities of the problems and the challenges you might have in school organisation.

**The CHAIR** — Can you suggest any of those?

**Prof. McPHERSON** — That one there. My wife used to teach in public schools in America, and she would teach four periods a week for six weeks; she would not see the kids for another 12 weeks, and then she would go in again. They were fairly long lessons, so they would get this really big enrichment for a period of time.

**The CHAIR** — At what year level?

**Prof. McPHERSON** — This is all through elementary schools.

**The CHAIR** — Primary school.

**Prof. McPHERSON** — Yes, and then in secondary schools there are the most amazing elective programs and typically what they offer. American schools have even more subjects in the school curriculum than we have in Australia.

**Ms HEINRICH** — Music is a language; I guess that is the thing, and the earlier you get it in with little kids, they are like sponges when they are little. To get music literacy happening when they are little is ideal.

**Prof. McPHERSON** — We have to get these kids before nine, because the most important profound developmental changes in aural development will be between the ages of 5 and 9.

**Mr CRISP** — You have talked a lot about music programs in schools, and Carl touched briefly on instrumental. I want to expand on the instrumental part of the music debate. Are you happy with the funding for
instrumental music programs currently in your schools? Are there changes you would like to see? We have heard a bit about what you would love to see in the music sections, but what would you like to see in the instrumental section of music education?

**Mr WILLIAMS** — I am never going to say I am happy with current levels of funding — —

**The CHAIR** — Really?

**Mr WILLIAMS** — because there are inequities.

**Mr CRISP** — And you did note too that the instrumental program you mentioned earlier is being done off campus and it is running in parallel with education at school, because of the broader instrumental — —

**Dr LIERSE** — Private students.

**Mr WILLIAMS** — There will always be students who elect to learn from a private teacher rather than learn in a school environment.

**Dr LIERSE** — You cannot accommodate them.

**Mr WILLIAMS** — You cannot accommodate them, and that is absolutely fine — people should be free to make choices — but we should be offering the option to have a quality instrumental music program in our state schools as well for those who choose to utilise it. I can talk about the model in the eastern region. I think we have a fairly good model within our limited funding budget. There are problems inherent in that in that the funding does not change, but we have an equitable and transparent model where we service all schools with funding, and I think that is fairly reasonable.

My main problem is that regions have been left to their own devices with how they allocate their buckets of funding, and some regions provide some accountability and transparency to achieve equity and some regions do not. So we have regions that have given the same amount of money to each school for the past 10 or 15 years whatever is happening in the individual school music programs. We have regions that provide instrumental music coordination time to provide that accountability and transparency, and provide professional development and support for the instrumental music teachers who are travelling between schools. We have regions that do not provide any instrumental music coordination whatsoever.

Under the new four-region structure there are moves now to achieve some sort of coherence and consistency between how the regions do their instrumental music coordination. As of the last time I checked, not all the regions had instrumental music coordination on their regional structure charts, but my assumption is that all four of those regions will have some coordination time in some capacity. My main problems are that, as I said, there has been no consistency across all those regions. So the issues of equity and accountability that we provide in the eastern region and the southern region is able to provide are not there across the state.

**Mr ELASMAR** — Your submission raises some concerns about how the current teacher registration requirements apply to instrumental music teachers. Could you clarify the exact nature of the problem and what you recommend to address this issue?

**Mr WILLIAMS** — I am sorry, I did not catch the first part. The qualification?

**Assoc. Prof. STEVENS** — Teacher registration; VIT.

**Mr ELASMAR** — Teacher registration requirements applying to instrumental music?

**Mr WILLIAMS** — The VIT has essentially opened a can of worms with its changes to the permission to teach. The VIT’s argument is that permission to teach was never going to be an ongoing program and they were always intending to phase it out. However, permission to teach was a mechanism that worked reasonably well in the employment of instrumental music teachers. Now that they have decided to not continue that — and I have to say that the VIT’s advice for last year was inconsistent, to say the least, to the point where some fully qualified teachers were ringing up and being told that they did not need registration — paraprofessionals have, depending on which day of the week they have rung, been told that they do or do not have to apply for permission to teach. As soon as you say the words ‘instrumental music’ to somebody from the VIT you are
demoted to not being a real teacher. They have essentially lumped us in with after-school hockey coaches, in the wording of the permission to teach document. Just last week I had an email from a paraprofessional in this situation, and I will just read it out:

