EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

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

Melbourne — 6 May 2013

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Ms G. Leigh, President, Victorian Principals Association;
Mr I. Sloane, Principal, Mitcham Primary School;
Mr G. Butler, Principal, Ormond Primary School;
Ms V. Miles, Associate Principal, Doveton College;
Mr J. Fisher, Principal, Oakleigh Primary School; and
Ms G. Thompson, Music Teacher, Mont Albert Primary School.
The CHAIR — Good morning, everybody. I want to thank you all for coming along this morning to appear before the parliamentary committee looking at music in schools. I particularly want to thank Gabrielle for coordinating the principals coming in this morning. It is important for us to hear from you because we think that certainly in the primary school area it is a real opportunity for us to investigate how we can improve our music offering in our schools across Victoria.

There are a couple of things I need to point out, and then I am going to ask Gabrielle to give some introductory remarks. Then we will get into some questions. Firstly, according to standard protocol we are recording today’s evidence through Hansard, and that is what these microphones are for. You will have the opportunity to review a transcript and make any corrections that need to be made. Secondly, it all sounds very formal but the evidence you give today as part of the committee is covered by what we call parliamentary privilege, which is the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament. That means you can feel free to say what you wish while surrounded by these four walls. Unfortunately the privilege does not apply when you leave the hearing proper.

That is really it for us. As I said, we have a number of questions for you. I might hand over to Gabrielle to give us some opening remarks.

Ms LEIGH — Thank you very much. We really do appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss some of the real issues around music education in Victoria. We are very pleased that primary education was included. I know there is a lot more structure within secondary, but we think we have the basis and the foundation for life for the development of music in our students. We think we have a very big role, but we have some huge limitations going on in primary government schools at present. We outlined three of them in particular in our response.

One is the lack of music teachers. A second is the absolute concentration at the moment on literacy and numeracy scores, which seems to be to the detriment of the Arts. Music very much has a place in that. Third are the budget limitations in schools. We are the leanest and meanest funded primary schools in the whole of Australia per capita, per student — that is, per student we have the lowest funding. A lot of schools do not have the resources to put into music, and unfortunately music is really suffering because of this.

We have made some strong recommendations. We would like to see a revival of music within our schools, certainly with the skilling of teachers. I think as we talk today it will be quite explicit that we do not have a lot of music teachers available to employ. We also need the funding in order to make sure those programs are of high quality. We believe that all teachers should go back to some core training on music so that they have an understanding of how important it might be. It might not mean that I teach guitar or something as far-fetched as that, but that I have an understanding. That seems to drop by the wayside in terms of pre-enrolled teacher training and pre-service education.

There are a number of people from our board today and some very enthusiastic VPA members. We think that it is of great importance, and we are really pleased to be here today to develop those sorts of things further.

The CHAIR — Thanks, Gabrielle. We might kick off with some questions. I might ask the first question and give each one of you the opportunity to introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about your school and provide an overview of how music is delivered as part of the curriculum at your school. Tell us if instrumental music lessons are offered at the school, and if so, is it through a user-pays system, and what other types of extracurricular music activities does your school provide? Give a little bit of an overview of what is happening in your school. Make sure that when you are speaking there is a microphone pointed in your direction. I might start with you, Glenn.

Mr BUTLER — Glenn Butler, Principal at Ormond Primary School. I am the Deputy President of the Victorian Principals Association. Ormond Primary School has just over 400 kids, and we have a very limited music program — very much a user-pays approach. Two private companies are engaged in teaching instrumental music. One company, Musicorp, provides instruction during school hours to a small
group of children — up to about 10 kids at most. We also have keyboard lessons after school two days a week, and probably 15 children are involved in that. So during normal school hours there is no SRP-funded teacher providing music education at Ormond. It is all outsourced and only then provided to a very select group of children. The families of the children who are involved in it obviously consider music to be very important, but within the constraints of the global budget at Ormond Primary School we are not in a position to employ a full-time music teacher or even a part-time music teacher. It is really quite a limited program.

The CHAIR — Good. Thank you for that.

Mr SLOANE — Ian Sloane, Principal at Mitcham Primary School. I have been the principal there for over 14 years, and we have about 450 children. My school values music education very highly, and we have a full-time music and performing arts teacher. Gabrielle made a telling point before about funding. I have last year’s figures here to demonstrate what parsimonious resources we have to deal with. These are not actually the figures that go into school, but they are called the ‘real in-school per student expenditure’. The last available figures were from 2009–10 when Victoria provided $11 034 per student, which was then about 12% under the national average and over $1200 less than the next leanest funded state in primary education. The situation is not all that much better in the secondary area, where we are also the second leanest funded state from the most recently available figures, which are published in the summary statistics for Victorian government schools.

Just building on what Glenn mentioned, my music teacher, who is a full-time employee, is also responsible for performing arts. Four years ago at my school the community built a performing arts centre, which is a tiered auditorium with great acoustics. In order to fully deploy the resources we have on the site we decided it was a necessity for us to have a full-time music and performing arts teacher. Prior to that the music teacher had a part-time position, but we increased her time fraction so that she is in school every day. My school also has instrumental music available on a parent-pays basis: guitar, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, percussion, violin, piano and anything else anyone can think of that children’s fingers will be able to cover the holes of; because little children cannot actually learn some instruments because their fingers are not big enough to cover the holes of the wind or brass instrument if they have a hole to cover. Those programs are available before, during and after school depending on what parents choose, and they meet the cost directly with the provider of the services. We have used other companies, as Glenn mentioned, like Musicorp. We have negotiated and had other companies in, but we decided it was better to deal with individual people because there were certain difficulties associated with companies and the provision of instruments. In addition to that, we run two choirs and have a lot of tuned percussion instruments, which the music teacher teaches during her music classes, which I can go into if you like, but I think that is probably a good enough preliminary summary of where we sit with music.

Ms LEIGH — Up until I took over this role, I was Principal at Caroline Springs College. We were a brand-new school in the western suburbs, and we shared a campus with an independent school, Mowbray College, which no longer exists but at that stage was doing quite well. It was staggering to me, as we both opened up at the same time, that I could not afford a music program but Mowbray could afford a music program. We could only afford it, as Glenn talked about, as a user-pays program, which meant that many children missed out on actually learning music. There was a two-tier system there.

