EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

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

Melbourne — 9 April 2013

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Mr R. Snape, Vice-president and Chair,
Mr M. Jongebloed, Government Relations Subcommittee, Australian Music Association; and
Mr J. Aldworth, The Civic Group consultants.
The CHAIR — We might make a start. I know some of the members are just getting themselves organised but in the meantime I will begin by welcoming you to the inquiry today. In terms of process this morning, we will ask you in a minute for a brief opening statement and then we have a number of questions we want to ask you. For the purposes of due process, which I need to cover off, firstly, I want to say that the inquiry will be recorded by Hansard today. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript and, if there are any typographical errors, to have those fixed. Also, the evidence you give is covered by what we call parliamentary privilege which is the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament. That only applies to the hearing proper, not outside, so you cannot do a doorstop at the end of this and bag the committee.

Welcome again. We might go straight across to you to hear your opening comments.

Mr Snape — Thank you. We would very much like to thank the committee for this opportunity. I am Richard Snape, vVice-president of the Australian Music Association.

Mr Jongebloed — I am the Director of Fine Music, a retail business. My background is that I have a Bachelor of Education and taught secondary music in government schools for five years.

Mr Aldworth — I am Jason Aldworth. I have worked with the Association now for some 12 or 13 years on government relations, polling and corporate affairs.

Mr Snape — The Australian Music Association is a not-for-profit organisation and it is the peak body representing musical product wholesalers and retailers. Musical products are essentially musical instruments, printed music and musical instrument accessories. The AMA has over 450 members and we employ in excess of 7000 people nationally in wholesale and retail businesses. Some of the initiatives that the AMA has introduced are the Music: Count Us In program that you might be familiar with, and also we were instrumental in the National Review of School Music Education that came out in 2005.

For most of our nation’s history music was a traditional, mandatory part of the Australian curricula. It was enjoyed by all school students across the country, regardless of which state or educational system they were enrolled in. In recent decades, particularly since the closure of the music branch in the mid-1980s, music education in the public school system in Victoria has been in decline. There is no doubt that this has escalated in recent times due to what we see as a total disregard by successive Victorian governments of all hues of the importance of school music. This has left our school music system, including the teaching of music teachers at tertiary level, in a drastic state of repair.

Currently Victoria is placed at the lowest level in the national scale of the provision of music education in government schools. Of course the same cannot be said for private schools, with close to universal provision in both the independent sector and mid to high-fee component of the Catholic sector. They often use this as a competitive advantage to get students — they advertise that they have music in their schools. There is now a great rate of academic literature which shows that participating in music and provision of a solid music education program improves students’ social interaction and academic prowess in critical areas such as literacy and numeracy. There is also considerable evidence that involvement in music has diverted many students from a self-destructive pathway and many of these success stories actually end up working in our industry.

We submit that this committee’s goal should be the universal opportunity for all Victorian students to gain the benefits of music at school. We understand that in part this is a question of resources, as was demonstrated by the wildly successful British Music Manifesto. Building affordable, sustainable music programs in schools which currently have nothing is about much more than cash. The United Kingdom has gone from several similar levels of music provision to Victoria to near-universal provision in little more than a decade. I expect you have heard a bit about that.

We submit that the use of innovative, whole-of-class programs such as those developed under the Music Manifesto should be an important part of building affordable, sustainable music programs. It is for this reason that the Australian Music Association provided seed funding and support for the Australian
localisation of programs like Musical Futures and wider opportunities. Structured programs like enhanced
school band programs and singing should also be a key part of a renewed focus on music education. Also,
improving the music education on offer in schools presents an opportunity for government to generate
creative industry jobs at many levels. These include, for music students, the opportunity to become music
teachers at all levels; giving students the opportunity to be exposed to a career in music composition,
performance or recording; and employment in the musical products area, either at a wholesale or retail
level.

To sum up, offering quality music education programs in schools and being involved in music has the
potential to improve academic results in critical areas, improve social involvement, create employment and
offer career paths to participants.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Richard, for those introductory remarks. You mentioned in those that
Victoria rates very low in terms of its music programs. Would you say that that is very much around
participation and that is the key problem, as opposed to the other end of the scale where you have got
excellence in terms of programs? Where are we really struggling in Victoria?

