CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

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

Melbourne — 9 April 2013

Members

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Witnesses

Mr C. Earl,
Ms G. Gardner,
Ms N. Vagner,
Mr L. Trigg,
Ms A. Robinson,
Ms J. Bunn,
Ms M. Barrow,
Ms E. Bibby,
Mr P. Sharp,
Ms J. Dema,
Mr D. Scott, and
Ms J. Geddes.
The CHAIR — I welcome you all here this morning for our instrumental music teachers’ forum. I particularly want to thank you all for taking time out of your own schedule to be here for this very important inquiry. I understand for many of you it is the school holidays and the fact that you have chosen to be here is very fortunate for us indeed. This is an important inquiry which gives us a real opportunity to look at music education in our schools and ways that we can improve what we have currently got and make music available to all. It is very much about improvement and that is what we are looking to achieve.

I inform you of the parliamentary process component. You will notice microphones in front of you. They are primarily for the purpose of recording the evidence for Hansard. All the evidence we hear today will be transcribed by Hansard and you will have the opportunity to review the transcript and make changes to typographical errors.

When giving evidence, we will have to run a teacher-pupil system today because there are so many of you, so if you could indicate by a show of hands if you want to make comments on a particular question. I will then call you and before you proceed please state your name so that Hansard can identify each witness.

The other thing I need to mention is that all evidence — which sounds quite formal — is covered by parliamentary privilege. That is the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament and you are certainly covered with regard to anything you say in the hearing today. That does not apply to what happens outside this particular process in the forum itself. We will briefly go around table for you to indicate your name, the school you currently teach at, a very short introduction and maybe what you teach.

Ms GEDDES — I am Jane Geddes. I am Co-coordinator of the Bendigo Instrumental Music Program. We provide instrumental music to the five government schools in Bendigo. I teach brass as part of that load.

Mr EARL — Chris Earl from Bendigo. I am a private teacher. I have been teaching brass for about 35 years. I only have one student at the moment. It fluctuates but I have prepared students both for AMEB and VCE as well, in a private external capacity assisting schools.

Ms GARDNER — I am Gayle Gardner. I am an instrumental music teacher teaching flute as my main instrument, saxophone and clarinet. I teach in three schools at the moment: Strathmore Secondary College, Melbourne High School and Brighton Secondary College. Over the years I have taught in 19 different schools. I have coordinated an instrumental music program for over 10 years.

Ms VAGNER — I am Natalya Vagner. I have taught in two public schools in the last eight years, and unfortunately the funds were cut and they could not keep music. I am a music specialist and pianist, and I teach piano, instruments and music in classrooms. I continue teaching privately, and I have taught hundreds of students in the last 15 years.

Mr TRIGG — I am Lee Trigg from Vermont Secondary College and Norwood Secondary College. I have been teaching woodwind since about 1974, and I have taught across the private system and the high school system and in Western Australia.

Ms ROBINSON — I am Anna Robinson. I teach piano at two state primary schools: Flemington Primary School and Brunswick South Primary School. I also coordinate the program as a parent-volunteer at Brunswick South Primary School.

Ms DEMA — I am Joanne Dema. I teach classroom music at Norwood Secondary College in Ringwood, and I am also the Instrumental Music Coordinator at the college for the nine staff there. I am also the friends of music coordinator, so I deal with how parents can assist to fundraise et cetera for the program. I am a classroom teacher, but I am overseeing the instrumental music program.

Mr SHARP — I am Peter Sharp. I am the Coordinator of Instrumental Music at Frankston High School, and I teach woodwind instruments.
Mr SCOTT — I am Don Scott. I work at Princes Hill Secondary College as an instrumental teacher. I have been an instrumental teacher since 1971. I was a regional coordinator in the west for about 15 years, and I have an active interest in community music as well as school music.

Ms BARROW — I am Marianne Barrow. I have been teaching for 28 years across the southern and eastern regions, all in government schools. I am currently full time at Glen Waverley teaching strings.

Ms BUNN — I am Jemima Bunn. I am currently on leave from instrumental teaching. I teach clarinet, and I have worked in the past at Glen Waverley Secondary College and Camberwell High School as music director as well as a couple of short stints in the eastern region.

Ms BIBBY — I am Emily. Until about a month ago I was the singing teacher and director of vocal and choral music at Cobram Secondary College, a program that has completely disappeared since I left and moved to Bendigo. I am working part time at Bendigo Senior Secondary College doing a little bit of instrumental music teaching, but I think I am the only singing teacher here.

The CHAIR — We have a very good mix of expertise around the various regions, so thank you again. I am going to kick it off with the first question, and it is around funding. Firstly, are there any changes you would like to see made to the current model for allocating instrumental music funding to schools? The second part is: should decisions about instrumental music funding continue to be made at the regional level, or do you think funding decisions should be centrally coordinated? Who would like to go first?

Ms VAGNER — I have a question. Do we have any funds for instrumental teaching at schools?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Ms VAGNER — Because the schools that I have worked at would not have had any funds. It would have been parent contributions.

The CHAIR — Currently there is a pool of funds that are available, and on a case-by-case basis schools apply for that funding.

Ms BUNN — I can only say, having worked in the eastern region, that I guess the biggest change would be to have an increase in the funding. The funding from my knowledge has stayed the same for the last 25 to 30 years. Regardless of the different gradings of teachers and them going up in levels of competency or anything like that, the funding has stayed the same. Therefore, it is a bit of a Tetris game of shifting the same amount of money around the region to different schools as they have a flux or an ebb and flow in their instrumental intake. The change would be to actually invest in instrumental music past what the levels were in the 1980s. That would be something to consider.

Mr SHARP — Supporting what Jemima says, the funding for instrumental music has not increased in a very long time. Frankston High School is in the new southern region. You will have to forgive me, but I cannot remember the new title; we have just done a merger with the eastern region, I think. That region is one of the largest growing in the state in terms of the number of new schools. There has been no increase in instrumental music for a long time. The spreading of funds across a large number of schools simply means diminishing the programs in those schools that are already established. That is really what it comes down to. In essence the problem is lack of money. There needs to be more money for instrumental music.

On the second half of the question regarding the regional level, I am a big believer in the regional system. I can only speak for the SMR, of course, but I think that the SMR has done an excellent job of being fair and listening to every school that has asked for money. At a regional level, the regional coordinators have a deeper understanding of what is happening in each school, and it is important to remember that instrumental music can vary from school to school. It is very much a school-based subject at the moment, so it is important that there be closer contact with the process of funding than, say, just at a central level.

Ms GEDDES — The other thing I would like to mention with regard to funding is that the difficulty we are now having is with the VIT’s new regulations, which mean that qualified teachers are the focus of our employment, which is a great thing, but of course they cost a lot more salary-wise than the people we have
previously been able to employ. To my knowledge, the funding has not expanded to cater for that, and we have found it really difficult to restaff or continue with our staff as they get qualified in programs.