We were trying to use very stretched resources to set up a new school, and you can imagine that after the school progressed and we grew quite rapidly, we looked but could not get the experts to teach music. Ian talked about his fantastic program, but you need the personalities to actually do it and the skilled people, and we found that was a real concern in the western suburbs. We hunted around, and we eventually got some good people in place, but it was about five or six years that it took to put that in place.

That gives a little bit of a perspective of the background. It is very haphazard — that is probably the word — across the state, and there is nothing really consistent. You are going to hear about some very good practices here, but there are also many schools that, when I asked them to respond today, said, ‘No, we can’t respond, because we haven’t got a program, and that would look really bad for our school’. With
that in mind as the backdrop — and Glenn was very brave that he said he would still come and be part of this — I am just trying to put that into context.

Mr FISHER — I am the Principal of Oakleigh Primary School, and we have a kindergarten on site as well. My school is approximately 300 students, and we employ a music and performing arts teacher for three days a week. I might describe it as a basic program. I would very much like to extend the program, but this is where we have a tension. At my school we have quite a number of children from non-English-speaking backgrounds. It is a very Greek community. We have had many families coming back from Greece over the last few years, and many of those children do not speak English at all. We continually have a tension of where our meagre extra funding should go. Should it go into support for children with poor English? Should it go into the traditional special needs, children struggling with literacy and numeracy, or should we try to keep our class sizes small? These are the continual tensions that we have.

As much as I would love to extend the program, we are also very restricted in the ongoing nature of the employment of our staff. When I took this position two and a half years ago I inherited part-time permanent — what we call ongoing — staff. The staffing arrangements are that they are entitled to keep a part-time position if they have negotiated that. They may not necessarily be the best people to teach music, but that is what I have. Unless one of those staff members leave, I do not have any capacity to employ someone else in that position. I think it is the lack of staffing mobility that causes us issues, as with all of our specialist programs.

I would suggest that we need probably around about 500 students to be able to employ someone into a full-time music and performing arts role. There is a very small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number. Across Victoria there is only a small number.

Ms LEIGH — It is an average of about 240 students per primary school if you average it across the state — just picking up on what Jack said.

Mr FISHER — My concern is that the instrumental music program — and I think every child should have an opportunity to learn a musical instrument — is virtually all user pays, and the children from low socioeconomic areas just do not have that opportunity because their parents cannot afford to pay for the instrumental music program.

Ms THOMPSON — Ghillie Thompson. I am a music teacher at Mont Albert Primary School. Our school has 600 students and music is valued greatly. I have been teaching at the school for 20 years, and in that time the music program has developed quite a lot and that is just because we have built up over the years. I am not the only music teacher — I am part-time with another one; we make up one full-time teacher together. We have a user-pays instrumental program and parents are quite happy to do that, but even though we are supposed to be a high socioeconomic school area there are quite a lot of school children who cannot afford these things, such as paying for an instrument, but somehow it is a priority of the school. A lot of them are learning privately too.

Anyway I will just tell you about the school. We have an orchestra and we have a choir and ensemble groups — recorder ensembles, wind ensembles and drum groups. The training that they do in the classes is a sequential program which has been built up over the years, but that is because I was trained 20, 25 years ago, or whenever it was, after I came back and did a Bachelor of Education with music, and I just know what to do, and I know the procedure. Some of these teachers that come in think you can just put a CD on and think ‘Good, that’s music’. We use the instruments; we play them. We do not sit down and write, but we do a lot of doing, and it has been quite successful. The orchestra is taken by an ex-pupil, and when I say an ex-pupil or ex-student there are many old students of the school that come back to teach in the instrumental program. We have got sort of a nice little database there. We also have a glee club. It is quite musical really. We enter eisteddfods and we do performances for the community as well.
My concern at the moment is that I have got a performing arts centre — not as flash as Ian’s at Mitcham; it was built 20 years ago — and because of the children coming into our school, it is now a classroom. It is devastating for me because I cannot do the things they used to do. The education department came out, looked at it and said, ‘No, that room is to be used as a classroom’, even though the parents fully pay for it themselves. He said, ‘Well, you’ve used our electricity for 20 years’. So we cannot use that as a music room until we get two more pupils; apparently then we can get a portable classroom and that classroom can go there. I am not that happy at the moment, pushing a trolley from room to room trying to teach music, but I do it because it is important. But it is still very hard to do what we did when we had our room.

A bit of a negative one there, but apart from that I am pretty positive about music at our school, and I am concerned about other schools that do not have this. I have a network, the Whitehorse Music Network, and I talk to a lot of teachers and the problems they have in their music programs. But I would say perhaps the Whitehorse and Boroondara area is probably quite well-resourced with music teachers. I do feel sorry for some of these other teachers, talking to you, Jack, and in other schools trying to get qualified — and I mean qualified — music teachers. I do not know the answer to that except that training in the universities is not good, because I see the students that come to our school and some of them can play clarinet and some of them cannot play anything, and they are told their assessment is: ‘If you can play “Mary had a little lamb”, you are pretty well in’. She said it is appalling, so I think that needs to be addressed.

The only suggestion I can make is the pilot music program that we used to do over 20 years ago was a group of teachers coming to schools to teach the classroom teachers how to do music, but it was teaching them with the children. It seemed to be successful at the time. We would go to about three to five schools in a week and would cover quite a lot of area. I do not know if that is another solution we could do for these students at schools that do not have music. Thank you.

**The CHAIR** — Can you just elaborate a little bit more on that one?

**Ms THOMPSON** — The pilot music program was in the Heidelberg and Blackburn areas, and the teachers were employed by a new system that was set up for this pilot music program. We went to schools. I would travel to two schools in the morning and two in the afternoon, or whatever it was. We would just come into the schools, and you can research about this: it could have been called the Victorian Primary Developmental Pilot Music Program. We would just take the classes as they were, with the teacher in the class. We would do it together, and they would see how you could teach music. The principals supported it, and it was a way of bringing music to these schools. Then you would advise them on the instruments they needed and they were only too happy to supply us with equipment.

**The CHAIR** — When was that?

**Ms THOMPSON** — That would have been 1990.

**Mr SLOANE** — I can add a little bit there to what Ghillie has just mentioned. At the time I was a classroom teacher at Greenwood Primary School in Bundoora, and we had the opportunity to participate in that very program Ghillie was referring to. The particular teacher who came into my classroom was a woman called Jan Ellis, who had previously been employed at Viewbank Primary School. What would happen is that she would come in and take a music lesson. At that stage I was reasonably proficient at music teaching so I probably was not the best recipient of the resources, but I was delighted to have Jan in because I had known her through sport. She had taken sport at Viewbank, and I was responsible as the District Secretary for sport in Heidelberg prior to me going to that particular school.

