CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

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

Broadmeadows — 6 May 2013

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Witnesses
Mr C. Mowat, Director of Development,
Ms B. Lobb, Education Manager, and
Ms D. Arcaro, Lead Teaching Artist on Pizzicato Effect Program, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra; and
Ms H. Hatzikalis, Curriculum Leader, Coordinator Pizzicato Effect Program, Meadows Primary School.
The CHAIR — Thank you very much for joining us today and having us out to experience the program. You know why we are here; we are obviously very interested in the programs that you are involved in and how we can further support music in schools. A couple of things I should point out. These microphones are very overwhelming and some of you may prefer to sing into them than speak into them, but Hansard is recording the information. You will have the opportunity to view that information and fix any typographical errors. I also need to point out in the formal part of the process that what you say today is covered by what we call parliamentary privilege, which is the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament. You can say whatever you like in the hearing proper and you will not have any problems, but you are not covered outside of the hearing.

Having got the formalities out of the way, this is an informal chat. Do not be overwhelmed by any of this. We are really keen to hear from you. We have a number of questions which we might go through and then give you the opportunity at the end to raise anything that we have not covered or you would like to tell us about. I will kick it off by asking if you could tell us what prompted the MSO to establish the Pizzicato Effect? What are the time and financial commitments of the MSO? Do you have any plans to expand the program to any other schools?

Mr MOWAT — I think I will start. The MSO divested from the ABC in 2006 and at that time we were looking at expanding our presence in the community. It coincided with the school here and with John Brumby approaching the MSO to see if there were things we might be able to do in the community. It was just a coincidence that it is this particular school. We chose to come out here but we were looking to increase our presence.

At the time it was set up we really did not know what it was going to look like or what the program was going to be like. We started up a bit of a pilot program and we are coming to the end of that pilot program, which is affecting a couple of things about our funding, but I will come back to that. Basically it was to increase our presence in the community and the role the MSO plays in the community. We thought it was part of what we do.

Financial commitments: I will keep going on that one, too. At the moment it is about $190 000 per year to run the program. You are aware of what that covers — the instruments and things like that? Good. That includes the time for our artists but also part of Bron’s time, which has grown over that four-year period. The challenge for us is finding funding for that. The other positive aspect of that is that it has attracted a number of donors within the MSO who are very interested in this program initiative, and we are seeing the growth in this program. What we are very interested in at the moment is that the pilot program that we spoke of is coming to an end and we need to look at where that is going to go next and how we are going to strategically position this program into the wider community. So your question, ‘Are we expanding it?’ is exactly what we are looking at at the moment. We are working with NAB, which is doing strategic assessment of the program to work out what the requirements for the MSO are to make this program and also the requirements of the school and the community. The other side of that is the funding that will be required to do that, how we develop those funds and how we access those funds, whether it be from the private community or from government, or whether it be from various sectors.

We are very keen to expand the program and to look at how we can do that, but obviously there is a financial commitment that the MSO needs to make. There are a number of larger financial factors going on at the MSO that we need to look at, but just to give you an indication for next year, at the moment we only have $20 000 going ahead. This is because we are now looking to see what the next program will look like, as we are finding that when we go to a number of trusts and foundations that have been supporting us over the last four years, they are only interested in seed funding or setting things up, they are not interested in long-term recurring funding — which is absolutely fine and we get that.

We are very keen to look at what the next step will be for this program, and how we might be able to implement that strategy, and then go and attract more funding. That is not to say that we will not get the funds, but I think we just need to identify that this pilot program effectively is coming to an end.
Ms MILLER — What challenges are you facing in regard to the Pizzicato Effect?

Ms LOBB — Danni and I might both talk to this together. It is not easy to pop a music program into a school and to have it up and running very quickly. Sometimes I talk about really great initiatives like Auskick, where you can have a representative of the community come out and talk to kids about football, hand them a ball, and they can kick that ball usually within one session. You cannot hand a child a violin and expect that they will be able to make a decent sound within the next half-an-hour.

I think one of the biggest challenges is that it is a complex program to both manage and to roll out. It is difficult to do that successfully and to be working with loads of different personalities and cultural backgrounds; a lot of the children come from very diverse educational backgrounds. Some of them may have missed out and have gaps because of where they have come from; they could have been in transit for a two-or three-year period of early learning. It has its challenges in terms of how we roll that out in school. Certainly in the very first year we sent Danni Arcaro and Bonnie Smart — who is a cello teacher, currently on maternity leave — out to a school with a whole lot of instruments, and we got started. We very quickly realised that there are all these other things that we may not have initially thought of. Over the years we have now started to develop them, so that we can really cater to the learning needs of individuals and groups and the school and the community.

