

13 February, 2013

Submission to:

Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools

Brief Background:

- 1962-4 Member of Australian Youth Orchestra (Trombone)
- 1965 Graduated Bachelor of Music, Diploma of Education (Melbourne University).
- 1968 At invitation of Technical Schools Division I conducted a pilot scheme to introduce an instrumental music teaching in Technical Schools.
- 1969-1980 I co-ordinated the Central Region Tech. Schools instrumental program.
- 1975 - 80 Seconded part time to Victorian College of the Arts Music School as part of program to offer unqualified instrumental teachers qualifications in music & education.),
- 1981 I was part of setting up the Box Hill(Whitehorse) Tafe course
- 1981 Assistant Principal VCA(Tech.) Secondary School .
- 1992-3. was acting principal VCASS
- 2003 - Teaching part-time at Australian Ballet School (Vic.Col. of Arts Sec School is provider)

Benefits:

The wide range of benefits in areas of cognitive, physical and social development, are well documented. It is not surprising that a very large number of people in high level skill professions such as surgery, architecture, science and the law, studied an instrument/voice and took part in musical training and activities during their schooling.

Observations over my career in music education:

I wish to focus on two aspects which I observed as critical in developing successful and cost effective programs.

1. Administrative Support

The music teacher (instrumental/class) must not be regarded as some sort of 'hobbyist', who teaches a full load in the class room and then exercises his/her 'hobby' by running extra activities, such as choirs, musicals, bands etc. as an extra. I feel many people misunderstand the musical context of 'playing' music. It is not a teachers' playtime!

Heaping praise on these efforts is not sufficient to sustain a person's health. Apart from being inequitable, we will not attract the most talented musician/educators who will be keen, like all other top level educators, to maintain their professional skill level. An overtired and time stretched teacher cannot do this. A talented (technically competent) music teacher can achieve incredible results, involving large numbers of students, as many of us have observed.

2. 'Critical Mass'

The most significant observation I (and team) made was, that to instigate an effective program (involving largest numbers of students) you needed to attract enough students to create a band/ensemble/choral program(s) which will develop and become part of the school culture. Participation by students generally becomes self – generating, as the other students see the results and benefits of taking part in these programs.

In order to achieve this:

- the program to be coordinated by a person of expertise and understanding of the dynamics of developing a **music** program
- There must be a team approach (class teacher and team of visiting instrumental teachers).
- A 'critical mass' (variety) of instrumental teachers to get the program 'off the ground.'

The experience was quite clear that, a single instrumental teacher at a school with little or no existing music performing culture was generally a waste of money (his/her salary). It was also quite demoralising for the teacher. The proportional involvement of **students per teacher** was significantly less than schools with a more comprehensive instrumental teacher team. Often the evolving programs collapsed.

Conclusion:

I believe that the incredible success, over a relatively short time, of the Technical School Music Programs (pre-amalgamation of Divisions) was our ability to target a school with an instrumental team and really get the programs going. I often meet former students of these times who went on to become high level performers (eg Melbourne S.O.) and expert music teachers across the country. They express gratitude to me for the program. I express to them my gratitude for the great visionaries in the Tech Division of the Education Department of that time that enabled such an effective program, as well as giving Victorian students the Victorian College of the Arts Technical School. (now VCASS).

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Leading Teacher
Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School