Jan would come in and her focus was to enable all the children to learn the recorder. She was very effective in teaching recorder, so we would jointly run music lessons in the classroom. I then gained a Vice-Principal’s position the following year, in 1991, so I do not know what happened to that program, but it was a funded program and it worked. It was a very good program for many teachers who did not have any musical background, because Ghillie is right about the lack of attention to music in university training courses these days, apart from MusBac at the University of Melbourne. Apart from the fact that they might
listen to MP3 and MP4 files, or CDs, most teachers have very little knowledge of what the components of music are. We are not serving our children well by precluding them from getting that experience.

The CHAIR — Great, thank you for that.

Mr FISHER — I think Ghillie has made a very important and often overlooked comment regarding facilities, because in our facilities entitlement — and Ian may help me out here — my understanding is there is no entitlement to a music facility in a classroom.

Mr SLOANE — Over a certain number, which I think is about 350, you are entitled to a 70-square-metre music room. It is actually built into the submission, and I cannot remember the exact cleavage point but there is an entitlement which many schools do not have.

Mr FISHER — I do not have a space to teach music, as Ghillie is a travelling music teacher.

Ms THOMPSON — A travelling circus.

Mr FISHER — I am sure yours is not a circus, Ghillie.

Ms MILES — My name is Vicki Miles and I am the Associate Principal at Doveton College. I have actually spoken to the committee previously, so I just want to reiterate a couple of things. Prior to my going to Doveton I was in Trafalgar, which is a rural school of 330 students in Gippsland. We did have a full-time music teacher there, but that was a deliberate choice on the part of the school. We sacrificed probably a phys ed specialist to do that. The feeling of the community at the time, it was quite difficult, because in a small rural school sport is highly placed. Our position was that within the community the children had opportunities to do is sport. They had a netball club, a football club, Little Aths, so they had the opportunity to do that. They did not have the opportunity to do the Arts. It is very difficult in rural communities to even get to music teachers, if you want to have private music lessons.

We built the program up over a number of years to the point where, out of the 330 students, we had 280 of them taking private instrumental music lessons as well after school, but we offered the program to all students, except for our youngest students, our prep students, at that time.

I have now moved to Doveton College, which is an interesting school where we have a birth to Year 9 and we are philanthropically funded for our early learning centre. We are the fifth most disadvantaged community in Australia and as such our students cannot afford to have instrumental music lessons. They cannot do it user pays, so we have 1.2 full-time teachers plus a 0.8 instrumental music teacher, and they work together in a team to teach music across the classes, using Musical Futures ideologies, which I spoke about before.

We do not have any private lessons happening at the present time, but we do have a number of lunchtime and after-school rock bands for the students, so they are very keenly participating in those. We have been operating for only about 12 months at the minute. We are including as many cultural music elements as we can. We have 52 different cultures at the school. We are doing a bit of work with our Koori community — we have a large Koori community — our Afghani community and our Islander community.

When I was at Trafalgar, talking about the provision of music in rural schools, it was one of the larger rural schools in the network. We had school populations of as low as 17 students and so we were looking at ways that we could provide our service, our facility and our teacher, to the rural schools, if they could make it in. Even then, it is difficult getting transport into the school.

In previous years, as Ghillie said, I worked in a small rural school of two teachers, and to provide us with our preparation time we had a shared music specialist. That music specialist travelled between five rural schools. The aim of that was to provide the teachers with time release, though, so we were not working with that teacher. That teacher was taking our students while we were doing our planning. That was a model that was existing probably about 20 years ago as well.
The CHAIR — Just remind me; how many kids do you have at Doveton?

Ms MILES — At Doveton, 750 at the minute.

Ms TIERNEY — I just want to touch on a couple of things that you have already mentioned, to draw them out bit more and I suppose make them a little bit more concise for the transcript. Firstly, can you give me the five top reasons as to why music education is not offered in primary schools? Secondly, what are the five top things that you think can be implemented that will ensure that music education is delivered in primary schools?

Ms LEIGH — We have six people, so we have a problem.

Mr BUTLER — Yes. One of the major reasons music education is not offered in many schools is because of the significant emphasis on literacy and numeracy achievement in schools. So schools will feel the pressure to do very well with literacy and numeracy education and that they would place music education as a lower priority because of the community expectation in literacy and numeracy.

I suppose another problem confronting principals is very limited access to talented classroom practitioners who are skilled in teaching music. There are plenty of people out there who are talented musically and they may have a teaching qualification, but they are not necessarily great managers of classrooms or great motivators of children. Often when the person has limited classroom management or student motivation skills they have the adverse effect of turning children away from music because of the chaotic nature of their classroom. To have the perfect mix of a great classroom teacher who is really inspirational and then has the added skill of being talented at music, whether it be singing, instrumental or performance, every principal is looking for that person, but they are very thin on the ground.

Mr SLOANE — A second point, following on from Glenn’s point, is that we do not have an aggregated budget where all the money from 2004 to 2005, when we had the school global budget and then the student resources package, was rolled into one month. Principals now have the choice of dealing with funds that come in provided by government, through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. As we explained before, the total quantum of resources is not sufficient in many schools to enable the provision of a music teacher within the constraints of the budget. I think that, notwithstanding Glenn’s point about there not being a really great number of talented music teachers around, the more important point is that with the quantum of resources that are provided to Victorian schools, which roughly averages about $5800 per student, when you have to employ a sufficient number of classroom teachers and you are looking at various specialist programs that you might provide, it becomes very, very difficult within that allocation to provide for a language teacher — be it Indonesian, Chinese or whatever you might choose; German, French or whatever; Greek — and a physical education teacher, which most schools regard as inviolate; you really cannot afford to not have some sort of provision of PE. Then you have got music. Some people employ a librarian, and then there is the provision of art as well. Then you have got intervention programs, like Reading Recovery, literacy intervention or maths and numeracy intervention. It really becomes a very great challenge if you have all experienced teachers, who are the most costly to employ. There is not any room for wriggling at the other end of the scale. So the second point clearly is provision of adequate funding. I think if there were to be provision, it would really need to be designated for a music program. If it were rolled into one lump, you could argue that you did not know what it is for. Therefore if you want to target music in every school as being essential, you really have to make sure that it is clearly identifiable that that bucket of money is for music teaching.