So I think, really, the biggest challenge is that it is a highly complicated program to manage. To have quality teaching staff who are trained and who know what they are doing is a big challenge as well, because at the moment in the sector what we are seeing is a lot of students who are not being trained to be able to impart their skills in a teaching capacity, let alone in a group environment. When they are teaching to a large number of students at once, we need to consider how they cope with the varying needs of those students. I think that is another really big challenge for the program.

Danni, do you want to talk a little bit about your role as a musician and teacher in the program and the challenges you would face?

Ms ARCARO — Bronwyn has really covered it. The main challenges that I face are because of the diversity of the children and their different backgrounds. Just catering for a huge range of children is very difficult, and a lot of them came with huge gaps in what they could do. I went in with one expectation of being able to deliver this and I had to fill in a whole lot of gaps underneath before I could even start. That has been the main thing, and that has been an ongoing thing. I think culturally we certainly have a lot of struggles in terms of which ones work and how to work the various cultures. I am always trying to accommodate the different children’s needs. I am learning Lebanese lullabies and all kinds of things like that to try to make sure that I cover as many children as possible.

Ms MILLER — Just following on from that, what kind of impact do you think it has directly on the student and on the school community?

Ms ARCARO — I have certainly noticed with some students — —

We had one today actually who was in ensemble, and she is a gem. I really love her. She rocks up. She plays and she practises. She apparently — I have never seen it — has huge behavioural problems around the school and everything, but we have never seen it even the tiniest bit. I know that when she comes into our program she is very engaged and she behaves beautifully. We are obviously effecting some of these children with those types of challenges really well, I would say.

Ms LOBB — I think it provides a really positive learning environment.

Ms ARCARO — And it is one on one.

Ms LOBB — Absolutely. Even within the group classes there is this opportunity for the students to have peer interaction and be able to help each other, but it is always very, very positive and we really try and use a lot of positive language and positive reinforcement. It is challenging. Just quickly to go back
onto that, learning music is challenging because it is like a language. You need to understand the elements of rhythm and pitch and you need to be able to read music, and all those sorts of things need to be developed as well. We try and make it really fun and interactive and educational, engaging, and the big thing for the Pizzicato Effect is accessibility.

I spoke earlier with David about a stream that we added a couple of years ago with our teacher Andrea Keeble, who now has a lot of students who have dropped out of the program for various reasons. There could be something happening at home, there might have been a high level of absenteeism over a period of their learning in Year 4, they might have become disengaged and then decided to re-enter the program, there might be a new arrival to the school midway through the school year. How can we cater for those kids so that no-one is left out? So we are giving multiple opportunities. We are not saying, ‘You dropped out so that is it, it is over’. We are really trying to engage with those students and provide something that is there for them, that is accessible and that is hopefully pleasurable.

Ms HATZIKALIS — I would really love to mention something very significant about the impact it has had on the children. When the program first began it was Year 1s. Most of the children had not attended kindergarten, even though they were enrolled. When we talk about the gaps, it is hard to comprehend, but the children were unable to have fine motor coordination. I remember you saying they were not able to even move the arms, that is how deficient we were. Yet to see the progress that is made now for all the programs — the Kodaly music and the instrumental music that has come in — the children are now starting to enter the program on kind of a level playing field, which before they did not have. That is really significant.

The CHAIR — Danielle, in terms of you personally, as a performer who is now teaching in the program, what has it done for you, if I could ask?

Ms ARCARO — I think any time you teach it enriches your playing a lot. It makes you think about it. I think it also provides balance, which is wonderful, because I think in the MSO we can get very unbalanced. I think it is really, really good for as many musicians as possible to actually be teaching and out there. Certainly all of my colleagues who I know do it find it very rewarding.

Ms LOBB — It is a gift as well. It is something that we can give the community. It is something that we can really give to people, to be able to share that gift of music.