Mr JONGBLOED — I would say that Victoria has some outstanding music programs in its
government schools but it is driven by — and this was one of your questions I think — what makes a
successful program. It comes back to the quality of teachers — the school principal, the school executive
and also the wider community as far as parents are concerned in that area. I was lucky enough to teach in
the eastern metropolitan region which has a number of exceptionally good schools. I also taught in country
Victoria, where the resources were not there. I think it is the fact that, as Richard mentioned, the music
branch disappeared in the mid-80s — the central body that decided teacher placement, teacher funding,
disappeared. Then you are relying on individual regions, such as southern metro or the eastern or
Gippsland region, to basically focus on where they could put their resources. We do not have a statewide
approach that every student should have access to either a classroom program or an instrumental program;
both would be the way we would go forward. I think that is an aspect.

People say to look to Queensland, which has had a strong classroom instrumental system since the
1970s. It has slowly been touched a little bit over time, but it is still there. I would say our outstanding
schools are at that high level and are sometimes better than what is happening in Queensland, but they
have more of them. We have a couple of very exceptional programs, but then the next rung down through
resources, teacher training and expertise of teachers is where we fall away in Victoria.

Mr ALDWORTH — I can add a little to that. It is dated now, but one of the more recent attempts to
measure provision of school music at a national level was the Stevens report, which was largely funded by
the Association but done independently by Professor Robin Stevens in 2001. That indicated that Victoria
had the lowest ratio of specialist music teachers per students in the country, and that seems to be reflected
by anecdotal evidence about the proportion of Victorian schools with little school music or none
whatever. The general anecdotal view, although there is no firm recent measurement, is that Victoria is
probably last in the country.

The CHAIR — In terms of the type of model, are you advocating for more of a centralised approach
out of the state, similar to where it was in the 1980s, or would you suggest something quite different?

Mr ALDWORTH — The view right now is that it is up to the school principal. They get a certain pool
of resources, and it is up to them. But with limited resources our experience again and again has been that
where a school already has an existing school music program the parents and friends committee, the
principal, the teachers and the students will do whatever it takes to retain and resource that program, but
where it is ground zero, where there is no existing school music program, is where it is most difficult.
Given that Victoria probably has the largest proportion of schools with nothing, that is where some kind of
external assistance to kick-start a sustainable program is a great opportunity for the state.
The CHAIR — What would your view be of a successful type of program? I know you mentioned a few in your opening statements, but what are the ingredients that are required for the type of program that needs to be rolled out at the ground zero schools?

Mr JONGEBLOED — If you look back over successful programs, you see they have an integrated approach, involving an instrumental music approach and a broad classroom approach, be it through singing or a contemporary approach to a classroom. Success is basically having a twofold approach. I do not think it is having a full range classroom approach without offering an instrumental music component or trying to put in just an instrumental music component with no generalist music program in Year 7 or classroom program. Both will tend to rock and roll backwards and forwards on the success of those sorts of things. The successful programs integrate classroom and instrumental music together.

In more and more schools now — I suppose in big government schools it has been cut down — generalist classroom music is possibly one semester over Years 7 and 8. They get basically one lot in Years 7 and 8, and if they want to go on, Year 9 then becomes an elective. You see more and more instrumental music is starting in Year 7, and those students will then hopefully continue on to do VCE and so forth to university. But I think the approach needs to be twofold, with strong classroom music right across the board, being compulsory in either Year 7 or Year 8. I believe New South Wales is the only state which mandates classroom music till Year 9; I could be wrong. But in Victoria we do not actually mandate classroom music in our government schools.

The other problem as far as instrumental music goes is that if you look at all of what you would call successful models, those schools probably contribute at least another 50 to 80% funding by themselves to what they get from the Victorian Government. If those schools you class as successful — with strong choral programs, strong string programs and strong band programs — just used the resources provided by the government, their programs would drop back dramatically. Most of the time they employ double what they get from the Victorian Government now, and it then unfortunately becomes a user-pays system.

Ms TIERNEY — How do you think schools should divide time in the curriculum between music and the other forms of art, whether it be drama, visual arts, et cetera?

Mr SNAPE — The AMA is not really in a position where it can decide what the curriculum should be, as you can imagine. In our submission you will find that we strongly believe music should be a core learning subject — not necessarily part of the Arts, so to speak — and treated as a core learning program.