Ms LEIGH — I think we have had three points already — about the literacy and numeracy, the skilled personnel and the resource base. Another relevant point that I think we alluded to in our response was the research on the link between learning numeracy, perhaps, and music development. It is a whole area that has not really been researched to the level that we think it should be. Professor Brian Caldwell has done some research about that. Why I am talking about the research is that pre-service education does not see the value of it and teachers do not necessarily see the value because they do not see the link. So I think we need a whole lot of research that would really help develop our practice and bring that link for us in
schools so that we can understand it. That really works with the universities. They then see the point of actually working with music education as well as all the other areas in terms of training. It is that point about research that I would like to add to the discussion while I am here.

Ms MILES — Can I just add to that, Gabrielle? I think that if you look at the way the curriculum is written in Victoria, music just seems to sit with a low priority. There is not a lot within the current framework that is music specific, particularly in primary school. I do not think there is enough attention paid to how music can be integrated across the curriculum and the benefits of playing music within the general capabilities of the Australian curriculum. Those things like teamwork, persistence and creativity — there is not a lot out there for teachers that is resource based to show them how those connections are made. I think with literacy and numeracy there is and with physical education there is. So that would just be a link to that research. I think a little bit more around how we could assist teachers to see those links within their classroom would be beneficial.

The CHAIR — Just building on that, is the research that has been done to link music to improved literacy and numeracy in our students something that you think needs to be more prevalent in both informing schools and parents as well as governments, as part of the overall discussion, maybe picking up on Glenn’s earlier point?

Mr BUTLER — Yes. It needs to be more than rhetorical, though. I mean, it would be very easy for us all to sit here and make the link, but there is no point in making that link and raising community expectations about music education in schools unless there are resources to support it. Without adequate teaching spaces or adequate training for music teachers we are not going to be able to support music education in schools, and community expectations are going to be far in excess of what is able to be provided.

Mr SLOANE — Brian Caldwell published a book called *Transforming education through the Arts*, co-authored with another researcher and published through the Song Room. I was lucky enough to be invited to the book launch. There is a clear body of evidence that he has unearthed that demonstrates a tangible link between children being exposed to the various arts — which do not just include music, obviously, but all the various arts — and student achievement. Whether or not that is affected by the home background, I do not know; I did not read the research that carefully. But clearly if a child comes from an upper middle-class home where they are exposed to the Arts — where they are taken to the pantomime or they are able to learn a musical instrument — that would give them an advantage. As I think a number of my colleagues who presented to you this morning have said, there is a link between families’ economic circumstances and not being exposed to music education, because the parents cannot afford the instrument and they cannot afford the tuition. I think Mont Albert is a good case in point. Even in a wealthy community like that there are some families who just have not got spare dollars.

Ms LEIGH — Could I just mention Meadows: we talked about Meadows Primary School. It is a redevelopment in the Broadmeadows area, an amalgamation of a couple of schools. I was lucky enough to go to their concert, not last year but the year before. They are working with the MSO, and it is a lovely partnership. It works. The kids are so proud of what they can achieve, and they would not have access in Broadie to a number of these instruments. In the preliminary research it looks as though this is going into later life, that they are taking those skills with them. Because that is the whole thing — you do not want a once-off wonder that does not go anywhere. I would love to see more of that sort of partnership between a private company — being MSO, private as it is — and schools across the state if that was possible. But people have to realise how important that link is before they will take it on, and that is where I think we go back to the research that is coming through.

Ms MILES — I think I would agree. The children at Trafalgar were primary students, and after a while in our program they were putting together the whole performance. Not only were they getting instrumental music and music, they were also getting lighting and sound; they engineered all of that as well. I think we need to look broadly at pathways for children. I know that in Years 5 and 6 that might sound a little interesting, but they certainly can do it and it is certainly part of what we are doing at Doveton as well. We
are lucky we have got a performing arts centre, but it will be the students who engineer a lot of that, and I think that is part of what I am saying about cross-curricular capabilities as well. It does not always have to be just in the playing of the instrument.

The CHAIR — Sure.

Mr CRISP — In your submission you advocated integrating music into the curriculum rather than it being offered as a specialist subject. Why is this preferable?

Mr BUTLER — I was probably the one who raised that point. In education we talk about a range of learning styles, a range of entry points. If music is seen in isolation from the rest of the general curriculum, we might surmise that some children will not be interested in music because it is a stand-alone study. But if we integrate into the general curriculum, then there is the hope that the scientific type of thinker, the kinaesthetic type of learner, the philosophical type of person, might also become interested in music, but through a different pathway rather than, ‘I want to do music’ or ‘I want to play an instrument’. An example might be that somebody who is very logical and mathematical may well appreciate the logic and the patterns within music. There would be others more qualified than me to talk about that, though.

Ms THOMPSON — I do not think it should be integrated, because I think it would dumb it down. I just think it really should be a stand-alone subject. Just getting back to this other one, the key is in the teacher training. Someone said about the music, ‘If you haven’t got a good teacher, you’ve got to be able to teach students first and then teach music’, because if you cannot control your class, there is no point. That is why sometimes the instrumental teachers who come can teach an instrument but they cannot teach a whole class of children. I think if you have got those basics, then you are going to have the student engagement and it is going to be quite high in the school, whatever subject it is.

I know at Mont Albert when I see the prizes coming out for chess and all of this, I say, ‘Music. Music. Music.’. They have all done music, the ones who are getting prizes for maths and things like that. I do not know what comes first, the chicken or the egg, but certainly the music has a major part. You cannot go past the learning of an instrument with the brain or the correlation of the actual learning an instrument rather than even dancing, to me. We do dance too but I just think the instrument playing is probably the thing that raises the standard of all subjects.

Ms MILES — The two schools that I have been at we have done both. We have had specialist classes, but the whole aim of that is to bring the music within the classroom and so the kids create — not necessarily on an instrument; at the minute they are using iPads and different software — to create their own music, and that overlays presentations and things like that. They can see that they are able to work with an instrument but also that music becomes part of their life in many different ways. I agree with Ghille. If you can do it, it is useful to have stand-alone music, but I think it is also very, very powerful if we can implement that across the curriculum in other areas.

Ms LEIGH — I was just going to make the brief point about the connection with other curriculum areas. You still have to teach distinct skills, but if it is connected into the whole, then it makes it a really relevant learning. Does that clarify things, Peter?

Mr CRISP — Yes.

Mr ELASMAR — What is your overall assessment of the quality and provision of music education in Victorian primary schools? What are the major difficulties or barriers that primary schools can face in trying to deliver a quality music education?