**Ms GARDNER** — I can only support Peter in what he said about an increase in funding. I too agree that regional funding has worked very well in the past. The most crucial factor of that is that the people involved in the region need to have hands-on experience of what is happening in the schools. The further you get away from the schools the further loss of control we have. Sometimes there have been experiences where the money has gone to the schools and there has not been any monitoring further on, and what has been done with that money is that the schools have reallocated the money elsewhere, away from instrumental music teachers. The regions need to be monitoring what is actually going on and having that hands-on experience.

I am listed as being from the northern region. I actually teach in the southern region and the western region, so there is a slight mishap there, but to my knowledge with the northern region there is not a regional coordinator or there has been one only in the recent shift. I can only support, from the perspective of the western and southern regions, how valuable those coordinators are in supporting schools and supporting teachers. In the southern and western regions they provide professional development and big concert band playing days, and smaller school programs can be involved in that, so they can have access to resources outside of their schools. Taking away from that would be detrimental to the overall effect of the programs.

**Mr TRIGG** — I would like to support what Peter said as well. One of the first comments I got from a principal was that it was a shame that I am qualified as an expert teacher, because he could have employed somebody much cheaper. Principals, if they have a lot of control over the funding, tend to see it from their own point of view, whereas when it was done regionally they took into account the students, the staff and the whole program. I am not sure that some principals view it that way. They see it more as extra money for the school and ask, ‘How can I use it?’ It has been a bit similar to that at another school that I am at as well, because I am at two schools.

The **CHAIR** — So you would advocate for not only allocation but monitoring of that funding to ensure that it actually goes where it is meant to go, which is what Gayle said before?

**Mr TRIGG** — Yes. Being through the region, you are talking to people who understand an instrumental music program rather than speaking to a principal who perhaps does not understand how an instrumental music program should be run. So it makes a difference, especially when it fluctuates from year to year.

**Ms BIBBY** — Further to those two points, I can say that that is exactly the situation that has occurred at the school that I have just left. We had a partly funded instrumental music program that I was teaching, which was equivalent to about a 0.4 position perhaps, and it was funded through region funding; but when I resigned for family reasons I was not replaced. The principal has decided not to use those funds to continue the instrumental portion of my teaching load. I think that is a great loss to the school, but it also raises a few questions about the allocation of funds. So, sadly, it does happen.

**Mr SHARP** — I am just concerned that the image given at the moment is that the funding that is provided is paying for the instrumental tuition that is occurring right now within the state. It is not. I cannot think of a single school that does not supplement the cost of instrumental music.

**Ms BUNN** — Correct.

**Mr SHARP** — To some considerable amount. It is happening for two reasons. First of all is the complexity of your program. If you are looking for more specialised teachers you have to employ them, particularly if you have VCE students, but that is going to cost you more money. The school has got to put that in somehow, whether they charge the parents or they find money from their global budget. You will have to forgive me; I know global budget is not a term used any more but I cannot think of the new one. The other thing that happens, too, is that the amount of money provided for instrumental music does not cover the cost of paying for the teachers that are provided by the state in that the money provided for
instrumental music is a generic amount. So it takes an accomplished teacher level — we have gone past graduate level to the next level; maybe accomplished teacher 2 — but if you have a number of expert teacher 4s or expert teacher 3s the school can be supplementing their wages by up to between $40 000 and $50 000 before you even start looking at employing extra instrumental staff. So there is quite an inequity in the amount of money that is provided already.

The CHAIR — I will take two more comments, and then I want to sum up on this point.

Ms BUNN — Further to that, of course, it means the systems we are producing are elitist because the parents need to pay the schools for participation in instrumental music, and that closes a lot of students off from the opportunities of taking part in those programs. If we continue in the way Peter is saying with funding, the funding has to come from somewhere, and it inevitably will come from the people as a user-pays system. I guess that, for music education, it causes disparity between instrumental music education and every other bit of education. It is privileged to some who can afford it, and it is not privileged to others who just cannot put that forward.

Ms DEMA — I agree with what has been said about the allocation of funding. Every year the principal at my school will tell me, ‘We are between $40 000 and $60 000 short of the amount the school has to find to make up the wages for the instrumental staff. How much are you going to cost me this year?’

If I want to apply for someone else, a specialist to come into the school to teach a particular instrument, it is, ‘Well, how are we going to afford that?’ because that is the amount he is looking at. From reading through submissions leading up to this week, in some schools it is $100 000 and in others schools it is more, so clearly the allocation of funding is inadequate. Even for a small school like mine with only nine instrumental staff, we are $60 000 in the red every year. It is a problem.

The CHAIR — Does anybody have a contrasting view to what we have just had in terms of the allocation of the funds?

Mr EARL — This is probably not a contrasting view, but I think one of the central questions that emerges is: where does music fit within the curriculum? Is it co-curricular and user-pays; or is it, as many of the submissions have suggested in this inquiry, that there are benefits across the entire education spectrum? So that is one of the very first questions to be addressed: is it co-curricular, where the parents are dipping into the pockets and teachers are doing a lot extra, or is it going to be integrated into a whole-of-curricula approach? I would favour the latter, of course.

The CHAIR — That touches on your point, Mr Elasmar. We might take the opportunity to talk just a bit more about that. Obviously we have some passionate individuals around the table, but in terms of what is seen as a crowded curriculum and with pressure from a lot of different areas, particularly art, drama and music tended to be condensed into one. Where do you see music fitting, bearing in mind the pressures of everything else that happens in a classroom?

Mr EARL — I believe music fits in as the next core subject. So you have English, mathematics, and music is your next core subject.

The CHAIR — Why?

Mr EARL — Because of the benefits of stimulation. It has been proven, going right back to Canadian studies, in assisting the development of students in core academic subjects. Over the last few years there have been a number of studies in the US, which I referred to in my submission, pointing out the benefits of music in the development of language for the students. But then there are also the social aspects that are attached to music that can also benefit learning and education. It may not be an in-vogue word to use, but there is that level of self-discipline.

The CHAIR — Before I get anyone else to comment on this, you have all been elevated to the position of principal of your schools. Can you give me a view now about where you see music sitting?
Ms BUNN — I see music as an intelligence, and that is the difference between music and the rest of the Arts. If we go back to Gardner’s theory, music is an intelligence in itself, and some students benefit by learning through that intelligence. We make way for the other intelligences — kinaesthetic and all that stuff in other subjects — but this is a unique environment where students can take advantage of a different perspective of the world.

The CHAIR — So you would still have music as a separate unit?

Ms BUNN — I would definitely have music as a separate unit.

The CHAIR — If you had to manage everything, you would still find a way for it?

Ms BUNN — I think you would see, since the 1980s when we got rid of the music branch in Victoria, that there has been a significant shift in how music has been regarded, and probably our biggest issue was when we were classified with the rest of the Arts. That has been a big difference.

Ms BIBBY — There is a lot of pressure on principals at the moment, too, to be demonstrating how they are creating student pathways post-school and into the workforce and the community at large. Unless we make music one of those significant pathways through school we are not going to be producing students who can go on to university and professional work in music and all its associated industries. So we perhaps need to think too about the broader community outcomes of not educating students broadly in music.