Mr MOWAT — I am not a player, but a player comes in every week to the orchestra and plays and the conductor tells them what to do. They cannot speak; this is how it is going to go. You artistically may think completely differently but that is what you have to do. In this kind of situation there is an artistic outlet that you are in artistic control of. That is part of the broadening of the players, and also I think the understanding of the impact that the MSO can have in the community. The great thing about this program is that while the children are learning at the school the other side of it is they come and see the musicians play and they see them playing onstage at a concert, so there is a two-way thing going on there. Some of the relationships that have been set up are really strong now. You recognise the kids who are there. The involvement of the greater community with the MSO has really evolved over the last couple of years. We now have Mrs Chernov as the patron, and she became involved with the MSO and the community outreach program simply through this program. The spin-off for us is terrific.

Ms LOBB — And the reward. I think there is a reward for a teacher like Danny and our other teachers in the program, and a reward for our musicians who come out and work with the students in various guises — I mentioned as a backing band for their performances. There is a great amount of reward to see these students just really excel at what they are doing and see them and their pride. Even ducking in there just now, going up to the school a couple of weeks ago, the improvement is vast over two weeks. There is an immense amount of reward to be had for the teaching staff, I think, and for the musicians involved in the program.

Ms ARCARO — Certainly all the musicians seem to know, too. Even if I just go in and am playing, people will always ask me what is going on out here and how it is going. Everybody seems to have an idea
Ms HATZIKALIS — But you are also role models to those children. We have a male music teacher, and these children need to have a calm role model in their life, because they do not have that. They want to be spoken to in a calm manner. If they do the wrong thing, they are not yelled out. You have a really wonderful influence on them.

Mr ELASMAR — You spoke about the rewards, and that was my question, but I will follow it up anyway. How important are the attitudes and support of parents in ensuring — —

Ms ARCARO — Sorry, how important is the support of parents?

Mr ELASMAR — How important are the attitudes and support of parents in ensuring that students practise at home?

Ms ARCARO — Enormous. I cannot emphasise it enough. It is huge. It is enormous everywhere; it is not just here. In every school I have ever taught, having the parents’ support is huge. It is certainly worth investing a lot of work into getting the parents onside, because children of this age are not able to self-regulate and create a practice routine and do all of that stuff. They are just too little, and they need parents to set them up with habits and with a space and also to just value it and say, ‘This is a good thing to do’. Certainly early on I know we had parents who seem to actively discourage it and who did not seem to understand what we were doing. That seems much, much better now. They have realised that we are really here for their kids and doing everything we can for the kids. When you have the parents onside, you have won half of your battle. I can talk till I am blue in the face in that lesson, but if it does not happen at home or in between, progress is really, really slow. It is very, very important, yes.

The CHAIR — Your submission notes that music should be taught in schools by specialist music teachers. What strategies can you suggest to attract more people to train as specialist music teachers in Victoria?

Ms HATZIKALIS — Could I start with that one, because that is a very important issue in terms of teacher training. I have had conversations with the network of music teachers. We need universities to acknowledge or put in place programs where the teachers come out with experience. Whether they have a bachelor of arts in music and then teacher training courses, that is the sort of calibre of teachers we need to take on the role of music specialist. What you are having in many instances is someone coming out of a classroom, being put in the role of the music teacher, and that is where it ends. You can imagine there is not a gift, there is not a passion and there is not knowledge. The universities need to be very mindful of providing something, whether it is sub-majors or majors, but — —

Ms ARCARO — I know from my experience of tertiary education in music that when I went through it was ‘If you could, you played, and if you could not, you taught’, which is the same for many other disciplines. I think that really did me a disservice, because I thought I was going to be the next Jascha Heifetz on the stage, and I was not. I think the university training I got was very unbalanced. It should be acknowledged that music teaching is an incredibly important profession and an incredibly difficult profession. I went out only having my music qualifications. When I first started that is all I used, and I was a dreadful teacher. I am sure just experience but also going back and getting my education degree and all of those kind of things has helped enormously, but I do not think it is valued by the universities, and I do not think that is conveyed to the students at all.

Mr MOWAT — Do you want to talk about the University of Melbourne program?

Ms LOBB — The University of Melbourne has recently started a Master of Music Teaching program, which we have tied in with having some interns into this program. We are certainly in the future hoping to set up some coursework that will be directly linked into Pizzicato Effect, because we think the success of
this program in the future will be making sure that we have the right people who are able to really impart the skill, the knowledge and the joy of music to students across the state. That is a really important thing.