Mr FISHER — Can I make a comment? I am sure that our committee members will be aware of the term ‘crowded curriculum’. Over my 30 or whatever years in education I have seen fads coming and going. There was a huge push in the 1970s for physical education, then that eased its way out. Obviously in the last decade, literacy and numeracy have taken over. Everything comes and goes, and this is one of our great challenges in education, because we just cannot do it all within the time restraints basically. Then
there are issues as well with our staffing profiles et cetera. There is a whole range of issues underlying all that. I do not have a great answer for that, but it is a fact of life that if, let us say, music is the next big thing, it would be fantastic. But then as Vicki said, at Trafalgar what else gives? In her case, physical education had to go. Give it another 10 years and people at Trafalgar will be saying, ‘There is too much emphasis on music. We need phys ed’.

Ms MILES — They still do.

Mr FISHER — I am not sure if that helps, but it is a fact of life that needs to be taken into account.

Ms LEIGH — Could you just ask that question again?

Mr ELASMAR — Assessment overall, and the other one is: what are the major difficulties or barriers — you probably spoke about a few things before, but the major ones.

Ms LEIGH — I guess the crowded curriculum is the second part. The assessment overall is that each of us sitting here would probably say that music education in Victorian government schools does not have the impact that it probably had 20 or 30 years ago. It is losing because I think there is a trend and we are very worried that it could be something that dies out with the people like Ghillie, who are so skilled. We do not have a new generation of Ghillies coming through — not that you are going, but you know what I am saying. It is a real fear for the future. I guess that would answer the assessment part.

Mr FISHER — The key issue, if I could really try to hit the nail on the head, and Vicki said this before, is if you go through the AusVELS — the new Australian Curriculum — you will have to work very hard to actually find where music education is within that comprehensive document. That is the starting point.

The CHAIR — Just picking up on Jack’s point about the crowded curriculum and things having to go, I would be very interested in the association’s views on the importance of where you think music sits. Is it something which for some schools is the point of difference and it should be offered to certain kids or do you feel as though, in terms of research and what we are seeing, it is absolutely essential that every school has some sort of music program, taking up Glenn’s point that there are other issues as well in terms of just ticking off what has to be done in the current climate? What is your feeling about where things should be at, given there are resourcing issues and there is classroom space, and let us forget all that and say that it is possible, if it is a priority? Do you see it as a priority or do you see we have light now in terms of being able to be implemented? Where do you think music lies as part of all that?

Mr SLOANE — To finish off the answer to your question, it is very variable in Victoria and there are some schools where there is no provision of music and there are others, like at Mont Albert and my school, where we consider it so important that we cannot afford not to have children exposed to music. I think that is the point I would start off making in response to your question, David.

I see the role of the primary school as being to expose children to every element of learning that we describe in our curriculum, and music should form a basic part of that curriculum, in my opinion. I think the view of most of the people sitting on the opposing side of the table to you, our elected representatives, would be that it is very important, but unfortunately in some cases, such as Glenn has described in his own school, the resource provision does not enable the employment of a teacher who is competent in music because there are other, higher priorities. Jack has also made the telling point that a lot of areas like science and music, and perhaps some of the other arts, are being squeezed out because of the relentless focus on literacy and numeracy because of our NAPLAN results and the TIMMS results and the Year 9 international comparisons, where Australia appears to have come to a standstill. At the federal level, the focus is then transmitted down to the state level, where we have to concentrate on maths and literacy. That would be where I come from.

Ms LEIGH — I guess what we are saying is that there is a two-tiered system at the moment. Some of the very middle-class schools have got their own programs, but most of the schools where I have taught
over the years in the north and the west do not have the programs because they prioritise the learning of English or the literacy-numeracy. There is quite a two-tiered system. If we waved a magic wand, I would love to see a number of highly trained people such as Ghillie still in the system. Jack was talking about staffing. He has a certain number of teachers he has to have at his school, regardless of what the curriculum is, to have the flexibility to be able to then say, ‘I am going to move that part-time person on and get somebody part-time in for music’. As a principal, you have the ability to staff it — so number one, the skills, and number two, the staffing. I think it is a priority. There should be more research coming out and there is more research coming out about the importance of music education in primary schools and kindergartens. Forget primary schools. We need to look before this and go into that field as well.

**Ms THOMPSON** — Phys ed is probably important at our school; it is right up there. I have to have good negotiation skills with the phys ed teacher over cross-country practice and orchestra practice. We decide who will have what. He is very obliging, and he is younger than me!

**Ms MILLER** — Welcome, everybody. The committee is interested to hear your perspectives about introducing more singing classes in the classroom and if you feel that could be delivered by a generalist teacher with professional learning and support. The second part to the question is: do you believe this idea has merit, and if so, what type of professional learning and support would the generalist classroom teachers need to be able to confidently deliver this program?

**Ms THOMPSON** — I know about The Singing Classroom. It is all lovely, and I think it is a good idea, but I just feel that it should be the whole gamut. It should be the whole thing, not just singing — it should be movement and everything else. It is the same as these hip-hop people who come and say they are going to take a hip-hop program at your school. It is very nice, but you do not want just that. You want to be able to do everything; I like to do everything myself. For some of these schools that do not have anything, perhaps The Singing Classroom is a good idea. It gets them going, and it might lead to something else.

**Ms MILLER** — At Doveton do you have any singing programs?

**Ms MILES** — We do not. Having said that, the students learn to play in bands. The whole idea is that you play in bands. So yes, they do sing, but it is more about the making of music for us. I think perhaps we need to be a little careful. I do not know a lot about music. I have implemented it in the schools that I have been in because as a child I did not have the opportunity to do it, because I lived in rural communities, and I think equity is important.

Interestingly, we need to have a look at how the 21st century is different from when we went to school. When I went to school, yes, we had ABC radio. We hooked into that for half an hour a week, and we all sang loudly together. But I did not have an iPod. I did not have iTunes. I did not have those things where I could instantly get music. The kids have that. In terms of thinking about singing, I would like to do a bit more thinking about what the place is for singing now, given that contemporary music has changed that for our kids.

If it came down to students having nothing or having singing, then I would choose that they had singing. It can be implemented very easily. My father was my principal. He turned on the ABC radio, and we all sang along. He has not a musical bone in his body. I know there are other avenues. I know Musical Futures, for example, in the UK has introduced a singing element. They do it aurally, and they do it through video, rather than just listening, so there is a component of that. That was done over there so that there was greater access to music provision.

