



15 February 2013

Attention: David Southwick MP, Chair & Kerryn Riseley, Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

**Re: Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education
in Victorian Schools**

To the Education and Training Committee,

Arts Centre Melbourne welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important Parliamentary review of the extent, quality, benefits and optimum funding for music education in Victorian schools.

Music as a core discipline of student learning is critical to the personal, social and academic development of Victoria's student cohort. Arts Centre Melbourne's commitment to high quality programs in music, music technology, performance and multimedia have been supporting Victorian government school education for over twenty years. The current programs at our Digital Learning Hub and in the Theatres continue to deliver against key aims of the AusVELS, supporting rich student learning outcomes for classroom-based learning. Arts Centre Melbourne involves approximately 22,000 primary and secondary school students in music-related programs and performances each year (approximately 1/3 of our overall student engagement). We are in the fifth year of a strategic partnership with the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development to support improved program development and evaluation for all arts-based education programs in the state.

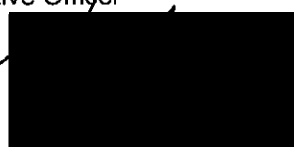
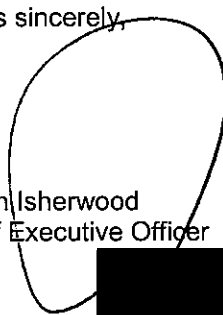
Our theatres and Hamer Hall also host the significant education and community programs of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Victorian Opera, Opera Australia and Orchestra Victoria.

We have prepared our comments under the key terms of reference and would be pleased to contribute our expertise to the Committee in person at any time.

We look forward to improved recognition and support for state funded education in relation to all disciplines of the performing arts, with music education as a critical foundation area in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Isherwood
Chief Executive Officer





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Arts Centre Melbourne offers the following comments and recommendations in relation to the Inquiry's terms of reference:

- **Current extent and quality of music education in Victorian Schools**

Our experience with over 500 Victorian schools p.a. from all DEECD regions indicates there is a highly disparate range of music programs available within government schools. Depending upon the resource base of the school, local availability of quality instrumental or generalist staff and physical infrastructure, as well as level of school or parent contribution, Victorian schools vary significantly one to another, from no music program whatsoever to a full, diverse instrumental or choral program.

Size of the school and locality also influences the quality of teaching, from programs delivered without a specialist music teacher (music teaching done by general primary classroom staff, for example) to non-specialised music teachers (for example, Art/Music teacher) to a team of high-quality, specialist music teachers (instrumental and vocal).

As a result, our view is that there exists significant inequity in terms of access to quality music education for individual students and schools across the state.

- **Status of music education in Victorian schools**

Like any organisation, the preferences of the Principal as school leader, particularly at primary level, determine the preferences of the cultural program at that school. The status of music in a primary school is therefore frequently related to the Principal's commitment to this discipline of learning. Also, general austerity post-GFC means school leaders continue to make difficult choices about resource prioritisation and allocation, as well as what kinds of activity might be reasonably funded through parent financial supplement.

There is also a significant lack of public and teacher awareness of the benefits of music and performing arts education for supporting cross-curricular learning outcomes. The international research in this area is compelling and well-documented¹, however there is poor understanding of this research by many Australian school-based educators.

Persistent cultural stigma for parents in relation to the amount of in-school hours dedicated to performing arts curriculum may also influence a particular school's commitment to music. Having said this, 87% of parents we have surveyed agree that the performing arts is an essential part of their child's learning, and many spend a significant proportion of the family budget to ensure their children have access to music and performing arts outside of school hours².

As a result, the status of music education in schools varies significantly from region to region and school to school in Victoria.

¹Ewing, Robyn (2010), *The Arts and Australian Education: Realising potential*, Australian Council for Educational Research ACER Press, pp. 11-19 for a summary of international literature; See also Deasy, R (ed.) (2002) *Critical views: Learning in the arts and student academic and social development*, Washington DC, Arts Education Partnership, and Hallam, S. (2010) 'The power of music: its impact of the intellectual, personal and social development of children and young people', London UK, *International Journal of Music Education* 38(3), 269-289.

² Hatch Research Group (2010), *Focus group data for Education programs*, commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne



- **What factors affect the quality of music education in Victorian schools**

Arts Centre Melbourne's digital learning educators are all music or media specialists and fully VIT-qualified teachers. Arts Centre Melbourne's Head of Participation and program managers have decades of collective experience working directly in and with regional schools, teachers and students on major projects and artistic residencies.

Our experience, along with surveys of our teacher participants in relation to music programs³, indicates there are a number of complex and interdependent variables that affect quality of music education within schools today:

- The culture of the school and the school community
- How music and the arts are valued by the school administration
- How music and the arts are valued and prioritised by DEECD at a policy level
- Differing views amongst music educators themselves as to the hierarchy of specialism that should be taught to students and when
- Lack of ongoing employment for many instrumental teaching staff: Instrumental teachers are most frequently hired as sub-contractors or casual staff in primary schools, and on term-based contracts in secondary schools. Therefore these educators are not integrated into the main staff and fail to be included in regular staff discussions or planning
- Poor teacher training and motivation for generalist primary teachers without a music background
- General lack of availability of specialist instrumental teachers
- Existing school resources and infrastructure, ie. availability of instruments, computer hardware, rehearsal spaces, theatres etc.
- Level of access to external funding or grants by the school
- Lack of expertise and confidence at primary and secondary levels in teaching non-traditional music composition, such as digital music
- Parent unwillingness to contribute to music excursions or incursions can be a barrier
- Cost: Participation in instrumental music, music theatre, extracurricular bands et al can be costly for parents and for schools, requiring instrument hire and maintenance, dedicated instrumental lessons and other performance and production-based costs
- Victorian students, whilst computer-literate, still require specialised support to move from media consumers to media creators in their use of music technology: Most schools do not have access to specialist digital music

- **Support available for music education in Victorian schools**

Arts Centre Melbourne believes that community partnerships are where music education in Victoria is currently best supported. A recent research report in Victoria explores the value of school-community partnerships in the performing arts and music⁴, with positive findings on the successful outcomes for whole school change resulting from partnerships between schools and arts organisations. Organisations dedicated to enhancing the quality of learning and teaching for music are also critical.