I think both Danielle and Helen were onto something there with that real balance of music and education. ‘Just a performer’ or ‘just a teacher’ is not meeting those two things together. I went through music in New South Wales, but it is certainly true that the big emphasis in music degrees is on performance. I think that ought to be changed, because not a lot of people that finish a music degree are going to be a performer. If we can shift that we can train them to be better teachers; and then also for the people who are doing generalist teaching we can give them specific skills so that they can learn to understand and read music, and if there is not the time to do that then at least we can provide them with the tools so that they can efficiently teach music. We need to give them some really great resources that they can use, and tell them where they can tap into to find the things that they need to complement their teaching in the classroom.

Ms ARCARO — If that does not happen, what ends up happening is that the classroom teacher teaches it with their skill set, which tends to be the written word and those types of things. So they will do the word searches or the ‘read the lyrics and sing along’, but it is not actually music education. That is a different skill set.

The CHAIR — I am conscious that we are going to run out of time, but I am very keen to hear a bit more about the potential rollout, where you see things from hereon in, what are some of the opportunities for a group like us to effectively utilise and leverage some of the things you have learnt thus far. Maybe we might finish with some of that.

Ms LOBB — The potential is enormous. The kind of pinnacle program of music education is in Venezuela — El Sistema — and that has now been replicated throughout the United States, Europe, Africa and the United Kingdom. There are multiple programs along those lines here. We have sought a lot of inspiration from that system. I think what you see when you look at something like that is that once you have a really great set-up and you have the funds behind it, this can be as big as you want it to be and it can affect a lot of kids in a really positive way, and then it has a positive impact on the community and on their likelihood for employment. Whether you are a musician or not, you learn all of these additional life skills that you can use that are with you then forever — self-confidence, an ability to focus on a task — —

Ms ARCARO — Perseverance.

Ms LOBB — Perseverance — all these really amazing things. The only thing stopping us at the moment is the resourcing that sits behind it. We are doing everything we can within our current resourcing, and I think the very immediate dream is to be able to roll this out into a few more schools in this Broadmeadows community because it is a community of high need, a community that has a big focus on regeneration at the moment; and it is the place where we have started and we feel like we are really getting to know the environment here and that we have learnt a lot that we can now share with some other schools. When we started we were with two grade groups and now we are across the whole school. That competes with timetables, so the question is: does the school then allocate three hours on a Monday afternoon dedicated to music and they are happy to do that; or do we shift to move after school so that it is only one hour within school and time after school? So we still need to adjust and work with our model so that everyone can achieve their learning outcomes. We know there is a lot of pressure on schools to deliver a lot of curriculum in a small amount of time, but to be able to set up a program where we can engage with a broader community here, it really comes down to the funding that goes behind it and then making sure you have really comprehensive teacher training in there, and then spreading that throughout the school so that we can work with teachers like Helen who have the passion — perhaps not the formalised music training but the passion — to be able to continue that on at the points of time that you are not within the school operating the program.

The CHAIR — Cameron, did you want to add anything?
Mr MOWAT — I think the other thing is that, as a pilot, it would be great to patch this up to say ‘This is what it can look like’, and we know that over four or five years, these are the outcomes that can be achieved. With the University of Melbourne doing the research, it will add on to that so we can positively prove the impact of this program. The other thing is, from the MSO perspective, you have a resource at the MSO. We are not just string players; there are brass players, percussion and woodwinds, so that we can then pilot this out to all different parts of Melbourne and Victoria.

So there is a great opportunity if we look at the benefits here. I think as to the funds used at this point, what it could actually save you at the other side I am sure you know all about, but that is the sort of thing that we would be looking at — the benefits, the social impact and the savings being made there.

The CHAIR — We could talk forever. In terms of what you are doing, I want to thank you. We have certainly come away from this short experience that we have had being absolutely enlightened by the work that you do. It is fantastic; it really is.

Ms LOBB — Thank you.

The CHAIR — We might just continue on. We have a number of questions, but some may have been covered, so pardon me for sort of skimming as we are going. I think we have an overview of the music program. Your submission states that prior to the Pizzicato Effect being introduced no student was receiving private music tuition in school. Could you elaborate as to why this was the case?

Ms HATZIKALIS — Okay. The community that is Meadows Primary had — back then 93% of the families were unemployed. No child was receiving any form of music tuition outside of school, because I had asked. There was no music teacher at the time, and we were accessing philanthropic organisations like Musica Viva and The Song Room, so that was the only exposure to music that was really occurring within the school.

The CHAIR — Also the committee has heard that sometimes music loses out in schools due to a crowded curriculum.

