



# Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

North-Eastern Victoria Region

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## **Submission to the Committee for the Parliamentary Enquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools**

### **Carl Williams background**

I have been an Instrumental Music Coordinator for the Eastern Metropolitan Region for the past 15 years. I also teach Instrumental Music at East Doncaster Secondary College, where I have been employed for 17 years. Prior to this I had experience doing replacement and casual teaching at schools including Balwyn High School, Mount Waverly Secondary College, Glen Waverley Secondary College, Melbourne High School, MacRob High School and Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School. I am also an active performing violinist.

There is ample evidence supporting the benefits of quality and sequential Music education to students at all year levels, and particularly at Primary level. This evidence has served as a catalyst for the Australian Business Community to recommend in their 'Skills for a Nation: A Blueprint for Improving Training and Education Policy 2007 – 2017' document that 'There should be an opportunity for all students to learn a musical instrument in primary school.'<sup>1</sup> This recommendation was one of just fifteen recommendations in that Blueprint.

As other submissions will be comprehensively covering Terms of Reference 1-3, I will limit my response to Terms of Reference 4-11 as this is where my position as Instrumental Music Coordinator for the Eastern Metropolitan Region has had most relevance during the past 15 years. I have provided an overview of the current program in my submission rather than raw data, but any relevant data can be provided to the Committee on request.

### **(4) music education provided through specific funding for music education;**

For many years, individual Regions have had control over the distribution of their instrumental music budgets. For the past 7 or 8 years these budgets have been distributed to schools as dollar amounts, in most cases based on auditing by and recommendations from regional Instrumental Music Coordinators. Prior to this dollar-based allocation, allocations to schools were made via EFT (ie. Individual teacher placements).

A minority of Regions have chosen to either have no instrumental music coordination time, and/or not undertake an auditing process. In these Regions, significant changes to individual school programs have occurred without this being recognised in funding levels. This has led to significant inequality in parent/school council contributions between schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Skills for a Nation: A blueprint for improving education and training 2007-2017  
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2007.

The Regions that have Instrumental Music Coordinators and have developed auditing processes can;

- Support individual school programs to maximise the outcomes of their funding.
- Support smaller programs and programs with unique needs and/or offerings (eg. Most schools cannot run a year-round full symphony orchestra).
- Recognise the vastly different needs of ‘traditional’ band programs vs. contemporary programs.
- Recognise where the available funding is not being used effectively and reduce it where schools are not interested in developing better student outcomes.
- Provide support and Professional Learning to Instrumental Music teachers who are usually itinerant and aren’t having their Professional Learning needs met by their school(s).
- Employ Coordinators who can cover the variety of instruments and styles that fall within the subject of instrumental music, in the knowledge that there are 30+ instruments with different needs and curricula, and significant differences in the needs of traditional band vs. contemporary programs.
- Employ Coordinators who are active music teachers themselves with a working knowledge of needs and issues as they arise. An education system that expects staff to leave the classroom as they progress up the leadership scale is a problem beyond the scope of this Review, however the current instrumental music program is one area where practising teachers can take on leadership roles.
- Set funding aside to run Regional programs of benefit to students within the Region. These programs include Regional Concerts where any student can participate in a large, high quality ensemble in a world-class venue such as Hamer Hall, and smaller workshops targeted at individual instruments/styles with industry professionals. These sorts of programs are costly and time consuming to organize, and out of the reach of most individual school music departments.

The support and development of high quality programs in the Eastern Metropolitan Region has resulted in parent contributions meeting approximately 45% of the cost. The State Instrumental Music Program is no longer providing music lessons at no cost, and is instead subsidising the cost of music lessons. As instrumental music numbers have grown across Regions, the funding has remained stagnant except for a budget grant in the late 90’s that increased the pool slightly for 2 years.

**(5) music education provided through non-specific funding, for example, general student resource package funding;**

The current level of funding is clearly not sufficient to fully fund the Program. Parents are being asked to contribute more, and in schools that could be considered ‘Best Practice’ such as Blackburn High School, parents are paying instrumental music levies equivalent to external private tuition.

I believe very strongly that funding instrumental music through the SRP as has been suggested in the Terms of Reference would result in an overall decline in instrumental music programs. A significant number of Principals have made it clear that if money is not ‘tagged’ to instrumental music, they will discontinue their programs because of the expense

they incur. Some of these schools contribute a significant number of students to the music industry.

