



10 February 2013

Mr David Southwick MP
Education and Training Committee
Parliament of Victoria

Dear Mr Southwick,

Re: Inquiry into the extent, benefit and potential of music education in Victorian schools

I provide these comments as an academic of more than 20 years in Teacher Education in the School of Education at RMIT University. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment to this Inquiry.

I was delighted when I learned of the Inquiry as I believe it has the potential to:

1. Document the range of music education activities in schools.
2. Reinvigorate music education in schools
3. Inform and direct the registration authorities on the important place of music in schools
4. Support the Universities to offer more opportunities in music education in their teacher education programs.

The terms of reference of the Inquiry are comprehensive. If implemented, the findings and subsequent recommendations from any of the eleven terms would benefit the school children and in turn the community in Victoria through an enhanced education with music. The inquiry has the potential to be a model for other investigations across Australia.

The call for evidence on the benefits of music education has been well documented in the research literature. I am sure that the broader music education community in Victoria will contribute specific targeted cases to support the vast available literature. It will be important to place the submitted data, against the data available from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and the national and international research literature. With such a triangulation there is the potential to form recommendations that will make a difference for the schooling of children in Victoria.

In Australia we have a long tradition of inquiries and investigations in music and arts education sponsored by governments and statutory authorities. There has been considerable excitement and anticipation surrounding each of the reviews. Each has elicited significant feedback and the reports have been heralded as ground-breaking. The reality is that rarely has any serious change come about as a result. I would sincerely hope that the Inquiry and its findings and recommendation do not languish as a tabled report to the Parliament.

To date no government has recently mandated (or even recommended) as little as five minutes of music a day in every classroom in the State. I am sure that Members of Parliament and governments say they support music education (and already have an appreciation of its benefits) however when it comes to the simple resourcing of such support the implications are too great for any government to comprehend let alone make a commitment. This commitment would mean that teachers will need to be adequately prepared – whether as a specialist or generalist – to deliver a sequential experience in the classroom and across schooling. This would not just be the responsibility of the University teacher education programs but would extend further to the registration authorities requiring that this happens, and further that the assessment authority might need to ensure that it is actually happening within a quality framework environment.

I have optimism for the outcome of the Inquiry. I am sure there will be a significant number and variety of submissions. The data and the subsequent recommendations could form the basis of extended research studies

which will live well beyond the scope and intent of the Inquiry. I welcome the opportunity to access the materials once the Inquiry is concluded.

I am happy to appear before the Inquiry if further clarification or comment is required.

Yours sincerely,



David Forrest PhD
Professor of Music Education