**Mr BUTLER** — I feel that singing by itself is just too narrow a focus. I think you should talk about performing arts and have a more broad-ranging view of students’ involvement in music education. There is a performance movement aspect that needs to be acknowledged. A lot of kids might like singing, but they might also like dancing and singing. We all know primary school children love to get up and move about. A lot of schools employ professional dance companies to come in and work with the children. Footsteps is an example of that. They have been very successful at teaching children dance skills over the course of weeks, culminating in a disco where everybody feels that they are capable and get full enjoyment out of it.
They are willing to do that sort of thing each year. The program can return. Some schools employ an African drumming person, so we have lots of percussion and a very active whole body movement type of performance. That is very engaging for children. Once again, it ends up being training rather than performance. To just have a narrow focus on singing I think would be doing an injustice. There is a whole range of activities and focuses out there that we should consider as part of performing arts and as part of music education.

Ms LEIGH — Going on from what Glenn said, we would not want to say, ‘We have done singing’, and tick it off for the week if we have had a singing class. We have to be careful. But I think there is wonderful value in singing. I think working with a group together, needing to harmonise — there are a whole lot of elements that are coming out. But we would not want to go back to the old listening to singing, and then teachers having to control their grades, and it becoming a negative experience. We would have to make sure that it would be done in a video way or a contemporary way that would fit in with the context of our learners now.

The CHAIR — Ghillie, how does your glee club work?

Ms THOMPSON — The glee club is taken by the other music teacher. She has a select little group, and they just do the modern things, just like the glee sessions on television. They love that. They move, they sing, they enjoy that type of thing, but we also have the choir. Even though it has gone down by a few in numbers, although that might be because of the lack of room, we still have a good choir going, and we sing very traditional things for the eisteddfod. So we have the balance. We have them dance. We have a lot of dancing at school, because we have parents that come in. Some of them are highly qualified, and they are quite happy to take classes with the teachers there and to show them. It is just another little thing. We have a rock band, too, and they have singers, so we do sing. One other thing I was going to say is that we then have Music — Count Us In. Do you all do that at your schools?

Ms LEIGH — This is the skill that is being lost. This is my whole example.

Ms THOMPSON — No, but Music — Count Us In is from Canberra, from Peter Garrett. He has this countdown, and we put it on. You all sing the same song at the same time once a year, say, on 10 September or whatever it is. They say, ‘At 11 o’clock we all sing this song together’. Secondary students have composed the song, and you just say you are going to be in it, and they send you the CD. The whole school practises the song, and it is always groovy. Then we have this big countdown. We just have our phys ed teacher, the one with the big bellowy voice, yell out ‘10, 9, 8’, and we all sing together at this time. They think it is absolutely marvellous. They all sing a song. The whole school comes into the hall, all the teachers come in, and we have 10 minutes of singing.

Ms LEIGH — Now unless you have a Ghillie, I do not think you would be game enough to do that with 600 kids.

Ms THOMPSON — We had it on the screen, and Peter Garrett was doing it in Canberra. I thought you all knew. Certainly the Whitehorse area knows it.

Mr BUTLER — It sounds quite motivating, but today is the first I have heard about it.

Ms THOMPSON — Really? Because I am a member of aMuse I find all these — —

Mr BUTLER — A professional?

Ms THOMPSON — Australian Association of Music Educators. I get all these things sent to me. But I have grandchildren in New South Wales who have also done it and sung that song, so it is all around Australia. It depends on the school, I suppose. We all sing at the same time, and it is quite motivating. When I tell them that everyone is singing at the same time they think it is quite thrilling. I thought you all knew. I will have to send it.
Ms LEIGH — Some of this communication would come to a music teacher, but if you do not have a music teacher at your school, that communication gets lost in the ether unfortunately.

Ms THOMPSON — It might be lost, yes.

Mr SLOANE — The notice would go in the round cylinder, the magic cylinder.

Ms MILES — Ian has a few things that would end up in there.

Mr SLOANE — Yes, a lot of department correspondence.

Ms TIERNEY — Gabrielle, in the association’s submission you note that the transition between primary and secondary music programs could be better. Could you elaborate on that and also indicate some strategies on how that transition could be made better?

Ms LEIGH — I think it is not only with music that that transition could improve. It was a general comment across the board. What would happen with skill development in primary schools is that most of the reports of it will get lost at the end of primary school. The transition does not occur readily with the secondary school, or it might not translate into a teacher there, so it gets lost. So it is just to build up the relationship between the two — for example, if there was a music group that was across primary and secondary. We think one of the keys is to have cross-sector groups that discuss issues together so that you get that transition across the board, because what skills might have been developed at Mont Albert might be totally lost when the student goes into secondary school. Often they are a bit embarrassed; they do not want to stand out from their friends. They are not going to say, ‘What about this? What about that?’ at that age. They want to just fit in with the group, so there are those concerns.

With my school at Caroline Springs, one of the reasons it worked was that we were all in one from kindergarten to Year 12, and Vicki has a similar transition between Years 6 and 7. It means you do not lose those skills and that knowledge at a very vulnerable age. Yes, that was our concern. We do not really sit down and talk. Some of the secondary schools have the music specialists. We do not really sit down and talk about if we had shared people in that across the system. It would be ideal too, because then those conversations are happening. Vicki, did you want to talk about Doveton?

Ms MILES — At Doveton the same music teachers take all the kids right across, so they understand their students’ skills, and it just continues. We use a personalised model anyway, so wherever the kids are at or have progressed from — —

I think a lot of times, in my experience, in rural schools the kids have no experience, and then they go to the high schools, where they start an instrumental program, which is either frustrating for the instrumental teachers or quite diverse, depending on where the kids come from. I know it was becoming an issue for us because we were having very highly skilled students leaving our school to go to the feeder school with very traditional models. We were doing some professional development work and talking. We shared the fence, so it was not as if they were a mile away, but we did a lot of talking about what kids were doing and trying to get the secondary students over into our space because in fact we had the better space to perform. So I think sometimes it can go both ways.

Mr CRISP — Are any of you aware of any Indigenous music programs that are operating?

Ms THOMPSON — Years ago we had an Aboriginal who came and worked with our children — dance and singing — but until then we had not done much in that area.

Mr FISHER — Are you referring to programs within schools or external providers?