Nobody denies the fact that instrumental music is resource-intensive and expensive. The benefits and positive outcomes make it not just desirable, but in my opinion, compulsory in current society.

Under the current model with a static budget, if a school's instrumental music numbers grow the school may get a moderate increase in funding *at the expense of other schools*. If schools were to be funded for instrumental music without a requirement to spend it as such, a number of schools will not spend it on instrumental music. Therefore a reduction in the overall tuition of instrumental music across the state would occur.

Such a system absolves any school from being **accountable** for the funding. Furthermore, such a system would clearly disadvantage smaller schools. The success of a Music program has nothing to do with the size of a school. Larger schools are generally more able to syphon additional funds into their programs because of their economies of scale, and yet our Best Practice school in the EMR has to be Blackburn High School, a relatively small school. Blackburn High School's program would be significantly and adversely affected under an SRP model. Because of the expensive nature of the program, every small school interested in running a successful program would be disadvantaged. Costs associated with improving and increasing programs would fall entirely on the parents and this would result in significantly more **inequality** across the system. Currently in the EMR, instrumental music levies to parents from school to school range from virtually nothing to thousands of dollars.

#### **(6) music education provided through parent contribution;**

Some would argue that, in the state education system, instrumental music should be offered at no cost to parents. Clearly this appears to be beyond the capacity of government in this day and age. I believe there is also an argument that some parent contribution encourages a greater 'ownership' of and investment in the program. Students are more likely to be supported and encouraged to practice and improve, and there is a greater demand on the provider to deliver a quality program.

However, some schools in EMR are currently in a position where they are effectively charging external private tuition rates to maintain their programs. Parents then additionally need to acquire instruments by hiring or buying. This is not only inequitable across the Region, but also within the school where some families simply cannot afford to participate. The program becomes 'elitist' and unavailable to a proportion of students. With parents already meeting nearly 45% of the tuition costs of the program, I would not like to see this increase further. We also need to be highly conscious of not increasing the inequality between levies from school to school. Asking parents to contribute more decreases accessibility in most schools. Furthermore, these problems are exacerbated under an SRP funding model where any attempts to grow a program would be funded entirely from parent contributions.

#### **(7) the extent and quality of music education provision in Victorian schools;**

There are many high-quality programs running in Victorian secondary schools. These programs, without exception, have the support of the parents, school administration, have experienced teachers and recognition from Region in the way of appropriate funding. These programs, apart from being examples of the ‘whole child’ education model, are providing vital career pathways for students considering a career in music.

Because of the pressures of the general curriculum, many schools have cut classroom music time to the point where students in some schools are asked to consider VCE Music with as little as two years of classroom music studies. There is little recognition in these schools that music studies should be sequential and continuous.

At least one school in the EMR has reduced the time allowance for Arts subjects whereby students are allocated music *or* visual arts, denying them the opportunity of any exposure to one of these subjects.

Some secondary Principals argue strongly that if they had more instrumental music funding they would have larger programs, however this is often not demonstrated at the school level. Schools that have the willingness and capacity to grow their programs clearly do so. South Oakleigh Secondary College had no instrumental music program 8 years ago. We (EMR) seeded their program with 0.2 (woodwind). In a relatively short time the school has grown it’s program to 0.8 with subsequent increased regional funding. Again, under a static regional budget this increase for South Oakleigh has come at the expense of other schools.

Other EMR schools have seen significant increases and decreases in their program enrolments and regional funding has reflected this. Funds have been reallocated to schools where program numbers are increasing. These instrumental music program changes often happen completely independently of overall school population changes.

Where EMR secondary schools demonstrate a willingness and capacity to grow their programs, this is achieved (within the regional budgetary constraints) under the current auditing process.

There are also some high-quality programs running in Victorian primary schools, funded entirely by the parents. Because of the lack of funding in the sector, however, the majority of primary schools do not have quality music programs. Of those that do run programs, they are often led by a non-specialist teacher on staff, or the school will contract in an external company thereby relinquishing any control over the quality or qualifications of the teachers. Even in the secondary sector, teacher quality is becoming an issue that needs attention. Recent changes to Permission to Teach legislation by the VIT have made it too easy for schools to employ staff with no qualifications whatsoever as Education Support Staff. Instrumental Music teachers have been relegated to the level of part-time sports coach. We should be trying to improve the qualifications and quality of teaching staff, not make it easier for schools to save a little bit of money by employing people with nothing more than a Working with Children check to teach our students. The instrumental music teacher in fact often works more closely with their students than other teachers because of the smaller class sizes and the intimate nature of the instrumental music class.

