

Mr Kevin Kelley



Executive Officer  
Association of Music Educators (Vic) Inc



## **SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

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### Endorsement of SMAG submission

The Association of Music Educators fully endorses and supports the detailed submission made on our behalf by the School Music Action Group (SMAG). aMuse would like to add the following comments about the provision of teacher professional learning, which is the focus of our core business.

### The Association of Music Educators

aMuse (formerly the Victorian Schools' Music Association – VSMA) is a professional teaching association open to all music educators and those who are interested in music education. It is an incorporated association run by music teachers for music teachers. aMuse has a range of services designed to provide members with the latest information about their profession and developments in education. aMuse's philosophy is that the study of music is essential to the emotional, intellectual, physical and social growth and well-being of all students and contributes in a profound way to a complete understanding of their world. aMuse represents the full spectrum of music education philosophies offered to primary and secondary teachers by providing an extensive range of professional development programs, conferences, publications, and web based resources to support music educators and the students they teach. It is the major provider of such resources in Victoria.

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aMuse collaborates with a diverse range of other music education associations and organisations in the broader community such as the Victorian Orff Schulwerk Association, the Kodaly Music Education Institute of Australia, SoundHouse Online and The University of Melbourne in order to offer teachers access to the most comprehensive range of contemporary music education research and resources possible. aMuse members come from all education sectors.

aMuse has been affiliated with DEECD over several decades and continues to see its major role as a facilitator in the development and implementation of Victorian Government education initiatives and a provider of support materials elaborating on these initiatives for Victorian music teachers.

#### Provision of teacher professional learning

Under the Extension Education Program, aMuse (then known as VSMA) was allocated 1.0 EFT teacher secondment to appoint an Extension Education Officer to manage and implement its professional learning programs. From 1 January 2003 aMuse has held triennial service agreements under the Strategic Partnerships Program. From 1 January through 31 December 2011 our level of support from DEECD was approximately \$56,000 per annum. Since 1 January 2012 our funding level has dropped to \$25,000 per annum.

aMuse reaches about 2000 teachers a year through its professional learning programs. Currently, DEECD supports our professional learning programs to the value of about \$12 per teacher.

#### Identifying teacher need

The National Review of Music Education identified the need for greater resources to be directed to music in primary schools. It also identified singing as an essential skill for all students. Responding to this identified need, aMuse directed a proportion of its DEECD to develop and implement a professional learning program aimed at generalist primary teachers and focussing on singing.

#### Snapshot of a new project “The Singing Classroom”

In 2012 aMuse launched the new PL workshop program for primary classroom teachers aimed at encouraging them to sing more regularly with their students.

“The Singing Classroom” workshops were offered to primary schools to be run onsite with teachers. The workshops focus on boosting teacher confidence and efficacy, whilst providing best practice skills and resources.

A team of three presenters delivered 69 workshops across Victoria during 2012. The workshops included ‘In school’ workshops with the whole school staff; workshops with school networks; CRT networks; pre-service teachers; one-day workshops for individual teachers.

#### Purpose

“The Singing Classroom” was designed in response to the 2005 National Review into Music in Schools which found that primary teachers were often reluctant to sing with their classes due to lack of confidence. The lack of hours dedicated to Music Education in pre-service training was cited as a main reason.

The workshop program was designed in early 2012 and trialled throughout the year. Experiential workshops were provided in order to develop pedagogical skills in Music Education for generalist primary teachers, as well as extending general teaching approaches. An exploration of the role of Music Education in integrated studies was a focal point.

#### Learning Outcomes

1. The learning environment is supportive and productive
  2. The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation
  4. Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of application
- The Singing Classroom' was designed to align with PoLT, in particular:
6. Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom

Through practical application participants developed skills in teaching songs, chants, action songs and rounds. They discovered the value of incorporating music activities into their daily schedule to enhance learning in the areas of maths, literacy, geography, science etc. Teachers explored the importance of using music to enhance student engagement, focus, attendance, teamwork, social interaction, and creativity.

#### Teacher reflections

In each workshop teachers were introduced to a range of songs including rounds, chants, action songs, chants and creative activities. It was interesting to watch them tentatively join in the first activity or two and then, once they realised it was a 'safe environment' were they would not be singled out or put on the spot, their confidence grew and the fun began. The volume increased as the teachers relaxed, and the sound of laughter and positive interaction joined the singing voices.

At the beginning of most workshops there was an air of apprehension and nervousness about singing. Often the Principal or the teacher who had organised the workshop would come forward to explain that the staff had been complaining about having to sing and had expressed that they really didn't feel comfortable about it. The data collected at the end of each session clearly showed that the vast majority of participants had not only felt completely comfortable and learned a great deal, but they had fun! (See attachment for collated results and comments).

Teachers at a number of schools were asked to report on the impact of these workshops on day-to-day school life. Georgina Wills, teacher at Wangaratta West Primary School wrote the following:

"Many of the class teachers at the school were apprehensive about the workshop and their ability to sing. After the workshop there was growing enthusiasm for singing and teachers began having a go at some of the activities in their classes the very next day. One student-teacher, who participated in the workshop, took her students outside each morning and spent 10 mins on singing activities. Other teachers were trialling the activities and, although still apprehensive about their ability, were willing to get outside their comfort zone to see their students singing. 'Funga Alafia' {a welcome song taught in the workshop} was taught to the whole school and sung at assembly to greet the parents. All teachers joined in as well.

At the same school the Grade 6 teachers chose another song from the workshop to be sung by the Grade 6 cohort at their Graduation Dinner. "It was very well received by parents".

#### Outcomes

The data collected shows a genuine increase in teacher confidence in their ability to lead singing activities with their classes. The data also clearly shows a change in attitude towards singing and music activities in the classroom. The discussion and verbal feedback throughout the workshops showed that teachers understood the role of music in the classroom as a way of engaging students in other learning areas and in school. There were also obvious

connections made between the use of singing and stimulation/activation of the brain in learning situations.

The data collected indicates that the program has been successful in encouraging teachers to include more singing in their daily schedules. Teachers comment that the provision of a range of appropriate resources along with the development of new teaching skills.

#### A problem and solution

Ongoing quality professional learning is vital for the delivery of quality music education programs in our schools. In Victoria there are many organisations dedicated to the provision of teacher professional learning. Some of these include: Victorian Orff Schulwerk Association, Kodály Music Education Institute, Australian Band and Orchestra Director's Association, Australian National Choral Society, Australian Society for Music Education, Australian String Teachers Association as well as organisations dedicated to specific instrument groups or musical genres. These worthy organisations are for the most part, run entirely by volunteers. They provide specifically-focussed programs that contribute to the ongoing improvement of teacher capacity to deliver quality music education programs. The delivery of these programs is far from strategic, the combined effort lacking a coordinated approach. A solution to this disparate offering of professional learning programs would be the establishment of a 'mega-association' (along the lines of MENC in the USA) that all associations would join that could provide the necessary administration and management to coordinate programs that address the needs of all areas of music education without competing with one another. This could be achieved with government support.

#### Recommendation

1. That the government provide greater support to teacher professional learning in music by providing on-going funding for programs such as "The Singing Classroom."
2. That the government investigate the establishment of a 'nexus organisation' to strategically coordinate the professional learning efforts provided by the varied organisations throughout Victoria.