Mr CRISP — I think we would take either in that perspective as well because it is a very small part of our community, but it is just whether there is anything happening out there in the landscape. You guys have a pretty good view.
Ms MILES — It is culturally sensitive. At Doveton we actually have two groups of Koori people. Traditionally one group was brought in from Lake Tyers and another group from Mildura, so they are quite diverse. We have a large Koori community, but it is a split Koori community. It is quite culturally sensitive about what is introduced, but some members of our community will come in and play. We also have students who dance, and they have been involved in dance at quite a few big ceremonies, like at the MCG, but they need to decide whether we are appropriate to do that rather than us saying, ‘You are going to come in and do that’. It is a sensitive area.

Mr BUTLER — I think there is a lessening of emphasis on Indigenous education. The Wannik strategy has been quite longstanding, but it has been wound down, basically, so the government’s indication to us all is that Indigenous education is not considered important. If you look at music education as a component of Indigenous education, the indication is that the government does not value it at all.

Mr CRISP — Thank you, Ian and Vicki, because when you have those two cultural groups it is very difficult, and I was wondering how you were managing.

Ms MILES — With great difficulty!

Ms MILLER — In terms of community partnerships, do any of the primary schools have external partnerships that contribute to music programs at your school, and if so, what are the benefits?

Ms THOMPSON — Do you mean companies?

Ms MILLER — Yes.

Ms THOMPSON — No, we do not.

Ms LEIGH — The MSO one, I guess, in Broadmeadows — that is a wonderful relationship.

Mr FISHER — I think a number of us have groups that come in and run after-school programs, dance programs et cetera. Is that what you are referring to?

Ms MILLER — Yes, just whether there is any external organisation that contributes to your music program.

Mr FISHER — They contribute, but it is user pays. It is their business — —

Ms MILLER — Not philanthropic.

Mr FISHER — Yes, it is not philanthropic. That was the intent of my question to you — —

The CHAIR — It could be both.

Mr FISHER — It is their business coming in, and they are running a business. It is not a philanthropic organisation, which we would love.

Mr BUTLER — The way it works at Ormond with the African drumming, the Footsteps, is that parents pay for that. It is an incursion; it is a program that runs in the school, so all parents are out of pocket for that. We publicise the program and certainly emphasise the relevance of it so we get 100% of the children involved.

Ms MILLER — Would it be an option to have, for example, one specialist music teacher to go round to a cluster of schools in close proximity? Is that something that potentially in the future could be — —

Ms LEIGH — Absolutely. It is the only way in terms of sharing that skill. I think Ghillie talked about a program that was good in the past.

Ms THOMPSON — And the sheer sharing of resources.
Ms MILLER — Would that be best potentially looked at from, say, a council point of view or from a certain area — schools within a 5 to 10 kilometre radius? How would you see that being effective?

Ms LEIGH — It is working with our regions and our districts, with the networks that exist already, and to find the need in the network and then to work accordingly and, I guess, in a priority because you are not going to magically have enough for 70 different networks.

Ms THOMPSON — I think that type of thing should come from the region rather than from outside the school. We just have — it is not really a partnership so much — an arrangement with another school. They have a Valanga African artist in residence that they have every second year. They come to our school and work with our Year 6 children and all their students — Box Hill Senior Secondary College — and then we put on a performance for the whole school with everyone involved. We have that type of partnership with other schools. Many children from our school — obviously quite a lot of them go on to private schools — go to the local high school. Not many go to Box Hill Senior Secondary College, but their school is quite highly regarded at our school.

The CHAIR — I am just interested in your views on things like the program you are currently involved in. I am not sure whether others are aware of — —

Ms MILES — The work of Musical Futures?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Ms MILES — We use a model; it is really a philosophy called Musical Futures. It has come from the UK. It has been highly researched over there, but was developed through the Hamlyn Foundation, so a lot of money was put into the development. However, what they do now is provide all of the resources from that development free. They are available to whoever wants them.

The philosophy is around playing together. It uses quite contemporary music ideas. It is about performance and playing together. It was originally designed for students in the middle years, and I was very lucky to be involved. My school took it down to Years 5 and 6, and it was so successful that it is now being implemented back into the United Kingdom and four other countries. It is truly seen as a middle-years program. At Doveton we are running it from Year 4 through to Year 9. Through that association we have made some partnerships, and we have a partnership of a kind with Roland. They provide us with cheaper instruments, and there is a champion school model that is being implemented in Australia. We will become a champion school. Basically that just means you are a centre. We run the professional development from our centre, but also provide support through our staff. We have signed on to do that, so we share that across. It uses technologies such as YouTube. There is a site called NUMU, which is a secured site, so students can create music. They can upload that music and then students from across the world can comment on it. So it is not just what is happening in your own classroom; it is quite a global thing. There is quite a network now of Musical Futures teachers, who work to support one another through media like Twitter and Facebook. There is Ning, which my teacher at Trafalgar began, and which has quite a large following. Teachers are starting to share through the same sort of media that students are, which is really nice.

The CHAIR — Looking at that model, the Song Room and Musica Viva, which are models that support generalist teachers in schools and doing a bit of train-the-teacher type elements, particularly for schools that do not have any music programs at all, what is your view?

Mr BUTLER — Just talking specifically about Ormond Primary School, where the onus is on the generalist classroom teacher to conduct music programs, we have four soirees a year based around the curriculum grouping. Years 5 and 6 would be put on one soiree, Years 3 and 4 and Years 1 and 2 would be put on others, and preps stand alone. Our school would have four performances a year based on those groupings. The sorts of programs you are talking about would be of benefit to the classroom teacher who was teaching the kids the skills for their specific soiree performance.
Ms LEIGH — These are quite expensive programs to get into schools. Musica Viva — it is fantastic; it is a great program, but it costs quite a lot if you are going to bring them in regularly, which many schools or parents would not be able to afford. Who funds yours, Vicki — Musical Futures?

Ms MILES — Yes, there was a two-year pilot that has been funded partly by the department. That has gone now. The only thing I would say is that the training for the Musical Futures model is quite cheap, but it still runs with having a music teacher with a musical interest.

The CHAIR — I suppose the view we are seeking is about if there were programs like that which were supported by government so that schools were not in the position of trying to find that funding, would they be the sorts of things you would suggest might be of benefit to schools?

Mr BUTLER — Yes, provided the government supported that with recurrent funding —

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr BUTLER — and it was not just shaved off the top of the student resource package. We are talking about new funding that needs to be continuous.

