

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

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### Terms of reference 1,2 and 3:

Evidence supporting music education in schools;

## (1) Benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career

Students currently studying at Universities around Australia and working as composers, conductors, professional players and teachers. We also have teachers currently within the Bendigo Instrumental Music Program who have been through the BIMP program themselves.

Students have participated in School Spectacular performances in the orchestra pit and in the chorus.

Past and present BIMP students and ensembles participate in the Bendigo Eisteddfod each year, and we often see students in the state championships. Bands from our program play at the Melbourne bands festival, winning prestigious awards.

Community concert, pipe and brass bands and community theatre companies in Bendigo are filled with BIMP students, current and past. We have students performing within the community functions through rock concerts, talent quests, community events and festivals.

We organize master classes with leading musicians.

We encourage individuals to enter AMEB and ANZCA exams regularly and great results are frequently seen.

School Community Benefits

- High achieving students providing opportunities for every member of the school
- Relationship with students outside of the classroom
- Providing opportunities for every member of the school
- Instrumental teachers showing an interest within the school, eg community events, leading by example.

Positive Effects of Ensembles

- Strong relationships between players and teachers, creating trust and social development.
- Recognizing weakness and developing strategies to overcome them.
- Helping individuals identifying learning needs.
- Team work
- Learning from others
- Leadership development
- Drive for younger/developing players when idolizing experienced players and striving for success.

Positive changes in our music department include individuals being put into positions of leadership and finding inner strength to rise to the challenges.

Initiatives that have been implemented include

- Massed singing at annual music week
- Regional annual PD day for instrumental and classroom music teachers.
- Development of combined ensemble for schools lacking individual numbers to cater for large ensembles
- Full Orchestra ensemble
- Fretworks (music week for guitars)
- Summer Program

I have just returned from a year teaching in Canada working with the band class program. There I witnessed the power of large balanced ensembles and the positive impact it has on student's music education, and found the support that music programs receive from the principal class has a major impact on the success and

breadth of the education offered. Schools that see music education as part of the school's curriculum

- understand that extra rehearsal times are needed, even though they impact on other classes
- they understand and appreciate the effort required to create and organize musical performances
- they celebrate the talent and effort of their students and instrumental teachers
- they expect students to perform and succeed as in any academic study.
- they understand music programs take years of growth to create, but can disappear within a year if not nurtured and resourced properly

## (2) general benefits to students as a result of music education;

It is most rewarding to watch students develop, and to gain confidence expressing the person that they are inside. Coming to understand music takes negative aspects from their lives and helps individual personalities develop.

Students can find it easier to fit into a social setting in the classroom.

We have worked with a number of students with special needs. Sometimes it has been possible to accommodate their needs as part of our program. As an example, a student with Asperger's syndrome enjoyed working with our contemporary guitar program but was not able to follow the study through to VCE years. His condition manifested in a strong focus on the music of Metallica, and we were able to feature the student in a contemporary ensemble program. The student's VCAL teacher and coordinator supported this participation, and the outcome was successful if not ongoing.

Other observations:

**Confidence:** Students who come in to the school in Year 7 with no musical experiences but 2 years later they are participating in the senior ensemble as soloists (improvised) or gaining lead roles in the school musicals.

**Listening:** It is obvious that the students are listening in their learning as they are improving and extending their skills weekly.

**Responding:** When guest artist come to the school to work with ensembles students feel confident enough to answer questions with appropriate responses.

**Negotiating:** Often students have many commitments, which require the students to negotiate lessons/rehearsals with their teachers and the parents.

**Team Work:** Throughout tours with ensembles from the BIMP students have worked together to load buses and set up concert venues in a time frame and this could not have been successful with out teamwork, which then is evident in their playing as ensemble.

Individual BIMP staff members have worked for NSW regional school music programs, but feel that BIMP can offer more offer more. Bendigo Instrumental Music Program offers support for the teachers through being employed through the education department. This promotes appropriate wages and conditions and provides the opportunity to be part of the union and support networks that a bigger organization can offer.

### Terms of reference 4,5 and 6:

Current provision of music education in Victoria:

(4) music education provided through specific funding for music education;

Tax – Employees of BIMP are paid through our base school ESC who administrator our salary and other HR related issues.

Ensemble Time – ensemble time is over and above our salaried time allocations and but are considered part of our job.

Our ensembles are run outside of class time.

Individual schools music programs purchase their own equipment and resources for their program. BIMP is a government resource, which runs alongside a government instrumental hire scheme, which shares its resources throughout the Bendigo schools. We are able to purchase some resources, which benefits the all the government schools. Our extra duties included weekend and after hours competitions, camps, tours, travel, AMEB and ANZCA exams, accompanying, personal learning plans for each student.

The facilities in the Bendigo schools vary greatly from school to school. Most schools have adequate heating and cooling. Sizes of practices varies, the ideal size being 12sq meters. All rooms need natural light and windows in doors. Soundproofing is also a major consideration – which if not properly done is not effective at all. Door sizing needs to be wide enough to get instruments through. Access to performance venues for large equipment, trucks and for staff with a large amounts of band and orchestral equipment.

We as BIMP work in a fantastic team of 12 instrumental music teachers with 5 school music coordinators. We have the opportunity for weekly meetings and professional sharing, professional development, resource sharing and innovation, combined school projects, visiting teachers in lessons, observations.

