

## **Submission to the Parliamentary Committee**

The extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools



**EXPECT MORE – ACHIEVE MORE**

**By Raymond L Yates Principal and the School Council of Monbulk Primary School, its community and the professional Educators who work with the school namely Ass. Professor Dr Katrina M\c Ferran Melbourne University, Mr Richard Gill AOM, Professor John Izard, Mrs Bev McAlister OAM, Rhonda Davidson-Irwin**

See appendix for details of the contributors cited.

## Terms of Reference

### Received from the Legislative Assembly on 23 October 2012

That, under section 33 of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*, an inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools be referred to the Education and Training Committee for consideration and report no later than 30 September 2013, including

#### Terms of Reference

Evidence supporting music education in schools

- (1) benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career;
- (2) general benefits to students as a result of music education;
- (3) benefits to student academic performance as a result of music education;

Current provision of music education in Victoria

- (4) music education provided through specific funding for music education;
- (5) music education provided through non-specific funding, for example, general student resource package funding;
- (6) music education provided through parent contribution
- (7) the extent and quality of music education provision in Victorian schools;

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools

- (8) optimum governance and oversight arrangements;
- (9) optimum use of targeted funding;
- (10) optimum balance of central mandates and supports; and
- (11) optimum balance of music specific funding, non-music specific funding and parent contribution.

The arts have been part of human history and have encouraged human expression in daily life and cultural ceremonies.

Our ancestors knew the arts were synonymous with survival. We created art to communicate emotions: our passions, jealousies, and enduring conflicts. Daily life, communication, and rituals were circumscribed and delineated in a range of artistic expressions.

We went into battle with the sounds of trumpets, piccolos, and drums all over the globe....We drew pictures of our kings and queens, and also cave drawings to tell the history of our day. Was this our primitive form of expression, or were we informing future generations in a way that language will never do alone? In short, the performing and visual arts have been the foundation of our recorded existence. I believe the arts are key to how we educate ourselves.

*Sir Ken Robinson suggests in his book *The Element**  
(Robinson, 2009)

Education doesn't need to be reformed – it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardise education but to personalise it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.

***This enquiry gives is a chance to transform education through a personalization approach.***

I want to say at the beginning what my biases are. These have been formed after long years as a principal in the education sector and my involvement with a wide circle of intellectually focussed music advocates and a wide study of educational innovation.

I am not a musician but I embrace and engage with Music on many levels. I hold a strong conviction for all the Arts. I strongly advocate the principle and the practices of music and the Arts being inclusive in the core curriculum

Monbulk Primary School secured funding for a state of the art Arts Centre including a magnificent Music Room. This with a grant from the State Government enabled the school to become a Music Specialist School and resulted in us forging intellectual, curriculum support and physical connections with the Music Faculty at Melbourne University. This linked with the existing engagement with Richard Gill, Music Council of Australia, Rhonda Davidson-Irwin, Professor John IZARD and Dandenong Ranges Music Council

*These commitments are shared by the following experts who have agreed to include their articles in this submission . All of these persons have worked closely with the*

*school over the past years and they, like my staff and School Council, are passionate about Music*

*Our Professional Partnerships:-*

#### Richard Gill OAM Victorian Opera

*Richard Gill is one of Australia's most admired conductors. As a youngster you might have found him glued to the family wireless, singing at church, or putting on a pantomime for the neighbourhood in the backyard. Richard has worked as a musician, teacher, conductor and music director, and says his career has been marked by 'devastating failures and uplifting success'.*

#### Ass. Professor Katrina MC Ferran Melbourne University

*Dr Katrina McFerran is a music therapist, researcher and lecturer specialising in Music Therapy with Adolescents as well as Children with Disabilities. Her clinical work spans a range of community and institutional settings, from palliative care to mental health and special education. Her research is similarly diverse, incorporating qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodology studies addressing pertinent questions in the field. She has published extensively and presents frequently on her work.*

#### Rhonda-Davidson-Irwin

*Rhonda has taught more than 10,000 children, performed for Queen Elizabeth, Bill Clinton and Muhammad Ali, composed more than 900 songs for children's TV shows In the Box and Puzzle Play and established one of Queensland's most dynamic orchestras, Viva La Musica.*

*Rhonda has written and directed thirty children's performances with the Queensland Symphony, Philharmonic and the VLM Orchestras.*

*She composed the music for the 2004 Athens Olympics and more recently, the Warner Brothers' Great Outback Spectacular.*

*A talented musician, Rhonda's CDs have been distributed worldwide, one album going Gold.*

*Rhonda initially qualified as a primary school music specialist and wrote both the Australian National Arts Curriculum and the Queensland Music Curriculum.*

*For fifteen years she has also lectured part-time in early childhood and music education at QUT.*

*Recently Rhonda has been working on the Music Council of Australia's new national advertising campaign – Music. Play for Life.*

*Rhonda holds a Bachelor of Music (Music Education) from QUT and a Masters degree with distinction from the University of Western Australia.*

Professor John Izard

John Izard (Adjunct Professor) RMIT

John is Australia's leading statistician and Mathematical expert for education. He has overseen for the World Bank many projects in Asia and Europe.