Ms ROBINSON — It should be treated also like a language. LOTE was introduced in primary schools, I am not sure when. I grew up in the United Kingdom, but it was certainly here when I arrived in Australia 20 years ago. I think music should be like that. It is a literacy and it develops those parts of the brain as numerous studies have shown, and I feel it should be considered like that.

Ms TIERNEY — Shifting the conversation a little bit to pragmatics, there have been some issues raised with us about instrumental teachers and teacher registration issues. Can I have your views about that, and what changes, if any, you would like to see in terms of those requirements? Then I would like to move on to the engagement of instrumental music teachers generally and how they are employed in schools and what the employment arrangements generally are.

Ms BARROW — Having taught for 26 years or so as a fully qualified teacher, and now to suddenly find myself considered merely an instructor, even though I am paid as an expert, is just ridiculous. My salary is as an expert teacher, but under the VIT and Education Act definitions of a teacher, I am not considered a teacher because my subject is not core curriculum. We have to get away from the terms ‘core curriculum’, ‘extra curriculum’, ‘wider curriculum’. It is all curriculum. It is just crazy. We have teachers working in schools who are not fully qualified, but they are still expected to take ensembles and stuff. It just does not work.

Mr SCOTT — The VIT thing is creating real problems in schools, and it is quite unjust what is happening. Classroom teachers, because they teach a class, are considered core curriculum. Instrumental teachers, because they teach small groups and do not take classes, although they might take ensembles of 50 or 60 kids every week, are not considered core curriculum. Yet they are the very people who are teaching and giving the kids the skills to go on and do VCE, for example, in things such as solo performance, and to perform at that level; that is mainly done by instrumental teachers. That is creating the core curriculum, but it is seen in this sort of narrow, defined way which just does not mirror reality.

There is a lot of injustice going on. People are supposedly now considered to be instructors, or something less than teachers, which is a real insult to people who have often been doing it for 40 years; suddenly they are reclassified like that by somebody who does not know what they are talking about, basically. There are people who technically should not be allowed to take ensembles without a qualified teacher supervising them. In schools that just does not happen. People are doing this all the time. It is like having an apprentice chef who is not supposed to be in charge of a kitchen but is actually doing it because the people do not have to pay them properly. It is just ridiculous. So the VIT, unfortunately, as I think I mentioned in my submission, are a very poor organisation in this way. The old teachers registration board was much more sensitive to those issues and coped with them much better. Unfortunately we are not good when we change.
things to do with learning from what was there before. When the VIT came in they did nothing about learning what had gone before, and so they have completely sort of stuffed it up.

**Mr Sharp** — While I agree with what Don is saying, I also have a level of understanding about what the VIT is trying to do. Those teachers that are in instructor class — and I have to say that I am in instructor class myself — although we have got qualifications within our subject area we are not holding a Dip. Ed. I think what the VIT is trying to do is make sure that every teacher who works within a school and is classed as a teacher has a Dip. Ed. That is what it is about.

If I could just go to an extension of Gayle’s question, though. I think you are referring to teacher qualifications and learning for instrumental music teachers. I would have to say at the moment from an instrumental teacher’s point of view there are no courses available in Victoria at least at a tertiary level that would qualify anyone to be an instrumental teacher. The thing to remember, too, is that being an instrumental teacher is not just about teaching your instrument. It is also about taking ensembles. There used to be a fabulous course operating at what was Melbourne Teachers College, which got amalgamated into The University of Melbourne, and that was basically an ensemble-based course. Trainee teachers had to learn how to take large concert bands that are directed towards students, how to operate small ensembles, how to coordinate those bands and of course how to teach their instruments working on the pedagogy of their instruments. Through that they got a Dip. Ed and a degree in performance. There is nothing available at all now which prepares teachers for that kind of work.

**Ms Bibby** — As a singing teacher I have a slightly different view on this as well, but it probably agrees with Peter’s point of view, which is that without a formal assessment and training procedure for singing teachers what sometimes happens is that people who really should not be teaching singing end up teaching singing. I do not know whether it is as significant an issue for other instrumental groups as it is for singing, but it is a particularly significant issue for singing teachers that there are people without any professional qualifications in singing. Perhaps reality television is to blame a little bit for this. However, I do tend to agree with the VIT’s insistence on teachers becoming qualified and registered because of the issue that I see with singing teachers.

**The Chair** — I want to extend the question so that you will be able to continue on this theme. Do you think there should be a minimum requirement qualification, and what does that look like or what should that be? Are the universities in the VET sector providing enough in terms of flexibility and opportunity for that? If not, what should they be doing? It is sort of an extension to where we were at.

**Ms Geddes** — I would like to go on from what Emily was saying. There should be more recognition for prior learning. In our situation we have a lot of teachers who have been teaching for a long time. They have amazing expertise on their instrument and through their teaching experience they are very qualified in our eyes. But they are now finding themselves in the position where there are support staff, and not every teacher is going to be able to deal with that with their family situation or whatever. So we are going to lose instrumental teachers. I have been talking to other coordinators and the possibility of having to re-staff what was a perfectly qualified and committed staff is a really scary prospect to us.

As far as the training goes, I agree with Peter. There is not a suitable course available where our experienced teachers can go and get themselves reskilled or add to their training in. We have had a couple of teachers who have done distance ed. courses and only through the schools have we been able to make that work so that they can have the time off that they need to go and complete the practicums and things that are required to get that qualification.

**Ms Bunn** — I was going to say much of what Jane said. The thing I think we are finding — and it is partly what Marianne was saying before — is that it is now up to the principal to classify whether you are a teacher or not. We were talking about funding and allocations, so if you were a principal of a school and you were really pushed for funding, why would you not employ someone as not being an instrumental teacher so that you could afford to pay them in your budget? It benefits principals to do that, not that we want that information to get out. Therefore we have issues where we have someone who is unqualified as a teacher taking a band of 70 kids at 7 o’clock in the morning. The qualified staff cannot always be there to be with them, and you have issues of mandatory reporting. Because they are not teachers, they are not
required to mandatorily report on anything they see and they are not educated in knowing what that actually is either. Also, they do not have to do professional development, so there is a lot of conflict going on within that system of what their responsibilities are as not being teachers. I would totally agree that there are no courses for experienced teachers to go through to get to that point where they have a qualification, because they have to give up 45 days of their schooling to satisfy the in-class requirements.

Ms VAGNER — I think schools should be employing specialist qualified instrumental teachers, and I think they should have registration. I do not know if the VIT need to change the structure of how they register the teachers. But instrumental teachers should also be included in the community of schools, and the principal should be worried about that. Otherwise they would be like outsiders. They need to provide constant concert programs that will raise funds for schools. They should inspire the community and they have to be involved in the community so they are real part of a school’s music education as well. Apart from music teaching in the classroom, as for general teaching, instrumental teaching should be coming together in a good team and working together with the teachers and the principal. I think then the whole school music education would be much fuller and work together.

Mr EARL — I would like to pick up on that. I think that is a brilliant idea. Why do school ensembles run cake drives when they could make a CD?