Ms HATZIKALIS — Absolutely.

The CHAIR — That there are a lot of schools, particularly at the primary level, that are not doing music at all suggests that there are obviously other competing efforts.

Ms LOBB — Could I just add that I think that a lot of that is also because if a teacher or a group of teachers are not feeling that they are empowered with the skill to do that, it is very easy to push that to the back because you are not confident in how to deliver something, so — ‘Let us just concentrate on something we are confident on’. So I think, again, with some more comprehensive teacher training it may not drop towards the back of the — —

Ms ARCARO — The rank, yes.

Ms HATZIKALIS — Do you know also resourcing — I remember we had years at this school where no-one could track down a CD player. If you did not have a CD player, you were not playing CDs or tapes, and people were not seeing — as you said, they did not have the voices. They were not teaching songs even if it linked into the SOSE topics. It was just perceived as, ‘I do not know anything about music, so I am not going there’, and even to this point I can say that there are some prep classes that do not sing nursery rhymes and songs.

The CHAIR — Just in terms of your program here, how many hours are allocated to music and how, on the flip side of what you have just suggested, have you been able to cope with having music in amongst everything else without necessarily losing other things within the curriculum?

Ms HATZIKALIS — Firstly, when we were given the opportunity to welcome the MSO into the school, I did go to the staff and I said to them, ‘This is the opportunity. What will we do with it? Will it be
something that will be offered after hours and just as an add-on or is it something we are going to embrace and have it as part of the school curriculum?’. Overwhelmingly it was, ‘We will embrace it’ because we knew it was something so totally unique. In the difficulty of timetabling you find there are issues coming up. Next part of the question was?

The CHAIR — How does it fit? Is anything lost as a result of what you all currently do?

Ms HATZIKALIS — No, we fit around it. Yes, we have our 2-hour block of literacy; yes, we have our 1½ hours of numeracy, and then every other subject — some specialist subjects. So we fit it in.

The CHAIR — Yes.

Ms HATZIKALIS — We move our literacy blocks around the times of the MSO availability, so we are accommodating.

The CHAIR — You would suggest if the resources were there and the teacher training was there, there would be no excuse for suggesting a crowded curriculum?

Ms HATZIKALIS — Yes, absolutely. We have provided an hour of music as a specialist within the school for the last two years. That is because we value music, and from what we have seen with the children we value the changes it has made in them. We also value the need to have another hour dedicated to music to support what is going on in the program. So as a school we have accommodated it in that respect. I do actually have a rundown of times. Including Pizzicato, which is 30 minutes, and including my music specialist program, which is 50 minutes, including Kodaly, choir practice — —

Ms LOBB — Practice club.

Ms HATZIKALIS — Practice clubs at lunchtimes.

Ms LOBB — Ensemble.

Ms HATZIKALIS — And ensemble after hours and choir’s lunchtime practice, you are looking at students who are getting a minimum exposure of 50 minutes of music and a maximum of 170 minutes. That is the last five years. Prior to that you would have said zero.

The CHAIR — Okay.

Mr ELASMAR — The committee understands that you have employed a Kodaly teacher to teach younger students fundamental music skills. Can you explain please why you chose to use the Kodaly method and how it has helped students to learn an instrument?

Ms ARCARO — That is me, I think. Earlier on when we realised that we could not quite teach the children instrumental without the classroom music happening underneath, I went away and looked at the number of programs that will deliver classroom music and I looked at the number of schools that were delivering Kodaly, mostly. I was blown away. I thought that it was so good on a number of levels. It is completely comprehensive; it teaches everything that the children need to know. It is developmentally perfect for where the kids are at. It is proven. It has been used all around the world. In a lot of these Sistema programs they all use it, but also just in schooling particularly in Europe it is used a lot. It has proven outcomes.

At the same time, when I was doing all this research into the programs my own two sons were singing in a Kodaly choir at a junior level. But I got the opportunity to see the whole range and the kids who were coming out the other end of that were extraordinary in what they could do. I just thought it covered everything. I love the fact that it is singing based, because I think a lot of music neglects that and a lot of people are actually scared of singing. The most fundamental musical thing that you can do is to sing. It takes all the mystery out of that and gets children singing. From the very beginning it is based on what the children do in the schoolyard — how they sing out there.
The other thing that is fantastic about it is that the training problems that go with it are really good for musicians like myself but also non-musicians. It steps out very, very clearly and simply from the beginning to the end, and anyone could come out of that and teach music and teach music well.