I was spoken to by my base school … with regard to the fact that now being ESS staff—

this is how the VIT is now recommending paraprofessionals are to be employed, as support staff—

I am apparently required to return my computer immediately and also that I am no longer permitted to teach. After teaching with the department for over 38 years I am obviously not impressed by this treatment and short notice but more pressingly, I require clarity as to where I stand regarding my profession. Do I have a job or not?

This is the standard of the advice that is coming out from the VIT. There has been no formal or consistent advice to principals. People — experienced educators, like this person who in fact has taught some of the most respected and experienced instrumental music coordinators in the program at the moment — are in a situation where they do not even know if they can walk into the school grounds and teach or not. So we have a significant problem.

Assoc. Prof. STEVENS — Getting to the nub of it, however, I think what we are saying is that the problem is that these people do not have the required teacher training qualification.

Mr WILLIAMS — In the eyes of the VIT.

Assoc. Prof. STEVENS — We sometimes have people with masters degrees or doctorates or people who have come from overseas, perhaps from Eastern European countries or whatever, who have been conductors of orchestras or are very experienced as far as music performance is concerned who are being paid, if they can actually get a position, at the lowest paraprofessional rate. I have a couple of students in one of my classes at university who tell me that they are being employed at $35 an hour, and that is simply untenable. You cannot live as a trained musician on that sort of remuneration. I think what is happening is that all of this musical talent is going off and getting jobs in factories or whatever and they are being lost to music education in this state.

Personally this is one of the reasons I am advocating that there be a separate instrumental music service that is able to recognise the teacher-trained instrumental teachers but also able to take in these highly qualified or highly experienced professional musicians who have been teaching for many years and bring them into an instrumental music teaching service and pay them at a decent level on the paraprofessional scale. Carl, I do not know whether you want to add anything to that or whether you have a slightly different view of it.

The CHAIR — Before you do that, very quickly, what might that look like? Are you talking in terms of an actual further qualification?

Assoc. Prof. STEVENS — It may be that these people over time are allowed to perhaps take a little more time in gaining a teacher qualification. There are already teacher qualifications like the Suzuki program, which is run by Suzuki Music. It is an international qualification for instrumental music teachers. It has certain components of what you might find in a Dip. Ed. or a Master of Teaching course, but it is not recognised by the VIT. I think at the moment, in my experience at any rate, that most instrumental teachers are concerned with teaching in what may be regarded as co-curricular or extracurricular rather than curricular areas, which are the compulsory or core areas of the curriculum.

If you can somehow accommodate these teachers within an instrumental music teaching service, as I think they do in other states — I think South Australia and Western Australia do the same sort of thing, and they certainly do that in the UK — you would have a way of adequately remunerating these people, in a sense shifting them out of the normal teacher role and focusing more on their music direction and their instrumental music teaching skills. Normally it is one-to-one or in a very small group. All of them do not actually, in my view, need the skills to handle large classes where you are doing normal teaching; it is more of a professional music ensemble direction role.

Dr LIERSE — Except that some of the people we have lost from the system have been taking huge ensembles at their schools by themselves. Now they are not supposed to; they are supposed to have someone with them. They have been VCE examiners et cetera. They are the people who we do not want to lose, who can handle large ensembles and who can lead in assessment as well.
I would like to add that, looking at the UK model, they have the same or a similar problem. I will read from page 12 of their document entitled The Importance of Music — A National Plan for Music Education:

A large proportion of the music education workforce, such as peripatetic music teachers, are based outside school. These professionals need to be recognised for their work and have opportunities to develop their practice. To facilitate this, the arts council will support Creative and Cultural Skills to develop a suite of independently assessed and accredited qualifications including a music educator qualification by 2013 to ensure the wider music workforce is properly recognised for their role in and out of school.