Ms VAGNER — Yes, exactly.

Mr EARL — You use the talents that you have best.

I would like to pick up on the area of recognition of prior learning and so forth, and ensuring that structures are in place for people in those categories so that they can continue to connect. Not so much from a regional perspective of Ballarat and Bendigo, but let us look at some of the smaller communities across country Victoria. They do not have the same access to those highly qualified instrumental teachers. In that local community there might be someone who has achieved and has a fantastic level of experience, but we cannot always bring them into a school environment because the necessary boxes are not able to be ticked. We have to look at the practicalities of the implementation of ensuring that there is access to instrumental music, but there have to be the checks and balances.

We can look at what I think was a real golden age for the development and emergence of instrumental music in Victorian schools, in the old technical school system that was sadly closed down. In the mid to late 1960s — and I am the product of that — the local bandmaster was brought into the two secondary schools in the town, in Maryborough, and we blitzed the field for about the next five or six years. He did not have single qualification, but he knew about the instruments and, importantly and picking up on a point made earlier, he knew about ensemble. That ensemble component of teacher training has to be developed a lot more in the 21st century.

Mr TRIGG — I would like to give an example of someone I know, an ex-MSO player and ex-West Australian Symphony Orchestra player. She has had a great deal of difficulty getting qualified to teach in Victorian schools. She was accepted to do her postgrad on violin, saying that her years playing in the orchestra satisfied the criteria, so she did her postgrad and got first-class honours. She was then deposed out of a school by a qualified person. I agree there should be some short course that would suit this type of person, as you have just explained. There are a lot of excellent people around who teach at Scotch, MLC and Tintern who have no formal qualifications and absolutely are brilliant teachers. If there was some course that was short, succinct, to the point and gave them a qualification that they could slide in, it would benefit millions of students. I think it is very important that we are actually losing those very high standard communicators of music, but you do not necessarily get that when you finish your degree, because, as was explained earlier, there is no course that teaches you to be an instrumental music teacher. It is based around classroom teaching and instrumental as a side issue.

Ms ROBINSON — I agree with what Natalya was saying about simply accreditation. It may not even involve people doing courses. An inspector or somebody could go out and watch these teachers in action. You can see pretty quickly whether somebody is a good teacher or not.
I also wanted to raise something I have seen and heard accounts of that is happening in primary schools — that is, commercial operators are going in. Principals want to be able to market their school by saying, ‘Yes, we offer instrumental music’, but they do not want the hassle of engaging instrumental teachers, so they get commercial operators to come in. Some of the reports I have heard about these operators are, ‘The teacher had grade 2’ — that was the qualification — which I got when I was nine; no practice required, no instrument required. This is not instrumental teaching; this is really the lowest of the low. I think these people need to be stopped. Again, accreditation would help to weed those people out. I have had students come to me who have been learning in these programs for two years and they and their parents have said they have learnt more in their first lesson than they learnt in two years of group teaching. I think that is something that needs to be taken into consideration.

Ms GARDNER — We need to think about the value of the qualifications and the distinction between having fully qualified teachers and unqualified teachers. I am a fully qualified both classroom and instrumental teacher. The big difference I notice is that when you have a qualification as a classroom teacher you have a whole-school perspective in how the whole school runs and how a classroom runs with a discipline. Even though a lot of these instrumental teachers are fantastic at what they do as teachers in their area, it would be good to have a course that could upgrade them so they could have a much bigger perspective of how the overall school functions rather than just coming in and doing their one little bit. A school is a whole unit; it is not just one area. That is vital, and it is vital to have some sort of upgrade in qualifications for those people.

Mr SCOTT — I agree with everything about qualifications, but what Lee and Peter said is just vital. I came up through the old tech system as well. There is a precedent in the old tech system, in which people were brought in from industry to teach kids automotive or things like that. It was a well-established principle, so when people came in with instrumental experience — and people did not come in without that experience and expertise — there was a way for them to be employed. Where the VIT is making a serious mistake is downgrading these people’s prior experience and often demonstrated experience from many years on the job. That is the thing that is really causing a great problem in schools amongst the staff, whereas we all should be working together. Programs really work well where instrumental teachers and classroom teachers work absolutely cooperatively in supporting each other.

Ms VAGNER — Exactly.

Mr SCOTT — The people who have real expertise in certain areas do it whether they are qualified or not, so the whole thing works brilliantly. That happens in private schools all over the place. At the moment we are creating a rod for our own backs in state schools. We are seriously losing a lot of very good teachers, and there is no reason for it. There are ways from the past that we can learn from so that people can get in. Courses can be established, and people here have pointed out very clearly the type of things that should be in those courses. It is just a matter of us doing it.

Ms DEMA — I want to agree with a lot of the comments made about instrumental staff. I have also seen a number of excellent teachers moved out of our school because they do not have VIT registration, and then other staff come in who do not do as good a job. Perhaps there could be a significant course that staff could do, but not a four-year addition. Some staff say, ‘I won’t do it; I am not going to restart my study’.

There is also a real problem when I ask for a job description to advertise a position. Our school does not have not a job description for an instrumental teacher; what is posted is the job description for a classroom teacher. I feel that at the top end there is not an understanding of the role of an instrumental teacher, whose areas and standards they teach towards are different to classroom work.

I agree there should be a course that is accessible and ticks the boxes. We should get it in and keep the staff we want to keep and make it work. We do not want to lose good staff. Having said that, I am supporting VIT as well, but I am saying we should not lose the gems we have who are walking out.

The CHAIR — In summary, there is general agreement across the table that there should be some form of qualification that is accessible and flexible to be able to bring people in and through.
Mr ELASMAR — Some submissions have noted that there needs to be greater integration between classroom music programs and instrumental music lessons in high schools. If you agree, how do you believe the work that instrumental music teachers do with students should be integrated into classroom music programs?

Mr SCOTT — They are absolutely complementary, because, as I said a second ago, a music program works well as an integration between the kids who are learning instruments, the kids who are singing, the kids who are doing all those things and what they are doing in a classroom. Where they are getting an often general introduction to all those things, the specialist deepens the knowledge of the students in all sorts of ways, but the programs work together. They are absolutely unified in what they do. There should be no real difference in a school between the role of the classroom and the instrumental teacher. There is a technical difference, but in the outcomes for students it is all offering a total package to students.

The CHAIR — While you are answering this question, Joanne, can we also just keep at the back of our mind that some schools do not have any classroom music program at all, so factoring in the need for potentially having a general program and then an integration of the more specialist program.

Ms DEMA — Classroom music and instrumental music are inextricably linked. They support each other, and the more that we have a crossover between them the stronger the program is. A quick example is our school had all our string staff taking all the students from a classroom music class and teaching them strings for half a year to form a string orchestra. It was a fantastic and very successful program, so I say we have got to build that in. That makes a successful program, and we need to value each other equally.

