

Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools

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The Demise of Music Education in State Schools :

I began teaching the flute and clarinet in inner city schools in 1990.

Back then, children came to secondary college wanting to learn an orchestral instrument and large groups of beginning students enrolled enthusiastically in our programs keen to participate in the College Concert Band which was the flagship of the music program.

These days, orchestral instruments gather dust on the shelves as students are only interested in learning voice, guitar or drums. Music education in primary schools is virtually non-existent. Children arriving at secondary college can no longer sing; they don't know or appreciate Christmas Carols or children's songs; and have no interest in orchestral or Concert Band music, instruments or repertoire. Instead all they know and want to perform is the type of material seen on Australian Idol and The X-Factor.

Children and families are missing out on so much. Parents no longer sing to and with their children, and children's listening skills and aural awareness is severely compromised.

Fifty years ago my mother trained to become a music teacher and taught in underprivileged schools. In the 1950s and 60s there were free orchestral concerts for all school children. She witnessed the transformative power of music and felt inspired about the future of music education. Today she is so disappointed with a system that is failing young people who have no access to music education in primary school and who can no longer sing or appreciate music because they have not had a chance to develop their aural and music appreciation skills.

This is such an unnecessary tragedy especially when we know so much about how music education contributes so much to the development of the child and of society as a whole.

Lyndal McLean
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In Praise of Music Education :

I would teach children music, physics and philosophy, but most importantly music, for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys to learning. ***Plato***

It takes discipline and focus to play an instrument but that's just the starting point – you have to hold on to that discipline but also let go and interact freely with others. I recently witnessed the first results of a groundbreaking scheme bringing music and musical role models to schools in deprived areas of London. The children involved were on fire and making huge progress academically (politicians who want to cut music education funding – take note). Music is a powerful tool, and when shared with others its power can change lives. British violinist ***Anthony Marwood***

Music is perhaps the most loved, but least understood, of all the arts. However, it can be appreciated at different levels and would appear to be a significant civilising influence on people everywhere, young and old alike All children need to be exposed to music early in their lives, not only to help their cognitive skills, but to enrich their lives. ***Professor Hugh Cornell***

Without law you don't have society; without the arts you don't have civilisation. ***Julian Burnside QC***

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC EDUCATION is alive and well in some Regions and not in others ... WHY ???

In the Western Region for many years there has been a central Instrumental Music Coordinator whose role it has been to:

- Provide a focus and vision for all IMTs across the Region
- Maintain a sense of fairness and justice in ensuring equity of provision of IM resources across the Region
- Assist principals with staffing decisions and the development of their music programs
- Ensure social cohesion and a sense of belonging and community for IMTs
- Remain up to date with the latest DEECD developments and communicate these to IMTs
- Be a voice for IMTs when they need one
- Provide ongoing support, advice and PD for IMTs
- Direct annual regional concerts
- Prepare and review the annual survey of IM resources in schools and ensure successful placement and management of these
- Ensure the ongoing success of Music Education in the Region
- Ensure accountability of spending of IMT funding allocation
- Connect IMTs with Professional musicians and businesses
- Connect and assist VCE music networks

Without this direction and oversight in other regions, schools have been free to do their own thing with Regional IMT allocations.

For instance one school has taken 2 periods of IMT time and given it to classroom music. It also gave 4 periods of IMT Coordination time to an SSO position and another school collapsed 0.2 Woodwind time into 0.1 Woodwind time. Where has the missing IMT time allocation gone? Where has the money gone and how is it being spent? Who is responsible for ensuring that what is allocated for Instrumental Music remains an Instrumental Music allocation in a school?

We desperately need Instrumental Music allocations to be properly administered otherwise programs disintegrate and money is wasted.