Mr JONGEBLOED — As far as music goes, in a lot of schools it is seen as a co-curricular activity. It is seen as outside the normal curriculum. Because it is seen like that the approach is that it is not a core subject. Most rehearsals happen outside of school time, either before or after school or during lunch hours. It gets bundled in with the other arts, either the visual or performing arts. We have the whole approach that it is a crowded curriculum already and trying to put something else into the curriculum is going to be a strain on maths and science and humanities and things like that. You can potentially look at drama, as it certainly was when I went to school, as being part of the humanities area. Dance and other forms of art were part of health, PE and those sorts of things. Music is one of those unique art forms that should not be bundled together with all of the other performing arts.

Mr ALDWORTH — One of the big differences between music and the other art forms is that music benefits greatly by being continuous and sequential in the nature of its teaching. That is one of the key reasons we would submit that the whole-of-arts approach that has been taken in curricula nationally since about the mid-1980s is the wrong approach for music. This is largely also the approach being contemplated by the national review. Where a school feels it can fulfil its obligations in respect of school music by an outing once a semester or once a year in a mix of the Arts which they can pick and choose, there is no continuous and sequential delivery of music, and therefore those children are missing out on all the academic benefits of school music.

Mr SNAPE — I think Michael just mentioned the crowded curriculum, which we hear a lot. It is an interesting situation because private schools and Catholic schools are able to offer music inside that
curriculum, and also quite often they are not at school as many weeks as the government schools. To us it is a little bit of a misnomer to say it is a crowded curriculum.

Ms MILLER — Your submission recommends that instrumental teachers should be encouraged to undertake teaching qualifications. What strategies can you suggest to encourage more teachers to undertake those qualifications?

Mr JONGBLOED — Thank you for your question; it is an interesting one. I suppose it is a bit controversial with a lot of teachers at the moment. In 2011 the VIT came out with some recommendations and changes to the role of what is classed as instrumental teaching. It is now made basically a two-class system within our government system, where we basically say, ‘If you are an instrumental teacher, the VIT says you do not actually have to be qualified’. It basically comes down to the role of the principal. He or she can dictate that your role is not classed as teaching. That means that you can then be employed as a support person within the school and paid less than a qualified teacher. At the same time the teacher is then not responsible for mandatory reporting of students at risk. Since they are actually not classed as teaching, they do not have to undertake any professional development or other skills. That has changed a lot in the last two years.

The fact is that you have teachers who want to get qualified. I believe and I am sure the committee believes all our teachers should have an education background and be qualified. There are not a lot of courses, and they are only now being developed in Victoria, that offer the opportunity to do a masters of teaching in instrumental music. When the changes happened there was no direction saying, ‘We need to produce these courses at the tertiary level to help our teachers’.

I agree that we want qualified personnel in our schools teaching music. With the changes at VIT it is very difficult at the moment to see which direction we are going. We are classing teaching instrumental music just like someone who is teaching rowing. They do not need to be qualified. That is the two-tiered system that has happened as a result of the VIT’s changes in policy.

Ms MILLER — You do not have to disclose who they are, but are there any schools that you know of where it is happening in Victoria?

Mr JONGBLOED — Yes, I know schools that are basically employing non-qualified staff and support staff to save money.

Ms MILLER — Is that in metropolitan and/or regional schools?

Mr JONGBLOED — I know it is happening in metropolitan schools.

Ms MILLER — Do you think that could also explain why Victoria has the lowest levels in comparison with national capacity?

Mr JONGBLOED — No, I do not think so. That change has happened recently. With respect to the colleagues I know of, the impact has only been in the last 12 months.

Mr SNAPE — We have been the lowest since 2001.

Ms MILLER — Since 2001?

Mr ALDWORTH — At least.

Mr SNAPE — Yes, at least.

Mr JONGBLOED — Yes.

Mr ELASMAR — Your submission notes that schools should make greater use of music technology when delivering music education. How can music technology help improve the learning experience for
students, and what are the types of barriers that prevent schools from making the best of music technology?

Mr Snape — This is an interesting one, and there will probably be a few responses here. In regard to the technology that already exists in schools, there are already software programs that can be used with the current infrastructure in all different areas — for example, software already exists that you can use through those electronic whiteboards or smart boards; in regard to PCs, laptops or iPads, software already exists that you can integrate into all sorts of different levels of music from recording to notation, to arranging. There is no great leap, if you like, in regard to technology.