Mr EARL — Classroom and instrumental music are just two separate branches of the one tree. In terms of how they are linked, I believe at the moment we are not making enough use with young emerging, aspiring musicians of the AMEB syllabus. If we look at how the AMEB syllabus is structured, there is the practical component and the theoretical component. If there were greater encouragement to attain these benchmarks, I believe that our students going through their secondary school would be learning at a more benchmarked rate for theory and with practical as well. In fact they would be better prepared for university admission.

At the moment universities use AMEB as a prerequisite. They have levels set, so should our curriculum not work backwards from that? Otherwise universities should be told what they are expecting is wrong. If we are looking at the outcomes down the track — that is, where students are aspiring musicians who have to attain a certain level — then let us work backwards. Then the two can be complementary in the classroom at the secondary level.

Ms BIBBY — I just make the point that VCE and music performance units 1 to 4 require students to be participating either in a very small ensemble or taking solo lessons in instrumental music. If students have not participated in a classroom setting in prep to Year 10 that mirrors what is expected of them in VCE, then they find VCE and the demands of music performance units 1 to 4 very, very hard. If they are not used to integrating the skills that they learn in their instrumental music lessons with the classroom and in a classroom setting and if the teachers are not used to working those two aspects of music education in together, then music performance is a very, very difficult proposition for these students.

Ms BUNN — I just wanted to briefly say that we also have to think though that not every student is going to go and do music performance. We want to encourage all students to be involved in this subject and this area, and we cannot necessarily use VCE or AMEB as our guide, because they are performance oriented. We really want to have students who come out of our schools loving music and take that appreciation onto their children so that we have listeners, we have audiences, we have participants in garage rock bands and we have people who when they are 60 can say, ‘I used to play a bit of guitar and I want to get back in touch with that’. It is all that kind of thing, and it is not just about producing performers.

The CHAIR — Just extending on from that theme, what strategies do you think we could be using in our schools and particularly at the primary level — and I mentioned earlier about some schools having zero music programs — to actually encourage students to get that feel for and taste of music?
Ms BUNN — Part of that is getting in early. So many things have been recommended about primary music. We have so many spokespeople. We have a national review that recommended it. We have so much evidence about primary music, and of course in government schools primary music is not acknowledged at all unless the school desires for that to happen. Getting in early and making that a culture is really the perspective that I would favour — where music just is. It is not something that is separate; it is just part of what we do, like maths, English and all the other things.

The CHAIR — I know that I have just added something into the thing, Marianne, and I have skipped you, but can I just ask who else wants to make a comment on that? So we have Jane, Gayle, Lee and Anna. Excellent.

Ms BARROW — Actually I was just going to say pretty much what Jemima said about using AMEB as a model, and the students that unis cater to is a very limited range of the students we teach.

The CHAIR — Sure, so we extend that flavour in terms of trying to encourage more people into music programs.

Ms GEDDES — The key point is not all primary schools provide music, and that is something where we need funding and support, so that it is not a principal’s decision: do we have somebody that teaches the music class? It is a matter of there being teachers and specialists available who can teach classroom music and give children that start they need, so they have got the opportunity to continue and get to VCE, as Emily said. Because if it is not there, then for some children the boat has gone, it is too late and they have missed out. Whereas if they have got that grounding in music in primary school, then the extension work we do and the collaboration between instrumental and classroom is something that we can take further, and we do not end up with this situation where we have got some kids who have had experience and are ready to go and we have got other kids who are starting from the very ground level.

The CHAIR — If we were going to encompass music in primary school for all kids, at what year level should that be?

Mr EARL — Prep. Kindergarten.

The CHAIR — I knew what answer I was walking into.

Ms GARDNER — I just wanted to take a step back to the first question about the integration of classroom and instrumental teaching. You cannot have a good instrumental program without a good classroom program. They need to work side by side, and I think there is a little danger here because we have talked about them being an integral part, but the classroom program does not replace a specialised instrumental program. The specialised instrumental program teaches the discipline of the instrument, and it is not possible in a classroom of 30 or 25 students to actually teach the integral part of playing that instrument. The classroom teaches appreciation of that instrument, and it actually allows students to create music using their current skill levels and combining them. It expands their horizons, but it does not teach the actual discipline of playing the instrument. There is a real danger there that we might replace instrumental teaching with some sort of integral classroom program thinking that is actually providing quality specialist teaching.

The CHAIR — Okay, great.

Ms GARDNER — Could I just say one more thing about the primary school? Quite a few years ago we used to have specialist music teachers who were going around to primary schools teaching a classroom music program. I believe it is certainly a step forward to actually move back to that — that is, some sort of half-hour or 1-hour program once a week for all students covering all levels; and there needs to be quality professional development given to the current classroom teachers so they can follow up with some very simple, basic things in their classroom. We can develop resources. The old ABC songbooks with the CD and that type of thing, just singing, having those aural experiences and movement.

Ms VAGNER — Exactly, and movement.
Ms GARDNER — Primary school students need to develop rhythmic awareness through good movement, and that can be done very simply at the primary school level and create that culture of loving music from the word go.

Ms ROBINSON — With regard to the primary schools, certainly from my experience what I see is that part of the problem is music being incorporated in performing arts at primary level. It is so much easier for principals who have no musical knowledge to employ a drama teacher than it is for them to employ a music teacher, or for that matter a dance teacher. Ninety per cent of those principals, I would reckon, go for drama over music. Even at schools where a music program is established, unless there is a classroom teacher and a parent body there to support it, there is a risk that it will not continue. If a non-musical principal comes in, it is like, ‘Oh, it’s too hard; I don’t know what to do’. So you need to have at least one musical member of staff to oversee things and make sure that music is included in the school life.

Ms VAGNER — I just want to add that I think music general teaching should be music in classroom in primary schools from prep level in every class for at least half an hour a week; 45 minutes would be better. Instrumental teaching for primary kids should be from Year 2, when they already have general singing and movement and they are already using all the different Orff and Kodaly systems; when they are ready and tuned. Then by Year 2 they are more focused and ready for even just recorders or starting different little instruments.

Mr TRIGG — At private schools they start teaching woodwind in about Year 4 — that is at Scotch. At MLC, at Year 3 and 4 they are starting to teach woodwind. The teacher who starts them often stays with them for nine years. That is one thing classroom teachers do not get. You can talk to principals; they do not get that you are going to have that same person, even starting at Year 7, for six years, because there are very few classroom teachers that have the same person for that length of time on a one-to-one basis every week and then take them in ensembles. This is a whole different experience to having a new set of students every year in Year 7. As for those who drop off the perch — well, you expect that you will not win everyone. But with a small instrumental program you only have to lose a few key students and it affects your whole program. What we are trying to do is keep people for a longer period of time.

I believe music should start in primary schools. It is fairly obvious. The reason that instrumental teachers cannot teach down is a standards thing. A lot of the tech guys went from here when they were discarded from the Victorian system. They went to Western Australia and set up what I think is a wonderful system. We always started kids in primary schools at Year 5. By the time they got to Year 7 they were used to the same teacher, they were often included in the high school program and there was no transition like there is at the moment. The other thing is that the standard of teaching would then be across the board, whereas at the moment in the schools that I am in often the standard of teaching in primary schools contrasts greatly with what we offer in high schools. The contrast between what they have been given, both in the standard of excellence and the type of music they have been given when joining the music program, and trying to get them to head towards VCE is huge. whereas I did not notice that contrast in Western Australia or in the private school system, where the one teacher starts at Year 3 or 4 and continues through. The students understand there is a system.