Ms LOBB — Very empowering.

Ms ARCARO — It is a wonderful training course for everybody, regardless of what your musical background is. On many levels it has got that longevity. I can see how it will be with us for a long time and will benefit for a long time. It supports me in my music teaching. We have had the first group of children who had gone through the program last year start with me this year in the new instrumental intake — —

Ms LOBB — Through the Kodaly — —

Ms ARCARO — They have gone through the Kodaly and they are starting on their instruments now. The difference is huge. Compared to the group we started last year, this group has a common language. They know what I am asking them, and they know how to do it. They are certainly not afraid of singing and making noise and participating in music making. It is fantastic. One of the other things it does, which not a lot of other programs seem to embrace, is the whole composition and improvisation. They cover everything: reading, writing — the lot. They think a lot about the way that children learn, so the lessons are structured in that you might have the kinaesthetic learners, you might have the visual learners, you might have those who learn with their ears — they cover every child in their learning styles. I just think it is really comprehensive.

Ms LOBB — Even down to which pitches, which level of pitch, a child will find easier to sing at an early level, so you work with a certain number of pitches and then over time you add to them. The research is that defined that they are saying, ‘We recommend that you work on these three pitches’, so the first-level songs are all based around those so that it is an easy transition from no singing to singing, and then you start developing that.

Ms HATZIKALIS — You can imagine all that missing and trying to teach students to play a string instrument, which is what we were faced with back at the start.

Ms ARCARO — Yes, it was really impossible. It has made a huge difference.

The CHAIR — The school submission mentions that currently a generalist teacher is responsible for teaching music to Year 3 students, and a lack of funding has meant that that has not been able to occur at the Year 3 level. Is the main barrier funding in terms of being able to provide that and other added musical professional development opportunities for generalist teachers in the general teaching of music?

Ms HATZIKALIS — Funding is always an issue, especially when the school operates in a deficit, which we have been for a long time. But it is also the inclination and passion within people to seek goals. I was having this conversation with the Principal, and I said to her, ‘Possibly teachers are saying, “Look, I have got to focus on literacy, I have got to focus on numeracy”’ and any PD to do with anything other than that is just ignored’. But do you know what? It is more than that; it is people wanting to put the time in to learn. But in terms of the Year 3s, what was that in reference to? I am not sure, because our children — —

Ms ARCARO — Up to Year 3 it is Kodaly and then after that it is generalist.

Ms HATZIKALIS — Yes, up to Year 2 is Kodaly and then Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, yes. I must say that I may be a classroom teacher, but I am accessing free music resources through the MSO partnership again and that is providing the basis of my program, so the kids are not being deprived because I am getting some wonderful resources linking them to YouTube.

Ms LOBB — The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra runs Education Week, which is an annual kind of festival for school; it is sequential learning for all ages. Within that program we have a program called Meet the Orchestra, in which we run three concerts for primary schools. Within that we sponsor a third of
our audiences through donations from our annual gala, and within that the group from Pizzicato come along. So a third of those audiences are receiving musician visits, free concert access and all the resourcing that is provided to the schools that are coming to those concerts. So there is that — —

Ms HATZIKALIS — Quality resources.

Ms LOBB — Yes.

The CHAIR — In terms of other professional development for generalist teachers, what would you suggest needs to happen to ensure that, particularly schools that do not have any music programs at all — —

Ms ARCARO — From my perspective, and I see teachers come out of a generalist one — and I have been involved with some of the university-level training of generalist teachers — a lot of them are just scared of it; it is an unknown. They just need to be helped over that next step. As I said before, they move from their skill set of doing stuff that is written and everything like that to making noise — and it not being scary — and to singing. From what I have seen there is a lot of paperwork — giving kids a sheet of lyrics and singing along with a CD. I do not really consider that to be good music education. Music education is making music, and it comes from an informed background of knowing about the basic elements of music and how to teach them. It is really unfortunate, and the fact is that most general music teaching is done by generalist teachers and not by specialists, and I believe it should be specialists. But if that is the case and we cannot change it, I think there needs to be a lot of PD happening between university and teaching music in class that bridges that and makes it not so scary.