They are addressing it by having an independent assessment for the teachers.

Mr CRISP — Are there any other cohorts of people offering services in schools, other than music teachers, who are caught in this bind? Is it unique to music, or are there other people?

Dr LIERSE — I have not heard of anything else.

Assoc. Prof. STEVENS — I suppose you get into sports coaches and so on, but I think this is a fairly unique problem to music and to instrumental music teaching.

Mr WILLIAMS — If I can speak a little further, there are two more significant problems that instrumental music teachers are facing at the moment. One is the excess situation, which I will speak about in a minute, and the other is casual employment versus being on central payroll. I heard the Victorian Music Teachers’ Association talking before about recommended pay levels, but that is for teachers who are employed casually by a school, which according to the official department process should not in fact happen. If a school is employing a teacher for more than 30 calendar days, they should be put on central payroll, but we still have a significant problem where a significant number of instrumental teachers are being employed casually, being paid by cheque, having to fill out timesheets, not getting holiday pay and not getting sick leave, and all that makes it harder to retain quality staff.

Another problem with the support staff mechanism that the VIT is now advocating for non-qualified teachers is that there are implications for the duties that would normally be required by somebody with teacher status — for example, mandatory reporting, whether they are eligible for laptops, which I spoke about before, anaphylaxis training and medical training. What are the implications for teachers accompanying a group of students on excursions and camps, which we as instrumental teachers do more than any other teacher in a school? As I said before, this situation is a can of worms at the moment, and I think we need to make it a priority to resolve it.

Mr CRISP — Would language teachers — for example, specialists in Aboriginal language and culture — be caught in the same bind?

Mr WILLIAMS — Not in the qualifications, as far as I know.

Mr CRISP — What about people who do excursions, not teachers, and people who assist in Aboriginal cultural studies and language studies?

Dr LIERSE — I would expect so, but I do not know.

Mr WILLIAMS — I have not heard of it. I have not heard of there being a qualifications issue there, but I could be wrong. Those people are caught up in the same situation that we are in the excess process, and this to me seems like a really simple thing to fix, yet nobody has got to the point of being able to fix it yet. The excess process, when a school cannot afford to employ a teacher, was designed for one teacher in one school environment. We as instrumental teachers teach across a variety of schools; we might be in four or five different schools a week. If one of those schools does not have the instrumental music numbers to warrant the employment of that teacher, they will declare that teacher in excess for a day. They cannot employ a teacher in excess for a day; that teacher then becomes in excess for their entire time fraction. If that teacher is across five different schools, they are now in excess for five days at five different schools just because the process is not designed for itinerant teachers. The process then is that the teacher will be put in excess at five schools. Five schools will need to advertise vacancies, and the teacher will then need to reapply for all their days.

The CHAIR — Is that happening much at the moment?
Mr WILLIAMS — It is happening because of the funding situation in most schools. It is exacerbated at the moment.

Dr LIERSE — We have had two people at our school in that situation.

Mr WILLIAMS — It is happening left, right and centre. Furthermore, if a teacher then applies for a new position, which would more often than not for instrumental music be a one-day position, that will become their new time fraction, so they will drop from full time to one day because one school could not afford to employ them. That teacher would then need to reapply to all their other schools. Most schools would hopefully do the right thing, but if you have a fairly expensive teacher, the principal does have the option of saying, ‘Let’s see if there is anybody less expensive out there’.

The CHAIR — I will pick up on something relating to what you are talking about, particularly in pay. Is there any evidence to suggest that we are losing expertise offshore as a result of our program, where potentially there are other jurisdictions that are doing it well? In your case you went over to Hong Kong and taught. Is there evidence to suggest that there is more of that?

Mr WILLIAMS — There is certainly evidence to suggest that we are losing paraprofessionals who cannot get a decent pay rate because they do not have an educational qualification. It is happening a lot.