The CHAIR — We will take one more, Peter, and then we will ask another question.

Mr SHARP — Just in support of what Lee has just been saying about the standard of teaching in primary schools, my own experience has been that, first of all and as Anna was saying, some of the local primary schools in our area have employed private companies to come in and do instrumental tuition. Under parliamentary privilege the only word I can use is ‘appalling’. The standard of teaching is absolutely appalling. We are finding that those students who come in in Year 7 and say they have been playing their clarinet for three years really have to go back to square one. They have wasted their time and their money. We are not being overly critical. We try to be as accommodating as we can, but nothing has really been achieved that our department would consider as being of a suitable level of education.

I do think there is a need for a good level of training for primary teaching. Our experience again has been that because some primary schools are offering instrumental programs where the students have learnt to a considerable level — and we are getting some students coming from further regions where they have got
to third or even fourth grade on their instrument by the time they have got to Year 7, this is the AMEB standards, which is a considerable level of playing — they may only last with us for two years. By the time they have finished Year 8 they have been playing their instrument for nearly 5 years; they have had enough. They move on to do other things. As Lee was saying, at the high school level, although it is not our overall aim, we should be trying to get students to play their musical instrument right through to Year 12. Whether they do VCE music 1, 2, 3 and 4 or not is irrelevant, I think; it is them playing and then going on to the community.

A lot of the primary school students, from my own personal experience, are very jaded. They move to high school, and they want something new. They very quickly move off to new things, even though we try our best. We do not put them in the beginner bands — we have several bands — we allow them to move up more quickly and that kind of thing. In some ways I question the need for instrument programs in primary schools. There used to be a bigger variety of things for the kids to do at primary school level. There is nothing wrong with recorder. A lot of primary schools have abandoned the recorder. I do not know why; you can study recorder to diploma level.

Ms DEMA — I know we are done and that Peter was the last speaker, but I must speak up for primary school music programs. I would hate the only record to be that it should not be there. A lot of people here I recognise as having been at, for instance, the Melbourne bands festival. The number of primary school bands and string programs, but more particularly bands — we allow them to move up more quickly and that kind of thing. In some ways I question the need for instrument programs in primary schools. There used to be a bigger variety of things for the kids to do at primary school level. There is nothing wrong with recorder. A lot of primary schools have abandoned the recorder. I do not know why; you can study recorder to diploma level.

Mr SHARP — Some should not; I think maybe they are biting off more than they can chew.

The CHAIR — I am going to leave it there.

Ms MILLER — My question to the panel is: it is clear that instrumental music teachers take on significant amounts of extracurricular work as part of their role, what strategies do you believe need to be put in place to support that instrumental music for teachers?

The CHAIR — We can discuss the extracurricular activities and that singing component that Elizabeth asked about as well.
Mr SCOTT — We all used to sing along to the ABC on the radio. They had special programs for primary school kids. As you mentioned before, Gayle, the ABC songbooks are still fantastic resources around schools. They are still knocking around — a marvellous resource. They could still be used or reprinted, and CDs could be played along. At least it is a start at something.

I would like to see instrumental teachers — I have had this experience myself — being recognised within a school for what used to be called higher duties allowances. They were for people who were running outstanding ensembles, or whatever the school community considered to be a great load of extra work, which often requires arranging and doing all sorts of extra work. Arranging music for that particular group is quite often necessary, because in schools the reality is that you cannot buy music that suits your particular group. They might have some real weaknesses and some real strengths, so you need to be able to write music that brings the best out of those kids and caters for all of them. It can take a huge amount of time.

I have been given a higher duties allowance in a school for doing stuff like that, and other people I know have too, but it is relatively rare, and it is difficult because often people are teaching in several schools in a week. One of the things that is really important about all this rego stuff and everything is that it locks people out of those sorts of school structures where their extra work can be rewarded. It is only for people who are recognised as the full bottle in terms of teaching. If that could be solved, then people could have access to those sorts of things, be recognised by their school community as doing an outstanding job and be paid for it.

The CHAIR — Just before we move on to the others, is there anyone else who would like to comment on the higher duties allowance? Are there any other schools currently paying a higher duties allowance for teachers in this regard?

Ms DEMA — We used to.

The CHAIR — Emily, in your case?

Ms BIBBY — I guess mine is the same but different. I was employed at our local primary school. I am a secondary school teacher, but I did a one-term contract last year for the sole purpose of running the primary school musical. It was the only example of singing that any of those students participated in all year. It was only the Year 5/6 students, so it was only a very narrow band. In terms of a model for being paid for the work that I did, it suited the principal and it suited the Year 5/6 teaching team, because I was brought in additionally to do just the musical. I do not know whether you would call it a higher duties allowance or extra pay, but I was paid for the time that I was there. It worked quite well as a model. I was an outside specialist or professional coming in for that one activity.

The CHAIR — Do people agree with the sort of thing that Don is proposing?

Ms BARROW — It was actually part of the reasoning behind the regional coordinators: it was another opportunity for instrumental people to get higher pay. Of course some of those positions now do not exist.

Ms GARDNER — I have a few comments. I will go back to the singing, but in terms of the higher duties allowance, one of my schools quite a few years ago paid out of their own budget supplementary allowances for those people conducting bands as recognition. Some instrumental teachers teach very long hours. Concert bands starting at 7 o’clock or 8 o’clock in the morning and often going to 4.30 p.m. or 5.00 p.m. in the evening. Some teachers in multiple schools could be doing four of these bands per week. Most instrumental teachers are involved in one band, if not every day. The contact hours can be quite extreme, and I think that needs to be recognised in some form.

Coming back to the singing aspect with primary schools, singing and the oral tradition is such a simple idea at the primary school and certainly secondary school levels. Most young children learn through singing, right from nursery rhymes. I think the majority of classroom teachers do something like that in their classes. If they have a singing background, they will sing along to a couple of small things at the prep level, but it dies out after that. It would not be very expensive to integrate singing as part of the primary
school program. At least that way when they leave primary school — we are looking at the minimum
here — they have had some sort of enjoyment and appreciation of music and the vocal tradition.

One of my schools, Melbourne High School, is a Year 9 to Year 12 school, and it is very strong in music.
An integral part of its program is that the whole school has singing one period a week as part of their
school activities. All the boys at each year level will go off to sing in one period. At the end of the year
they will have a performance as part of their speech night, where the whole school, that is 1300 boys only,
stand up on stage and sing. I have taught there for more than 19 years now, and every year it just gets to the
heart to think not only are these boys singing but they are singing with passion and they really enjoy it.
This is just at the pinnacle of their musical experience — if that is all they ever have at that school. It is a
very simple idea, and it certainly can be implemented at the primary school level fairly cheaply.