Mr Jongebloed — I think the music technology used in a generalist classroom to offer a broad approach to generalist — Year 7 and Year 8 — students is being used right across the school curriculum already, including in music education. It has been happening in schools in the last 15 years, actually probably in the last 20 years. I would say Victorian schools have been heading that way for a number of years. If you talk to people in the United States, they are astounded at what we had in Victoria with setting up computer labs in the early 1980s and into the 1990s. It is far ahead of what the United States has been doing, and they are slowly catching up on the use of music technology in the generalist classroom approach.

There is a bit of a difference where the United States does not tend to have generalist classrooms. They tend to have a choral program, a string program or a band program, and you can say, ‘How can we use music technology more in the teaching of instrumental music?’. Surely it can be included. People can look at the way we teach violin. Has violin teaching really changed from when violin was taught 200 years ago? It is still a violin, and if you look back on the teaching practices you can incorporate music education and technology into that component.

Mr Aldworth — You could probably split the use of music technology into two separate streams. One is effectively as a cost-savings measure — for example, using existing infrastructure in classrooms to deliver cheap music on an iPad is cheaper than printed copies for all the children. There is a secondary use which requires a small amount of additional investment to existing infrastructure. If you are doing a room of PCs, then adding appropriate soundcards and software to enable the utilisation of those PCs in a school music setting is not much of an additional investment, but it increases utilisation of those computers substantially and adds to a given school’s music program.

Ms Tierney — Your submission mentions that many music teachers actually spend a lot of time doing extracurricular activities. What sorts of strategies could be put in place by schools to support these teachers?

Mr Jongebloed — I suppose an acknowledgement that activities they do outside of class time are part of their actual teaching load. For many instrumental teachers taking a 7.15 a.m. rehearsal before school is actually not classed as part of their teaching load. They will then potentially have to teach five-on for the day, and they may then have a rehearsal after school as well. Some of those instrumental teachers teach in five different schools.

I can certainly say from the eastern metropolitan region that on a school-by-school basis many schools acknowledge that if they are doing morning rehearsals, or afternoon rehearsals, it is up to the schools to decide that, but there is no general policy to acknowledge the extra hours teachers do in preparation is actually part of their teaching load. Whereas if you look at the private system, any individual teacher who is employed to teach clarinet gets paid to teach clarinet; and if they have to come to a concert, they then get paid for that concert. If they come to an extra rehearsal, they get paid for that extra rehearsal. Whereas with our government teachers, it is a bit of a given that that is part of the job. It would be greatly appreciated if those conditions acknowledged that conducting or ensemble direction is part of their job description. At the moment it is not part of their job description that instrumental teaching of the clarinet or flute is what they actually do.
One of the unique things in our government system is we offer programs that parents and students cannot get anywhere else in the community. We offer private lessons or group lessons, and we offer an ensemble experience, be it a choir, band or orchestra. You can easily go out and have a guitar lesson from a private teacher, or have a clarinet lesson, but there is not really anywhere else you can go and have the lesson and ensemble experience. That ensemble experience is one of the core things we offer in government schools. That is really important. The fact that for our instrumental teachers it is not acknowledged that being a conductor or an ensemble director is part of their job description. I think acknowledgement of their roles is one of the changes that would impact on a lot of instrumental teachers.

The CHAIR — I will just pick up on a couple of things. Your submission talks a lot about examples in the international marketplace, and you mention the Music Manifesto and the former Blair government’s initiatives. Could you talk briefly about some of those and about what we can learn and incorporate from those into our programs in Victoria?

Mr ALDWORTH — Obviously the Music Manifesto is just one of the most radical and far shifts in musical delivery that the world has ever seen. The United Kingdom had similar levels of provision as Australia, and this year they are now predicting universal provision in the UK as a result of that 12 or 13-year program. While originally it was a Blair government program, it has been supported by successive governments and by Boris Johnson heavily. He has actually invested City of London money into further investing in instrumental music in schools in London. There are many dozens of programs that came out of the Music Manifesto, which was in part funded by the national lottery money. One of the benefits a smaller jurisdiction like Victoria has is that the UK has made access to a lot of those learnings and programs available via the Association.

