

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express the importance of music education in primary and secondary schooling. I am a third year Arts/Law student at Monash University and I regularly work as a musician, singing in acoustic duos and bands. I attended Ormond Primary School and McKinnon Secondary College. I have used these schooling experiences to address the terms of reference below.

1. General benefits to students as a result of music education

The social benefits of music education in schools are extraordinary. Music education involves collaboration with fellow students to reach a common goal of creating great music. This collective aim urges students to put their differences aside and learn to co-operate in a productive manner. This collaborative process not only allowed me to develop my teamwork skills but it gave me a powerful sense of belonging. To this date, some of my best friends are the very students who I shared a music class with in school. Given many students consistently listen to music to find joy and release; it seems natural that they will approach 'music' education with a positive mindset. I believe this optimistic and open-minded outlook is the key to the social bonds that emerge. This positive approach which gives rise to social cohesion, is alone, sound justification for music education's compulsory and well executed inclusion in Victorian schools' curriculums.

2. Benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career

The music education I received at Ormond Primary School and in particular, McKinnon Secondary College was of outstanding assistance to me in developing my pathway as a musician. My musical development was assisted in two major ways.

Firstly, I was given the opportunity to establish my musicianship and technical skills. The music education provided through my schooling granted me a thorough understanding of music theory and knowledge. This foundation means I have the musical capabilities required to strive for success in this industry. Whilst I started learning keyboard from the age of 5 as an extra-curricular activity, the technical skills I gained from my compulsory music classes in primary and secondary school, along with my music performance VCE studies have shone through in my ability to collaborate with other musicians, transpose songs and write my own music- all of which are crucial capabilities a working musician must display. Indeed, it is of the utmost importance that students feel they are equipped with adequate technical training that will allow them to develop a musical career if they so wish.

Secondly, my music education allowed me to develop my performance technique and confidence. McKinnon Secondary College in particular provided me and my fellow students with a plethora of invaluable performance platforms such as concerts, recitals, house music festivals and musicals. These opportunities were not only constantly available, but I was heavily encouraged to take advantage of them. Indeed, these performances instilled in me a strong sense of self-assurance and I have consequently been able to reach my maximum potential when performing to large crowds. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the industry contacts I was able to make when partaking in these performances proved helpful when securing further performance opportunities. These showcase platforms allowed me to secure gigs which are essential in any musician's career.

Additionally, when schools are musically active, the benefits to society are apparent in the local community. Not only are students being trained appropriately to provide quality entertainment, but schools are ensuring that local institutions receive performances at no cost. My principal and teachers at McKinnon Secondary College consistently stressed the importance of giving back to the local community, and indeed, the music program provides a direct method of doing just that. As a member of multiple school music groups including choir, senior singers and stage band, I was regularly performing at local aged care homes, churches, carols by candle-lights and festivals. It was at these events that I gained an appreciation for the strong impact music performances can have on the lives of others- particularly those incapable of venturing out on their own to seek entertainment. The number of delighted audience members who thanked us for our performances and urged us to come back soon was hugely up-lifting. In fact, several individuals at an aged care facility we once performed at said they had been excited and looking forward to this performance for weeks. This overwhelming feedback serves as evidence that musically active schools can generate a positive change in the community. And indeed, it comes at no detriment to students given they are gaining valuable performance practise.

3. The extent and quality of music education provision in Victorian schools

The extent and quality of the music education provided by McKinnon Secondary College, in the form of course curriculum and performance opportunities was of an excellent standard. The course structure effectively tackled music education at an appropriate level for the targeted students, whilst liberally incorporating group work (the importance of which has been discussed under the first subheading). Additionally, instrumental lessons in a vast array of music instruments were made available to students, allowing any students' musical interest to be explored and developed. And importantly, my peers and I were presented with numerous opportunities to put our studies into practise, perform to an audience and showcase our talents. Whilst students could easily obtain theoretical music education out of school, it is very rare that students would be able to gain access to the performance opportunities that McKinnon Secondary College consistently delivered. The well valued music skills, knowledge and experiences I gained at McKinnon Secondary College are a testament to the quality of its music program.

Similarly, the compulsory music curriculum delivered at Ormond Primary School was greatly beneficial to me in that I was able to develop musicianship at a young age. However, my most memorable musical experience occurred not in the classroom, but rather, in the lunch-time choir. The concept of harmonising with my fellow students to sing our favourites songs was utterly gratifying. And indeed, the sheer number of students who sacrificed their lunchtimes in order to partake in a musical activity lends veracity to the argument that students gain great satisfaction from music education. It is therefore paramount that this musical interest is nurtured and expanded from a young age.

4. Optimum use of targeted funding

When determining the allocation of government funding, I believe the following points should be taken into account:

- *Performance opportunities*
 - The government should seek to ensure that all schools mirror the efforts demonstrated by McKinnon Secondary College to ensure students have consistent access to performance platforms. Students are more likely to engage when studying music theory and technique if they can apply this knowledge to practical situations. All students, regardless of their competency level, should have the option of showcasing their learning in a fun and exciting manner.
- *Primary schools establishing a thorough and well-executed music program*
 - The government should seek to ensure that primary school music programs tackle music theory and facilitate the development of aural skills. If indeed there is an association between music education and academic achievement (to which I would not be surprised), it is crucial that this music education is taught effectively from a young age. This will ensure students can approach their secondary schooling, and in particular, VCE studies on their best academic footing. To aid this early musical development, schools should have access to a range of class-room instruments that the students can experiment and play with. This will likely promote an enthusiastic student approach to music studies.
- *Wide range of instrumental classes*
 - The government should ensure that all students are encouraged to undertake instrumental lessons in their desired instrument at both a primary and secondary school level. It is vital that schools offer a diverse selection of instrumental lessons in order to cater to all students' interests and consequently increase the likelihood of students enrolling in instrumental classes.

In conclusion, I urge the government to take advantage of the benefits music education in Victorian schools can provide. The argument that music education maximises student's academic performance (as discussed by Mr David Southwick MP) is one of many justifications for government support of music programs in schools. Indeed, government support would undoubtedly foster an inclusive social environment in schools- a hugely beneficial outcome. The comprehensive music education I was granted was not only fulfilling at the time, but has left me with lifelong skills and friendships. I can only wish other students across Victoria have access to the same opportunities I was so fortunate to encounter.

Please feel free to contact me for further information.

Yours sincerely,

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