- Instrumental music teachers often work one-on-one with students.
- They often direct ensembles much larger than average classroom numbers.
- They attend more out-of-school-hours functions than most other teachers including rehearsals, performances, band tours and music camps.

- Issues such as Mandatory Reporting, Anaphylaxis and Asthma training become vital for instrumental music teachers when they don't have the support of a fully staffed school environment.

These are significant duties to place on unqualified and often inexperienced support staff. There have been many examples already of schools advertising instrumental music positions as Education Support on Recruitment Online.

On the other hand, there are highly qualified teachers who are not recognised as such by the VIT. A Suzuki qualification, for example, is more rigorous and exhaustive than many 'recognised' teaching courses, but is not considered by the VIT to be an acceptable qualification. My belief is that we should be insisting on quality music teaching in our schools by requiring qualifications, but the definition of 'qualified' needs to be broadened to include more of the experienced performers and educators who don't currently meet the narrow definitions of a teaching qualification. The Permission to Teach system allows for that at least in part, but this has fallen by the wayside for instrumental music allowing the bar to fall too low.

### **(8) optimum governance and oversight arrangements;**

Currently there is no continuity between the Regions around the administration and allocation of instrumental music funding. I believe a 28 million dollar program should have more accountability and consistency. Regional arrangements vary from a team of coordinators undertaking transparent and equitable auditing processes, to no coordination at all.

I have already expressed my belief that the removal of an auditing process for instrumental music allocation would ultimately result in a decrease of tuition available to schools. It is my recommendation that a consistent model of auditing be applied across every region to maintain at least the current level of tuition. I also believe that the provision of regional workshops and concerts for students is also highly beneficial, as is the provision of targeted professional development for state school instrumental music teachers. These activities are the norm in the private system, but are beyond the financial and organisational capacity of most state schools.

Instrumental Music Coordinators are funded from each Region's instrumental music budget at their discretion. Therefore the only cost incurred is a decrease in the funding available for direct tuition of students.

Regional concerts and workshops are also funded from existing regional budgets at the discretion of individual regions. This results in some regions providing an extensive variety of activities across a range of styles, and other regions offering a very narrow focus, if anything. The Eastern Region Concert is highly valued by students and staff within the EMR and yet it was lost in the regional restructure for 2013. Unfortunate timing after the closure of Hamer Hall for two years has meant that a large number of senior students may have missed their only opportunity to perform in Hamer Hall. These opportunities need to be viewed as vital to a best-practice instrumental music program and not just be available to private school students.

School instrumental music teachers are usually ‘on the outer’ of their schools because of their part-time status in each school. There are significant issues with this including;

- The Excess process, where teachers cannot be declared in excess for part of their time fraction (ie. At only one of their schools). If an instrumental teacher becomes superfluous to a school’s needs because of declining enrolments and/or funding, the teacher is declared in excess at ALL of the schools. They revert to their base school for their entire time fraction. If they are successful in obtaining a 0.2 position at a new school, this becomes their new time fraction and they must reapply to all their previous schools. If one of their schools decides to take the opportunity to find a cheaper teacher, the teacher remains in excess at the expense of their base school. This naturally makes schools very reluctant to become base schools for instrumental music teachers.
- The annual teacher review process is often not completed for instrumental music teachers across a number of schools because no one school takes responsibility for undertaking it.
- The process of applying for professional development funding is frequently problematic for instrumental music teachers because schools will only pay their pro-rata proportion of the allocated funding. The teacher goes through a lengthy process of applying at a number of schools and refusals are common.
- The ability for school Principals to employ staff as Education Support with absolutely no performance or educational qualification of any kind, nor any requirement to undertake the mandatory training expected of Teacher Class staff. The nature of instrumental music programs with intensive staff/student relationships and high proportion of out-of-school-hours commitments makes this training essential in most programs.

It would be preferable if instrumental music teachers were directly responsible to an umbrella group. The West Australian model consists of a school of Instrumental Music with it’s own Principal and administration staff.

An alternate model is one or more governing ‘base’ Music schools in each Region, with central oversight. There is currently nobody in Victoria taking ultimate responsibility for the program.

