This is the Victorian Music Teachers' Association Statement for the Parliamentary Inquiry and Hearing into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools. The Hearing is on March 27, 2013 at 55 St. Andrews Place, Melbourne. This statement is made by Mark Dipnall, the Vice-President of the VMTA, a former full-time principal musician with Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet and presently a full-time music teacher of 28 years with the Victorian Government's Department of Employment and Early Childhood Development. My educational credentials in work experience (including my appointment as Treasurer for the Australian Society for Music Education) are complemented as being the possessor of a graduate degree in music performance, a graduate diploma in education and two masters degrees, one in music performance and the other in educational research.

The Victorian Music Teachers' Association, as an integral body of professional and collegiate music educators, welcomes this opportunity to attend and respond to the parliamentary inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian Schools. The VMTA, established in 1928, represents a membership of 850 music educators engaged within the school and private studio setting. The membership engages in music pedagogy within the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of government schooling. The association has strict controls upon the registration and admission to membership categories with full registration being granted to qualified graduates in music practice or music education and who have been nominated appropriately.

As such the VMTA is vitally concerned with the status of music teachers in Victoria. The VMTA strongly advises that music teachers are to be highly valued within the pedagogical circles of Victorian schools. VMTA teachers spend many years in graduate and postgraduate studies embracing music degrees in Bachelors, masters and PhD research. VMTA teachers are specialist teachers imparting specialist knowledge embracing instrumental and multi-instrumental instruction, performance practice and appreciation, classroom curricula, research, musicology, special needs, ensemble direction, community involvement, career choices, adjudication, assessment, IT application, professional development, teacher mentoring and school music direction in policy and administration.

The inherent value of the music teacher lies in the uniqueness of its categorisation. Music is constantly embraced by society for its expression of cultural diversity, creative aspiration, creative expression, entertainment resource, self-fulfillment and self-expression. Music expression is a hallmark of our democracy. How has this come about? Clearly part of this process is the result of music teaching. Music teaching as such needs to be well considered in the curricula designs of Victorian Schools. There is a perfect opportunity to incorporate music teaching within the core activity of classroom instruction involving Years 4 to 10 followed by VCE elective choices in Years 11 and 12. Given that the Victorian Government recently announced that the National Curricula designs of the Federal Government would not be enacted within Victoria it follows that a revisionary approach to
curricula is required. No longer should music education be viewed as an elective component but, to repeat, this should be a core requirement.

In fact, the music industry, according to the Music Council of Australia's Dr. Richard Letts, generates about $7 billion in revenue. Given that there are 5,500 music students within the Department of Employment and Early Childhood Development's (DEECD) Southern Region of Victoria, and, by extension, incorporating the other three remaining regions, this would equate to approximately 22,000 music students participating in Victorian schools. For every one of these students this would also involve two parents, which equates to approximately 64,000 active participants in music education. With the inclusion of at least one extended family member this would represent 86,000 and by the inclusion of two extended family members this would equate to 108,000. The numbers substantially increase when whole communities are engaged in music presentation involving eisteddfods, school concerts, festivals and the multiple varieties of expression within community cultural practices. What this suggests is that music education represents a large community of people involved with the education of the music student. This community takes pride in the achievements of it members and in turn this large community would look favourably upon a government that was progressive and revisionary incorporating music education classroom instruction, instrumental music instruction and massed singing as a core requirement in schooling from years 4 to 10.

The VMTA welcomes this opportunity to present its views to this inquiry. Music teachers are a valuable resource within social and educational domains. Music teachers are particularly a valuable resource within the primary and secondary school domains. It is suggested this value needs to be addressed and substantially enhanced with core curriculum participation and appropriate ongoing employment conditions involving a career structure with highly prioritised and sustained Treasury and DEECD budgetary allocations in teacher training, staffing, resource management and visionary administration.

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VMTA Vice-President