Many tools and programs were created and delivered out of Musical Futures. One of the really big changes in terms of music education and pedagogy is an emphasis on whole-of-class music programs. Like Australia, with low provision in government-funded schools, while most traditional music educators would like to see the kind of music education that right now you see in independent schools rolled out in state schools, it is acknowledged that there would be a financial cost to that which most governments in the current environment would find difficult.

While you want to protect those great examples of small group teaching that do exist within the system, programs, whether it is Sing Up, Musical Futures or Wider Opportunities, they are all predicated on upskilling the generalist classroom teacher who is already there with specialist help and assistance from specialist classroom teachers, as part of a whole system, so that whole classes and hundreds of kids can be delivered a meaningful school music education with the kinds of resources that used to deliver school music to only a handful of children.

This is not without controversy. This is a significant change. A lot of people within the sector would like to see the kind of school music that happens at Melbourne High or Scotch College delivered to every child nationally, and there would be significant benefits to that. Whole-of-class probably is a bit of a compromise, but it is a compromise that can make a difference to a lot of kids.

Mr JONGBLOED — I think the changes proposed to the British model at the very beginning the report in 2011 entitled Making every child’s music matter, looked at what was happening in the initial programs. They tried to make a case for introducing singing back into the primary schools in the UK leading up to the 2012 Olympics and having mass singing as well as the Musical Futures and other whole-of-approach programs.

I think Victoria could certainly look at the research and at how things have impacted there. I also believe that the UK model is a little bit different in that they actually engage local councils and communities. It is not just the government putting a product in their schools, it is a wider approach — local councils funding, private providers putting in teacher training. And now they are trying to accredit TAFE courses to make sure the people who are delivering these programs have the skills and it is not just the guy who learnt guitar 20 years ago going into a school and offering a program. They want to make sure that people are provided with these skill levels.
It is certainly worthwhile looking at that, and the 2011 report, which is I think report no 2 into the Music Manifesto, makes interesting reading and has a different approach that Musical Futures and other programs are a small part of trying to get a bigger model back into primary schools in the UK and into the secondary schools as well. In Victoria we do not actually have primary music teachers in our schools; they are not there. Our courses do not train any. It requires a school-by-school approach to put in a primary specialist music teacher.

**The CHAIR** — Has the Association done any polling in regard to music and what the view is?

**Mr ALDWORTH** — Over the last decade there has been quite a bit of research, both in Australia and overseas. It is not academic research, but public opinion research. NAMM, which is the US equivalent of the AMA, in conjunction with Gallup started a poll every five years, commencing I think in 1994, on community attitudes and participation in music and the views of the community on school music.

The Australian Music Association has now taken that Gallup poll and run it in Australia twice with a fairly substantial survey size, I think close to 1000 people. I think the UK has also now run that Gallup poll in that market. The results in the English-speaking markets are relatively similar in terms of public attitudes to school music. I can run you through a couple of numbers.

Most people believe that music helps a child’s overall intellectual development — 86% of Australians in total agree with that, 43% strongly agree and 43% mostly agree. In terms of whether music should be mandated by individual states, the result is quite interesting. The question, and it has been asked in both Australia and the United States — was whether music education should be mandated by the states to ensure that every child has an opportunity to study music in school. In 2001, the first time that question was asked in Australia, there was total agreement of 74%. That is now up to 87%, with 51% of Australians believing that strongly and 36% mostly, which is slightly higher than agreement in the United States.

I have also been involved in some qualitative research, focus groups of parents in relation to a number of education activities over the years, and school music has been very much one of those. This is why there was such a push for school music in the United Kingdom. For parents of children going to state schools, school music is one of the things that, quite simply, they feel their children are missing out on by going to a state school rather than to a private school. There is masses more but that is just the top line.

**The CHAIR** — We are going to have to finish up there, but can I ask that you provide that information to us separately, particularly on the polling details. That would be very useful. Is there anything that we have not covered that you want to briefly make mention of?

**Mr JONGEBLOED** — I think the only thing, insofar as you mentioned a little bit about the training support, which unfortunately the Victorian Government cannot do anything about, is that the teacher training at our tertiary institutions has been on the decline for numerous years in Victoria and is certainly at the bottom as far as teacher training and offering appropriate courses to upskill. But we are saying that if successful music programs are built on expert teachers and quality of teachers, then we have to look back to where the teachers are being trained. I think that is a huge point that unfortunately state governments do not control.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much for coming and thanks for your very detailed submission as well.

Witnesses withdrew.