BIMP is a government resource, which runs alongside a government instrumental hire scheme, who shares its resources throughout the Bendigo schools. We provide some resources for our staff and fund activities for students, but rely on schools and the region to support what we cannot fund. We are able to purchase some instruments and resources through individual schools depending on their program and school support. Most of our PD is funded by instrumental student's fees and region.

**Terms of Reference 7 - the extent and quality of music education provision in Victorian schools;** (This may be a mix of opinion and fact)

Please describe your views particularly to the school you're in contact with. Comparisons to provisions you have seen interstate or overseas can be made.

We teach at a number of schools. The degree to which music is valued and supported varies from school to school. While one school offers administrative and financial support, others show significantly less support, and this is highlighted by the size of their programs. There appears to be a correlation between the effectiveness of the program and the socio-economic outlook of the enrolment of the school.

Some schools offer classroom music only at year 7, and usually only for one semester, while others offer a classroom program through to VCE years, usually elective in years 9-10. In one instance a broader subject called Performing Arts is offered rather than Music as such.

In all schools in which we teach, Music programs are headed by qualified music teachers, however there is one instance of a generalist teacher contributing to a music program.

We use a band/string methods, then move on to AMEB, ANCA, VCE, VET and other material.

Team members are either tertiary trained or undergoing tertiary training. This varies from B. Mus. with Performance Major, Grad Dip Ed, to Post Graduate qualifications at Masters level. One member is presently finishing a PhD.

A lot of our work is definitely collaborative.

We try to be involved in as much outside activity as is practicable. Being in a regional area makes Melbourne-based events expensive in which to participate, but we manage some of these events.

We always strive to accommodate the individual needs of students, especially the gifted, but time restraints sometimes mean that gifted students are extended by greater involvement in activities rather than receiving extra attention to refine their skills. There is a tendency to spend more time with those who need it, to lift them to an expected level, at the expense of gifted students.

We have school concerts each semester, local competitions, annual music week, community play-outs, and a music camp for guitarists called Fretworks.

Operating as a regional resource within our town, we interact as a cohesive team amongst ourselves. Within each school our sense of belonging varies. It is easy as an 'itinerant' to feel on the outside as far as other staff are concerned.

We feel we have ownership of the program we deliver, but not necessarily as part of a broader school program. School management can vary from strong support to passive acceptance.

Generally if we don't know something there is someone nearby who can give us advice. We use AMEB and ANZCA because it is an accepted graded process. These are not complete programs as they cater for soloists, and not for ensemble work.

The VIT processes are designed for general classroom teachers, and we often find the "one size fits all" approach to professional development needs some massaging to suit our needs.

### **Terms of reference 8, 9, 10 and 11:**

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools:

#### **(8) optimum governance and oversight arrangements;**

In the future we would like greater job security for instrumental music staff.

We would like to develop curriculum that flows from year 7 – 10 through to VCE/year 11 & 12 VET years, particularly for contemporary instruments and ensembles.

While the principal of our BIMP host school, ESC, liaises effectively with BIMP coordinators, this does not necessarily flow through to other campus principals. Often the school structure relies on the music coordinator to make all decisions and report directly to the principal. BIMP staff have little or no input into the decision-making

process when it comes to designing and implementing curriculum.

Our region could improve things by sharing BIMP suggestions for curriculum development and implementation through increased representation at district principals' meetings.

Parents do a lot already for our students: transport, attending after school concerts and events, and supporting students financially. It's important for parents to remain well-informed regarding varying student requirements from primary school years and throughout period of the years 7 – 12.

The Victorian Government can improve music education by supporting teachers who are presently working in music education by providing professional opportunities with secure career pathways.

For the future, tertiary courses such as the University of Melbourne's Master of Education (Instrumental Music) degree, and other courses tailored to developing teaching standards and curriculum are needed. Upcoming instrumental music teachers need a course that includes specific study in conducting and learning how to play and give instruction on the range of instruments that we teach. Educators need to be equipped with practical and pedagogical skills that they can draw on when teaching. Practical experience in the classroom is also vitally important.

There is also a lack of professional development for instrument teachers that may be very experienced in their field but on entering the government system now require a qualification that was previously not an issue. These teachers need to be able to continue to work and have their experience recognized while completing a course that allows them to become qualified for teaching in government schools.

Regarding governance of remuneration, Instrumental Music Teachers should be entitled to no less professional opportunities than other teachers and should be remunerated accordingly. Whether through the Department of Education, Catholic Education, Independent School system, or a studio music teaching program, awards and conditions should be made clear, as they are in any other profession

Regarding Governance of teacher standards teacher standards should be governed as any other standard of performance, whether at a government or other school, through PD. Private studio teachers have to manage PD privately, and this could be encouraged ie private teachers could be financially encouraged to attend recognized course of certification or study.

VIT should definitely improve their process by considering Recognition of Prior Learning. This has been an issue for some of us. They have created long and exhaustive processes which don't always lead to the best teachers recruited for students. Teachers that have a lot of practical experience can be the best candidate for teaching students the skills they require for their musical development and should be assessed on suitability for teaching not degrees obtained.

BIMP team members who have worked overseas, and others who have studied overseas teaching methods, and data, help to inform our standards. My experience with Canadian Band Programs has helped us to realize the power and positive effect of ensemble work. In the tertiary sector courses should be maintained for high achieving instrumentalist but Instrumental music teaching, and contemporary approaches to music education courses should also be encouraged.

Discussion between a range of instrumental music programs including BIMP, private educators, tertiary education facilities, and the Parliament of Victoria Education and Training Committee would be good to develop solutions of best practice.