The recent paper from the UK; “The Importance of Music, A National Plan for Music Education’, proposes the use of ‘Hubs’ supporting the provision of local school music. Recognising that not every school will have the funding nor the interest in being a leader in the provision of music education, “*Government will set core roles for hubs to ensure national consistency and equality of opportunity*”<sup>2</sup>.

UK Government funding will be distributed through these hubs similarly to our current Region model. This arrangement could also be used for the provision of high-level tuition to remote and rural areas where expertise is lacking. Hubs or specialist schools could be required to regularly run rural workshops and activities, exposing those students to regular high-level instruction.

Ultimately, a ‘whole-team’ approach is what is lacking at the moment. When so much of the

<sup>2</sup> The Importance of Music, A National Plan for Music Education  
UK Department for Education, 2011

workforce is itinerant and somewhat marginalised, it is too easy for the program to perform below optimal level. As with any workforce there are of course a minority of staff who use this to their advantage, keeping a low profile with low student numbers and doing the bare minimum in their respective schools with no-one interested enough to hold them to account.

**(9-11) optimum use of targeted funding, non-music specific funding, central support;**

I would strenuously defend funding for the secondary school Instrumental Music Program. Ideally this would be increased to make instrumental tuition available and more affordable for more students.

Additional funding should be provided for tuition in the primary years. A move to allocate any of the existing funding as non-music specific will serve only to 'water down' existing programs.

Ideally funding for regional events such as workshops and concerts would not come out of the existing instrumental music budget. The regional concert, although highly valuable to students, staff and their school programs, comes at a significant cost to the budget when sponsorship money isn't available. This is a prime area for corporate involvement. It is of a high enough profile to represent a significant marketing opportunity to the corporate sector, and a centralized structure around the instrumental music program would make it easier for a corporate arrangement to be formalised. Already one major company has expressed an interest to the EMR Music office, however progress has been frustrated with the cancellation of the concert and a lack of structure and support for corporate involvement at the regional level.

I propose the following model to maximise outcomes for students and school communities;

**Proposed future Instrumental Music Program Model:**

- Increase funding to the Secondary Instrumental Music Program to improve accessibility and affordability to all students.
- The creation of an Instrumental Music Program 'Principal' or similar officer to oversee the program on a statewide level.
- Retaining Instrumental Music Coordinators attached to Regions or hubs/nominated Music base schools. Instrumental Music Coordinators would remain responsible for auditing programs to keep schools accountable for their funding. Instrumental Coordinators should demonstrate best practice Instrumental Music teaching, and be able to provide leadership in this area across their regions/networks.
- The auditing process and funding allocation model be consistent across the state.
- Any non-music specific funds allocated to schools should be *in addition* to current funding levels so as not to diminish existing programs.
- Using hubs/Music base schools to provide additional high-level support to other schools in their networks by way of workshops, performances and teacher exchanges/visits. These would involve Instrumental Music Coordinators demonstrating best-practice teaching, and would also be used to support the rural sector where high quality teaching may not be available.

- Formalised support for schools that would become specialist Music schools, and would possibly take on the role of Music base schools. These schools would have the funding levels to make them internationally recognized best-practice schools offering the type of program providing career pathways for future performers and Music educators.
- Instrumental teachers would be attached to (and possibly directly employed by) these base schools or hubs to reduce the current issues around qualifications, excess and marginalization. These entities would also undertake the professional reviews of instrumental music teachers to ensure that the process is completed satisfactorily.
- If schools are to be directly responsible for the employment of instrumental music teachers, they are then 'based' at their Music base school or hub in the same way that base schools are currently nominated.
- A review of instrumental music teacher qualifications. Schools should only be allowed to employ staff with no educational or performance qualifications under exceptional circumstances. Definitions of educational qualifications should be broadened to include Suzuki training and equivalent. The Permission to Teach process should not be denied to instrumental music para-professionals, but used to facilitate the employment of those with performance qualifications only.
- Formalised funding for large scale Regional Concerts, possibly from the corporate sector.
- Venues such as Hamer Hall need to be more affordable for the state school sector. Either an education discount should be negotiated, or DEECD could subsidise the cost of these events.
- A requirement that all Primary schools have a music specialist on staff able to provide quality Music lessons to all students including notation reading and singing.
- Umbrella support for Primary schools to develop Instrumental Music programs. This support could be provided through the Secondary program and it's hubs/base schools.