Ms LEIGH — I guess with the idea of the singing, the broader element would be something that schools would be quite heartened that they could perhaps then deliver the curriculum properly. People would want to do it, but they just find they cannot do it resourcewise and timewise. You would start to juggle things around a lot more if they seemed to be really good quality programs like Musica Viva and the one you are talking about, Musical Futures.

Mr BUTLER — These sorts of programs are good in supporting the teachers who really struggle with music education. There will still be the schools that excel in music education because they have the community support, the passion and the tradition of doing it. Certainly so far as raising the base level of music education in schools is concerned, it would be of great benefit.

Mr SLOANE — One suggestion that we might make is that four years ago when the current Prime Minister was the education minister, attention was drawn to the fact that there was an anomaly between the way the commonwealth funded government secondary schools and primary schools. She provided $100 per student, which was supposed to go to schools. We have not yet seen any of that money in Victoria. If that money was actually to be given to schools for the purpose it was intended, all of us would be able to do something with it, and in many cases there would be the provision of music education. In the case of my school, that is $45,000, which is nearly two-thirds of a teacher’s salary. I think we could draw that to your attention as a starting point.

The CHAIR — Currently there is the musical instrument program, which is available to secondary schools and access funding for these sorts of things. If primary schools were able to access similar sorts of funding that would allow you to run a whole lot of different programs — like what Vicki is doing — would that be something beneficial to primary schools?

Ms THOMPSON — Yes.

Ms LEIGH — Absolutely, it was fantastic when we went to a secondary context at Caroline Springs College. When we got to Year 7 we then qualified for that program, and it made a hell of a difference.

Ms MILLER — With the Mowbray school that is no longer here and the new schools evolving, do you know if they are looking at introducing a music program?

Ms LEIGH — I do not know, I am sorry. I am not up to date, but hopefully, yes.

Ms MILLER — It would be interesting.

Ms LEIGH — That is right. I agree with you.
Ms THOMPSON — Our school has Oz Opera every year. It is $6 per student, but we take that out of the student allowance that the parents pay. The other thing is that we used to do MSO, but the cost is prohibitive because the cost of buses needed to take the students there is just horrific. So we have not done it, and yet it would be really good if we could go to the MSO once a year. I actually talked to them about them going over to Meadows, and I said, ‘What about Mont Albert? We are not that rich. We would love you to come over and do something like that’. That is another thing that all students should have access to.

Ms MILES — We actually are able to go because we are a disadvantaged school, but I think the most depressing thing about that is we are in Dandenong. Our students do not even travel into the city. They do not go outside of Dandenong. They cannot afford to, and they do not experience any cultural events like that, so for us it is fantastic we can take them, but it is very sad.

Ms THOMPSON — Are the buses provided?

Ms MILES — Yes, they are, otherwise we could not do that either.

The CHAIR — I have one last question, and then we will finish up. We have morning tea here at which we would love you to join us. Some of you have mentioned competitions, soirees and all sorts of different things. How important do you think having these sorts of competitions in schools is for just engaging kids in music programs?

Mr BUTLER — I think competitions in music are really quite a valid thing. It is very motivating for children to participate, put themselves forward, exceed their own expectations and occasionally win. The winning is not everything; it is the opportunity to perform. The audience is important, and I think it is most important that we give children an opportunity to strive for improvement and an audience to acknowledge that improvement. We certainly acknowledge a lot of sporting competitions and benefits there. A lot of us have good focus on academic, mathematics and literacy-type competitions — and poetry competitions and all of that — so I think competition is acknowledged as a very beneficial thing in our society.

Mr FISHER — Could I urge the committee to keep the focus on the teaching of music in schools on a regular basis, as opposed to what I regard more as recreational music. We do all of that as well — going and watching someone perform and enjoying it as we do in our own recreational time — but our concern really is the delivery of a comprehensive music education within our regular timetable.

Ms LEIGH — Could I just go back to the point that you do not always have to have a competition, because the state schools’ spectacular was fabulous. When I was at a little school without any music program it gave my kids a context of performing in a big group. That was really valued, and for a lot of the kids from nearby schools that did not have music programs it was one of the most exciting things that would happen to them in their whole life. So I just recommend how that just gave students a taste.

Mr BUTLER — I think we agree in many ways with the emphasis on the audience there, and the opportunity to perform in front of an audience is a really great thing there.

Ms LEIGH — That is the critical thing, yes.

The CHAIR — If there is anything that you would like to finish up with that we have not covered, now is your opportunity.

Ms MILES — I would just like to say that it is delightful to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the kids and on music. I know you have been working on this for quite a while now, so I am looking forward to the outcome. I think it shows that there is an interest in music, and I hope the committee has some good information and that it has an impact on the children.

Mr BUTLER — I would just like to encourage the committee to continue drawing on the broad range of opinions. Across this side of the table we have got an interest in music education, but we certainly look at it from different angles, and when each of us makes a point we do acknowledge the value of those
different perspectives. I would encourage you to not become too narrow but to continue to have a broad acknowledgement of the various perspectives on this issue.

Mr SLOANE — Actually going to schools would be one way in which you could satisfy yourself about the range of options that are offered to children in various locations. Obviously all of your colleagues in Parliament represent particular electorates, and we would encourage them to go into the schools and have a good look at the offerings we provide for our young citizens of the future.

The CHAIR — We are doing that this afternoon.

Ms LEIGH — I guess I would just finally like to say that we really do appreciate having been part of this conversation today. You can see that we are all passionate in our own ways, and we all have various levels of competency with music. Because we have evolved into such autonomous systems since the mid-1990s, it has then been up to schools to see what they can deliver, and it is an incredible juggling act for principals around the state just to see what balls they have got in their hands and what they have still got to do. I think that if we had some really good research that backed up how important music education is for people in Australia and for developing our next generation — and your report is coming out — it would really just help us along the pathway. So thanks very much. We do appreciate that.

The CHAIR — On behalf of the committee I want to really thank you all for coming out and appearing before us, for your submission, and more importantly for the work that you do in schools. We appreciate and understand that your job is very difficult, and that there is the continued pressure of balancing all the things you need to do and all of the demands. This is a very exciting area for us. I think that when you really delve deep into a particular topic as a committee you get more engrossed in it and you see the opportunities, so we are very much looking forward to coming to a conclusion and hopefully presenting a series of recommendations that provide more opportunities for our young people. Please join us for morning tea.

Ms LEIGH — Thank you, everybody, for finding time today. I know Monday mornings are really hard. We appreciate it.

Witnesses withdrew.