Ms VAGNER — Just to add to the topic of singing, isn’t singing the most natural musical experience
that we have? Straight away when we are born we are vocalising first and then we are speaking. In Italy
we are always saying why when they are born do they sing straight away? Because they do — it is in the
culture. Why don’t we also make it the culture in Australia? Singing is the most natural thing. I have
worked in primary schools for the last eight years, and children love singing. I have been singing and
dancing with them and having fun. Did you get taught? No, I had fun. It is a fun thing for children. It is the
most natural thing.

Through singing you add a little musical element and you keep teaching. It should be part of music in the
classroom. It is normal. It is lovely. Then they can go into the choir, the performances, the concerts and the
school production. The whole thing just layers and layers. Then you can invite instrumental teaching from
Year 5 and 6. Maybe it can be made a compulsory program at school, so when the students go into the
colleges they already have a little instrument to play. The college can actually have a good band playing,
and then there is a kid getting inspired about music. I think the stages come naturally to children.

Mr EARL — I would just like to pick up on what Natalya was saying about the culture. The culture
begins literally in the womb. I think it is up to all of us to nurture it right through, from primary school on.
In terms of singing, those ABC broadcasts were fantastic, weren’t they?

Ms MILLER — I agree.

Mr EARL — They were really great, but they were part of the culture. The musical culture is not
always encouraged in our education system. It is a bit of a clash of the giants of music versus that other
five-letter word that Richmond is doing quite well in this year. It has to be part of the culture to flourish
and to avoid that drop out.

I think it was Peter or Don who was talking about how kids have grade 3 or grade 4 AMEB when they hit
secondary school and then they drop out two years later. That was identified in the national study by the
federal government a couple of years ago. I think boys drop out at about 12 and girls about 14; that is the
average for drop out in participation in instrumental music and/or dance. But if it is part of the culture and
they grow up with it, it reduces the risk of drop out.

There will always be a risk of drop out; we know that. The worst thing about teaching young people music
is when that great one gives it away, because they do. But we can promote the culture, whether it is
through school choirs or recorder bands, which are the best thing ever to judge at eisteddfods. I used to
love hearing the little recorder groups from primary schools. Let us develop the culture and therefore have
it as part of the curriculum right through.

The CHAIR — I am going to go back to Peter, and then after Peter speaks we could also think about
the use of technology as part of teaching. There are lots of different programs and things that young people
are really immersing themselves in. What role do you see that as having in the school arena, particularly at
the primary level?

Mr SHARP — Just to come back to the initial part of the question regarding extra duties with
instrumental teachers and what have you, we have not spoken about the management of an instrumental
program. It is quite different to any other classroom scenario, even down to when you start your first year
and you do not know whether you have any students or not. Every teacher that turns up to a school knows that 7A has this number of students in it, whatever group it is, 26 or 27; there is a list of names.

As an instrumental teacher I do not know who I have got and as the coordinator of the subject it is my job to get out there in the school and sell the program. That in itself can take me three-quarters of term 1, and that is just one small component of managing the whole thing. You also have to throw into the mix the fact that you have staff to look after, because strangely instrumental coordinators seem to end up looking after their staff more than the school administration does, and you also have to throw into the mix the management of the instruments.

Frankston High School has a policy of encouraging students to buy their own instruments as quickly as they can. We have a very mixed clientele and many of them cannot afford to do that, so we also have a large instrument base which has to be looked after. I am talking hundreds of instruments and talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of instruments. You have got to take care of the loans yourself and you have got to make sure that everyone has signed all the pieces of paper. It is a never-ending job. On top of that you also have to teach. I can do many extra hours of work just taking care of that. I know many other subject coordinators also work very hard, but I think the situation is particularly onerous for instrumental music coordinators.

Then also if the program is fairly large — I consider our program fairly large in that we have four concert bands, several stage bands and small ensembles — they all require performances. The directors take care of their performances, but as a coordinator you should be there to hear them play, and those performances are not necessarily within the school because there is a lot of community involvement. I am sure everybody here gets involved in their community at some level, which means playing on weekends, going on camps or trips or whatever. A case in point is myself. We have become involved in a program to help promote Frankston and later in the year we are doing a big performance with James Morrison. I had a 7 o’clock in the morning business meeting with the group that is promoting that, which meant my day was very long. I am not complaining about that, but it is just an example of the peculiar kinds of things that instrumental teachers find themselves involved in that the normal classroom teacher would not.

The CHAIR — Moving on to the technology component, the committee has heard already that there have been other examples where you have jurisdictions that have low participation in music, particularly at primary level, and Victoria is one of those that has a very low participation in music programs per se. There have been examples where technology has been used, in the UK particularly under the former Blair government, and that meant that music re-emerged and was repositioned in that particular arena. What is the view of the participants around the use of technology in empowering classroom teaching at a broader level and combining that with specialist teaching? Chris, do you have a view, and then Natalya, Gayle and Emily?

Mr EARL — I come very much from a rural and regional perspective. I think even in major communities, in regional capitals like Ballarat and Bendigo, there is still a level, and at times a quite a discernible level, of isolation. There is not the same access. The pool of participants is not as great; they are not just down the road or around the corner. They might be right across town, and even to go across town in Bendigo now is a half-hour trip — it is quite literally half an hour — so the use of technology is important in giving access to performance appreciation and performance viewing, but also for mentoring of teachers and students who are emerging with a particular specialty. Then those students themselves need to have access to peer support. I will give you two examples. A young, aspiring musician in a regional area might want to have weekly access — let us say you were participating in MYM, which is a brilliant course — to MYM every Saturday. But hang on, that is five hours on a train or the parents take you up, or whatever, so when does the homework get done? There is still that core curricular homework that has to be done over the weekend. When does that get done? They are further away.

I had a student going back about seven or eight years now — she is now out teaching — who travelled twice a month from Mildura to Bendigo while doing Years 11 and 12. That essentially meant that she was up at 6 o’clock to come to Bendigo for a lesson, have lunch and go home. The whole family did that. Using technology would help, whether it be mentor support, peer support, even lessons over Skype. I am aware of, of all things, a pipe band in Warrnambool that is of a very high standard. They have survived
their isolation and people moving away from their country community to Melbourne by operating a weekly Skype lesson and Skype practice. That is how they have had to survive. It is about being creative, having in place the access and creating an awareness of these programs.

I suppose two areas where I think from a rural and regional perspective we can maximise the use of technology is in the development of structures and networks for mentor support for teachers and for students, but importantly peer support for students so that at any time of the day or at a certain time of the day they are with like people. Again, this is to ensure that there is not that dropout when boys turn 12 and girls turn 14 because there is a higher level of dropout in country areas as that national study showed.

The CHAIR — We have time for a couple more and then I want to ask one last question. I had Natalya, Gayle and Emily on my list, so if we can leave it at that and then I will ask my question.