³ Digital Learning Hub teacher survey data (2010-2011), Arts Centre Melbourne

⁴ *Partnerships between schools and the professional arts sector*, Education Policy and Research Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with Arts Victoria and University of Melbourne (2009), p.5



A number of key providers support students through excursion and incursion activity to ensure community, civic and social inclusion as well as discipline-based outcomes for Victoria's music curriculum:

- Arts Centre Melbourne's Digital Learning Hub: Student courses in digital music composition, VET Music Technology and generalist primary music programs; *CC sMash*, music mash-up website; *Revolutions: Australian Music History Timeline from 1955-present*, website; Dig Deep Youth music mentoring program; Indigenous and diverse music performances such as *Big Notes* (Hamer Hall) and *Raising the Roof* (Hamer Hall)
- Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Education programs
- Victorian Opera Education programs
- Musica Viva in Schools program
- Artists in Schools (Arts Victoria)
- Professional and industry bodies such as aMUSE (Victorian Association of Music Educators), ABODA (Australian Band and Orchestra Directors Association), AUSTA (Australian Strings Association)
- Online resources generally, eg. www.australianmusiccentre.com.au; www.songroom.org.au

6. Key benefits and issues surrounding music education in schools, including any identified gaps in existing educational opportunities

In 2010/11, Arts Centre Melbourne conducted research into the impacts of effective music education for young people in our weekly Dig Deep youth music program. An evaluation of the program identified a range of beneficial learning, social and community benefits for participants⁵, including that 95% of the teenage participants believed the enhanced confidence and self esteem derived from the program extended to the participants feeling more confident and effective at school and work. One case study highlighted the cultural transition that can be assisted through music education:

Having spent 13 years in a refugee camp in Tanzania, Participant 'D' had a difficult journey to Dig Deep. He arrived in Australia in 2007 and together with a friend he met in the refugee camp was involved in Multicultural Arts Victoria's 'Visible' mentoring program for African students. There the pair met one of the Dig Deep mentors who referred them to Arts Centre Melbourne.

In 2010, 'D' joined the Dig Deep program. He continues to attend Dig Deep every Tuesday and believes that it has built up his "music, technical, performance and production skills". At home, he has set up a small studio.

From being a new refugee arrival whose first language was not English, he now "writes in English, is comfortable performing to audiences of 200 and is no longer shy at school". 'D' is currently enrolled in VCE.

The Australia Council's 2005 research overview⁶ into the benefits of arts education indicated positive impacts for students in relation to the following:

- social and personal development
- attitude to learning
- literacy
- numeracy

⁵ Keating, Clare, Effective Change (2010). *Dig Deep Program Evaluation*, commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne

⁶ Hunter, Mary Ann, *Education and the Arts Research Overview*, Australia Council for the Arts (2005)



- arts knowledge and discipline-based skills
- generic competencies (writing, communicating, problem-solving, planning, organising)
- enjoyment and value of the arts

In addition, the enhanced cross-curricular learning outcomes derived from music education for ICT, design creativity, mathematics and communications provides important skills and knowledge for students preparing for careers and post-compulsory learning. A significant percentage of Australian students will enter the creative industries, therefore a solid grounding in this specialism will be essential for a number of students' professional futures.

7. Best practice music education programs

Noting the uneven distribution of resources across the state, there are several excellent examples to draw upon for this purpose. The majority are from metropolitan Melbourne. Arts Centre Melbourne has identified three school-based music education programs that demonstrate leadership in music education in Victorian schools, as follows:

7.1 Moonee Vale Instrumental Program, Moonee Ponds and Ascot Vale area

- A group of four primary schools - Ascot Vale, Ascot Vale West, Moonee Ponds West, Moonee Ponds Central - pool financial resources to employ quality instrumental teachers they couldn't afford on their own
- The program also includes combined bands and orchestras that rehearse and perform between the four schools
- Students derive community benefit and skills in teamwork from working with other schools in the area but also receive a high-quality music education in instrumental practice

7.2 Ivanhoe Primary School, Ivanhoe

- Administration's support for before, during and after school music
- Full strings, band and choral programs from Year 2-6
- Highly-motivated and inspiring music staff
- Music features at all major school events
- Regular offsite performance opportunities are created for students
- 'Friends of Music' parent group has formed to support teachers and students involved in music, as well as to fundraise for music programs at the school

7.3 Mentone Girls Grammar, Mentone

- Administration's willingness to be flexible with a student's timetable to accommodate musical projects
- Full instrumental and classroom music program
- Specialist instrumental music teachers
- Highly-motivated and inspired teachers
- Teachers work through after school/holidays with students on musical projects
- Dedicated facilities and music building
- A computer lab dedicated to computer music
- A large theatre where students learn the technical aspects of music production and perform regularly



8. Recommendation

Arts Centre Melbourne recommends the Education and Training Committee consider a significant policy commitment to music education in the state, with the following objectives:

- Reduce inequity and improve the status of music education in Victoria
- Improve teacher training in music, dance and drama for primary teaching graduates
- Demonstrate best practice approaches for students at all levels to engage with high-quality music and arts education
- Ensure schools work closely and effectively with the major institutional providers and artistic companies in the state in music, to ensure excellence and international best practice in learning, community and social outcomes for Victorian students and teachers