The CHAIR — But not necessarily offshore.

Prof. McPHERSON — I think it is happening at another level as well. I am Director of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Maybe every year 100 undergraduates finish our BMus. Only about 5 or 6% of those would normally go over to cognitive education and do the masters of teaching, so they want to be specialist classroom teachers. That is a huge gap compared to when I was teaching at New South Wales University, where it was probably 30 or 40% of the students who would want to go on and do classroom music education. We have got that difference or discrepancy.

Also what we have tried to do is introduce a Master of Music (Performance Teaching) — a three-semester course that the students can do so that they can come into music education from another angle, because a lot of these students are fantastic musicians and they want to continue practising their craft and impart that to students. They want to conduct orchestras and choirs and things rather than necessarily follow the classroom route. That course has been incredibly successful, so we might see a bit of change. We need some different entry points for these students, but the point I really wanted to make is that the generation has gone; we have lost it. These students that I am teaching have gone through school music, and they have not seen what I saw. I loved music education when I was at school, and I am sure many of them had a good music education, but by and large the quality is not there to sort of encourage them to think about teaching as a career. I guess that is across all disciplines, but it is particularly evident in music.

The CHAIR — Just to pick up on one last thing from another perspective, technology, what are your views on technology in terms of it being used for delivery of music education?

Dr LIERSE — Can I speak on that one? Technology has transformed the provision of classroom music in schools and makes it possible to accommodate the needs of all students entering Year 7, Year 9, or any level. I speak from my experience at Melbourne High School where students enter at Year 9 with enormously different musical backgrounds. Some students do not know what a crotchet or quaver is while instrumental music students may have their L.Mus.A. diploma which is a tertiary level qualification. Because we have designed our core curriculum around the use of the computer keyboard laboratory, we can take advantage of some excellent technology-based programs which allow students to succeed at their own rate. Students develop music literacy skills including aural and theory while they create and compose music. They are inspired to make music and can listen to their work as they compose, and are excited to play their work to each other. In fact, of the 340 students in Year 9, over 200 choose one of the five elective music subjects for study in Year 10. Music technology is helping to close the gap in achievement between those who have and have not benefitted from prior musical opportunities. I would like to see a music computer lab in every school.

Assoc. Prof. STEVENS — But, Anne, one does have to say that technology does not replace the teacher.

Dr LIERSE — That is exactly right! Getting that balance is incredibly important.
Mr WILLIAMS — It is a teaching tool. From an instrumental music position, instrumental music teachers, more often than not being one day per week, are often overlooked for technology. They are not allocated departmental laptops in local school iPad rollouts. The instrumental music department would be lucky to have one, so the teachers are not having that access to technology to learn it and impart it to the students. I think, again, this is where it is important to have some sort of umbrella support. As regional coordinators, we are able to provide ongoing professional development for teachers, and we always offer music technology, so teachers can access that two or three times a year. And AME — Kevin Kelley spoke about that sort of thing before. Just because the technology is there does not mean it is necessarily available to instrumental music teachers at the moment.

The CHAIR — We are going to have to leave it there. Is there anything we have not covered that you absolutely think we need to add?

Assoc. Prof. STEVENS — We have touched on primary teacher education, but can I just say that one of the real issues for us — having taught primary teacher trainees for almost 40 years — is that the problem with the generation of students coming through at the moment is that they have no background in music, so you have really got to start from scratch with them. If you have an average of 17 hours from a course of primary teacher training, and you have to teach (a) musical content, and (b) music teaching methods, it is very much an uphill battle, and I think until such time as VIT actually mandates particular minimum standards for primary teacher trainees to do XYZ for their registration and until such time as the universities themselves actually recognise this, we are not going to have graduates coming out as primary teachers who are capable of teaching music successfully. I believe a big stick has to be waved somewhere to get VIT and the universities to recognise the value of music education.

The CHAIR — Thank you for coming in, and thank you for taking part throughout the day and certainly for your commitment to what you are doing to ensure we have a vastly improved music program in Victoria.

Committee adjourned.