Ms VAGNER — I agree with Chris about rural areas and travel and the use of technology, but also the use of technology in primary schools is important. But it is all about funds. We need to have money to buy all this recording equipment, microphones, and so on. I do it with my private students; I record them and I put it on my website. I do it because I love it. Again, the level of practising and performing increases because it is very stimulating. In a lot of cases you just cannot do that. You do not have funds. You just cannot use technology. But if you can, great. In primary schools it is about recording; it is about listening. That is what kids love; they go crazy about that.

In secondary schools the use of technology is fantastic to start using composition. Finally, they can actually express themselves through composition, through making the music; and this is what we want in education. It is like art. In art you paint your little painting and that is exhibited. In music we have to have self-expression. When we compose something we recreate something. It is self-expression, and this is what should be encouraged — great self-expression for students. Through the use of technology, yes. For garage bands there are plenty of music programs that you could use in secondary colleges.

The CHAIR — Thank you. I have got Gayle and Emily next. Could you also think about, and Natalya just mentioned it, things like garage bands and the like in terms of student-centred learning as part of that at primary school level?

Ms GARDNER — I think there are a lot of fantastic apps out there for tuning, ear training and playback, like the garage bands. That is also for computers and certainly can be used. My point is that once again there is a danger that these technologies will replace the actual involvement in music itself. These are all aids. The whole point of music experience is the personal involvement. Just putting children in front of the computer with some sort of program and thinking that you are delivering music is not music education.

Ms BIBBY — Very quickly, instrumental music teachers all need to have access to this technology, and they need to have the PD in it as well because not all of them do. If they are not recognised as teachers under VIT — or even if they are, they are not necessarily recognised by their school as being on the staff — then they do not get the department netbook or laptop and they do not get the PD that goes along with it.

The CHAIR — Thank you. This last question is particularly for those from rural and regional areas. It has been touched upon already. Are there particular issues with instrumental music in rural and regional areas that instrument music teachers face when it comes to programs, that the committee needs to be aware of? Are there particular issues in rural and regional areas that we have not potentially touched on already?

Ms GEDDES — I think access is the main one, access to professional musicians. The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra is here and Orchestra Victoria is here. Orchestra Victoria runs a great program where they come to the regions, but that is once a year that we get that opportunity. Access to professional musicians and artists-in-residence programs are great for us because the artist can come up. All our kids get that experience and that participation and opportunity. Some of our kids do not know what the pathways are, because unless they have been down to see a concert themselves with their families, they have no access. So the artists in residence, the access to professional musicians and then also the access to
the universities and pathways like that, because it is not as easy for them to go and do the open days and whatever.

The CHAIR — On the flipside, I am going to ask all those from rural and regional areas: is there anything that the committee should be aware of that is working well in your region that we could be applying to other regions and areas within rural and regional programs?

Ms GEDDES — The Orchestra Victoria on the mOVe workshop is one that we definitely look forward to each year and we hope that continues. The Castlemaine festival has done another great one for us, where they brought up the AYO. The Australian Youth Orchestra also do a bit of touring in their smaller groups. More of that would be fantastic for our areas. Then obviously in Bendigo we are lucky because the department funds the program that covers five government schools. We are able to share our resources and get a bit more access for the kids that way. Yes, there is certainly a sharing of resources and opportunities for teachers to meet and discuss the network with each other, because we do work in isolation a lot of the time.

The CHAIR — Other rural and regional areas?

Ms BIBBY — As I said earlier, the program that I ran at Cobram Secondary College has now completely disappeared because there has been no commitment on the part of the principal to continue it. I think that lack of consistency and availability of staff in regional areas is a really significant issue. I do not know how hard the principals try, but that is not my issue.

The CHAIR — Anything on the flipside?

Ms BIBBY — When there are staff at the school that I have just left, when we had a really well staffed team, the program was fantastic. I think it does probably come down to finding the right people and putting them in the right schools and working with the right groups of adults to make sure things happen.

The CHAIR — Anyone else? Chris and then Lee.

Mr EARL — Firstly I would like to come in very much in support of Orchestra Victoria. It is a fantastic program, and it should be four times a year. Seriously, in an ideal world it would be once a term. That is probably where the students would benefit most. Orchestra Victoria last year had an extension program where it brought together I think about 70 from across all of regional Victoria for an end-of-year performance in Hamer Hall last December. That was great. That gave 70 young country Victorians two opportunities of exposure with OV. But it needs to be more.

I think there are opportunities, and in creating those opportunities in schools and communities I think we need to not just look within the school confines but we need to look at the opportunities that are available in the broader community, whether it is the AYO, the ACO or the Australian National Academy of Music, which has some great outstanding ensembles. We probably need to look to be getting those ensembles into regional Victoria as well. It is the access — it is being able to share with other musicians, for teachers; being able to share with other musicians, for students — and the more opportunities there are, the better.

I think there is also the matter of access, because those really keen people and the families who support those really keen young students will also then look to make trips to Melbourne. I think it is only the MSO that has a special student package available. I think there needs to be encouragement for that, because it is what teachers inculcate in the classroom in young students — the appreciation and the involvement — whether that is in the instrumental classroom or the classroom generally itself. But it is what happens outside — it is that same access. It is not just in the local community; it is a trip into Melbourne. A number of initiatives could be looked at to encourage that to happen without it being a further great impost on the parents, as we have already heard, who are paying extra for this lesson, for that lesson, for this concert et cetera. The parents carry a very large load already and there is a limit to how far they can go.

The CHAIR — Lee, the final word.
Mr TRIGG — I have worked for a long time in Geelong. There are small schools there that have instrumental programs that have perhaps under 100 students or fewer — below 50 even. They really value regional band days, regional string days and the opportunity to perform. The small schools value the opportunity to perform in large venues. It is the same thing in Melbourne. If you are in a school that has a small music program, it is very valuable to be able to send them off to play in a band that is 100, where they do not have one trumpet player, they have 20. The whole sound and the whole experience is entirely different and extremely valuable.

From an instrumental teacher’s point of view, it is wonderful to be able to sit back and let someone else take your students in the band situation and actually talk about what music you have been using. ‘Why do you have so many good trumpet players when we are down?’ ‘That is because we do this and we do this’. ‘How did you recruit so well?’ ‘We do this — we go out to the primary schools and we do this’. ‘Wow, I never thought of that’. I think the regional days for the student are really valuable, but it is also valuable for the instrumental teachers to talk, because we are often in our own little universe, and to meet up with others is wonderful.

The CHAIR — We have concluded in terms of time and we have well and truly had a great opportunity to learn so much about what has been going on from all of you. I want to thank you for the contributions you have made today. In the spirit of cooperation, networking and professional development, we would like you to join us for lunch to share some more stories and learnings, because I think one of the things also here is just being able to listen to you all, as you all just have so much to add. Part of it, really, is sharing some of the great things that people are doing in different areas in being able to ensure that that best practice gets noted and used in other areas as well. That is part of what we will be doing in terms of our report as well as showcasing many of the great things that are happening throughout the various programs and also the gaps, and trying to explore how we can showcase them and then fill the gaps that are in place. Thank you very much for coming today. Thank you for your contributions, and most importantly thank you for your passions in your various areas of promoting music within your schools.

Witnesses withdrew.