Ms LOBB — And top-down support. I think schools need to make the commitment to have music within their curriculum and then support teachers to go off and receive the sort of PD that will enable it to happen. There may be an interested teacher within a school community who wants to go and do PD, but if there is no music in the curriculum, then we are all wasting our time. So really making sure it is being driven from the top — that it is being made a priority — and then once that priority is set making sure there are opportunities for those teachers to go and learn, whether it be Kodaly or whether it be linking into the University of Melbourne’s symphony orchestra, which offers teacher PD working with musicians from across the world who teach all sorts of ways of interacting with students in collaborative composition and all sorts of really fun activities that can tie back into literacy and numeracy and everything else.

Again, it is a communication top-down commitment. It is the same in the orchestra. These programs do not have traction if our musicians, our chief conductor, our managing director and our board do not say this is important, which they have. That is why we are here.

Ms HATZIKALIS — Just as an example, Victoria University operates from our campus. Every Tuesday the students have a lecture and every Wednesday they are in the classroom. There are about 20, and not one is allowed to work with the music teacher or the art teacher. Again, it is the perception, too, from the universities and how they are linking in.

Ms ARCARO — It is incredibly difficult. I know that at my children’s school NAPLAN is everything. At the moment we are really in preparation for NAPLAN, and there is no room in what they do in the day for anything that is not NAPLAN preparation. I take umbrage with the fact that music should be provided simply because there is support for it; I think it should be given because it is good for children. It is an important part of the human condition and we should learn music, not just because it is good for your maths scores. I think there is ample emphasis on that. Music is good, and it should be taught.

Ms HATZIKALIS — This is what a lot of people do not see, and perhaps if you are a classroom teacher you see more; if you are a music teacher, you do not. It is the integration of the lyrics and the stories behind the music that can help you with NAPLAN.

The CHAIR — Just one more question: I understand the program initially started at the earlier levels?
Ms HATZIKALIS — Yes, Year 1s.

The CHAIR — Year 1, and now you have gone to Year 3. Can you briefly talk us through why you changed that?

Ms ARCARO — I made that initial decision about what age we came in and taught them based on a lot of teaching I have done in other schools. I realised that developmentally a lot of the children were not at the same level. I remember in my first or second year when I was in the middle of struggling, I thought of this. I was talking to Maureen, and I do not know what her official capacity is, but she works with younger children. She had just had the maternal health centre nurse come in to do the 3½-year-old developmental checks on her preps, and they were really happy because they had all passed. This was partway through the year, and preps by this stage are nearly five years or turning six. They were behind in a lot of areas. They had missed out on their basic fine motor skills. They had not danced, they had not moved and they did not have the coordination. Playing the violin or cello is really tricky; you are doing totally different things. It is not visual like a keyboard; it is very hard — —

Ms HATZIKALIS — It was not because of the program they were facing; it was the attendance. The parents were signing them in to do kinder, but they were not coming regularly. That is why they were falling behind.

Ms ARCARO — Is that what it was?

Ms HATZIKALIS — And at home they were just sitting in front of the TV.

The CHAIR — Would you suggest the ideal level for this program is Year 3 as a starting point?

Ms LOBB — I would suggest the ideal is having a support program like the Kodaly foundation program in early years. As Danielle mentioned, this year we are seeing our first year of Kodaly students enter Year 3. We only started Kodaly last year because we received an injection of funds through NAB Schools First, and we thought, ‘What are we going to do with this? Let’s set this up so we have really quality foundation skill building for these students in the early years and by the time they get an instrument they can really fly’.

I would suggest instrumental, Year 3, but Kodaly from prep, so you have three years of it. Next year when the current Year 2s enter Year 3 they will have done two years of Kodaly. In two years’ time the Year 2s will have done three years of it. I think we are just going to see incremental improvements in what these students can achieve. The faster they can achieve, the faster they will feel rewarded and the less likely they will be to drop out, because they will feel good doing what they are doing.

Ms ARCARO — For those little kiddies, in the beginning it was frustrating for them that they just could not do it, and they knew they could not do it.

Ms LOBB — And does it sound good?

Ms ARCARO — It sounded dreadful. Behaviourally we had a lot of troubles then, and we do not have that now. They are engaged.

Ms LOBB — In an environment where people want to be able to pick something up and do it straight away, to download the latest app and game or whatever, if you cannot achieve it straight away — —

The CHAIR — You give up.

Ms LOBB — It is that commitment thing. I would say, yes, Year 3.

The CHAIR — Fantastic. We are going to have to leave it there. Thank you very much.

Witnesses withdrew.