

To: Parliament of Victoria, Education and Training Committee

Response to the Inquiry into Music Education in Victorian Schools

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to respond to the Committee's inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian Schools.

Music in Special Developmental Schools is vital because of the role music can play in accessing the emotions, providing stimulation and as a nonverbal form of communication. Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities are motivated to engage in music. It is extremely beneficial as music effects the whole brain not just the right side of the brain as previously thought. There is also considerable evidence regarding the role music it has in increasing the plasticity of the brain and creating new learning pathways.

At Bayside Special Developmental School a Registered Music Therapist is employed on a contractual basis once a week for 6 hours. She focusses on providing a tailor made music program which addresses the specific needs of the child. The students are prioritized for this service and she sees those children who have the greatest needs for stimulation, communication and emotional outlet as provided through music. Children are usually seen in dyads so that they can respond as independently as possible and to provide the child with adequate processing time.

Many children who have a special interest in music are restricted from accessing the music therapy program due to the limitations on resources (funding and space). These are in part ameliorated by the use of music therapy students through the University of Melbourne and by the use of recorded music by the classroom teachers and their own skills in producing live music.

In summary:

- Bayside Special Developmental School employs a Registered Music Therapist on a contractual basis for 6 hours (one school day) per week over 38 weeks.
- Barriers to the quality of music education are -the lack of contact time available for the Music therapist to service all the students; lack of appropriate physical space to deliver services on a more regular basis.
- Currently the music therapist uses a multipurpose room for a day a week. This space is used by other programs during the rest of the week. There is provision with in the budget for the purchase of equipment and maintenance of instruments. Staff are enthusiastic about the use of music and endeavor to include music in their programs via recorded music and where possible live music
- Ongoing adequate funding for the provision of and access to music education for all students in State schools is required.

Michael Pepprell