*Since 1997 John has been the Programme Supervisor of the innovative Testing for Teaching at Monbulk Primary School – The study is now in its fifteenth year, the longest longitudinal study of its type in the world.*

*The purpose of the project is to use data as a driver of improvement, hence Testing for learning purposes.*

### **Overview of the case for Music in the Curriculum**

Is it possible that we have lost our way?

How will we become a great nation if we neglect Music and the Arts?

It is worth challenging the thrust of modern education. There is a demand for greater concentration upon the traditional basics: English, math, science and history and a new focus on computer competency together with a renewed focus on the need for a foreign language. Add to this all of the other calls for education to perform and one wonders where music education fits in.

Plato once said, *“Education in music is most sovereign because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bringing with them and imparting grace if one is rightly trained.”*

Why has the value of music education eroded so dramatically from Plato's position on music education to the position we hold today?

The idea of music education is supreme in my view, but past events and short-term thinking has eroded its importance.

Why should music be a part of basic education? Why should it be up there with English, math and science?

### **Here are some examples of current modern thinking on this question:**

- UNESCO considers education in the arts to be a universal human right, implying that its absence or sidelining is a breach of the convention on the rights of the child. A ‘road map for arts education’ was prepared at the First World Conference on Arts. It included the following statement: Culture and the arts are essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual. Therefore, Arts Education is a universal human right, for all learners, including those who are often excluded from education,

such as immigrants, cultural minority groups, and people with disabilities. (UNESCO 2006:3) UNESCO (2006) 'Road Map for Arts Education',

- John Goodlad, author of "A Place Called School" views the arts as one of the "five givers" of human knowledge, along with mathematics and science, literature and language, society and social studies, and vocations.
- Ernest Boyer's "High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America," lists the arts as second curriculum priority, after language, in the proposed core of common learning. This proposed core includes nine subject areas. He goes on to say that music is ranked first among subjects most liked by students and receives high rankings in the areas of importance and difficulty.
- Howard Gardner's "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences" states that there are seven forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, *musical*, bodily kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. None of these ought to have priority over others.
- Ernest Boyer says the "aesthetic literacy is as basic as linguistic literacy." He also wanted a "powerful voice for the arts in education."
- Mark Tramo of Harvard Medical School says "Music is biologically part of human life just as music is aesthetically part of life."
- Dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts are the five art forms in the Australian Curriculum, and these were considered to be 'reasonably distinct' although 'organically connected, and not easily separable in some contexts' (ACARA 2010a: 4).  
Finland, which consistently performs well in PISA, specifies nine forms of the arts in its national curriculum which include literacy arts, performing arts (circus, theatre) and visual arts (architecture, visual arts and craft) (Finnish National Board of Education 2011).Caldwell & Vaughan 2012
- Sir Ken Robinson argues that we've been educated to become good workers, rather than creative thinkers. Students with restless minds and bodies, far from being cultivated for their energy and curiosity, are ignored or even stigmatized, with terrible consequences. "We are educating people out of their creativity," Robinson states.
- Professor Spychiger of the University of Fribourg in Switzerland studied 70 classes of children ages 7 to 15. Half of them received daily 45 minute music lessons. Those who did get the music lessons got better at language and reading and did as well at math as those who spent more time on language, reading and math.
- Michael green, Recording Academy President states "Music is a magical gift we must nourish and cultivate in our children, especially now as scientific evidence proves that an education in the arts makes better math and science students."

### **Reasons for including Music into the core curriculum**

Far too many schools and administrators deny that the study of music is one of the basics of education. There are many compelling arguments to the contrary.

- Music contributes to the school and community environment (quality of life).
- Music helps prepare students for a career and is a vocation.
- Music makes the day more alive and interesting, which in turn leads to more learning.
- Music combines behaviours to promote a higher order of thinking skills.
- Music provides a way to image and create, contribute to self-expression and creativity.
- Music enriches life; it is a way to understand our cultural heritage as well as other past and present cultures.
- Performing, consuming and composing are satisfying and rewarding activities.
- Music integrates the use of both sides of the brain. This creation of neural pathways is unique and the effect is not found in any other discipline.
- Music is able to nourish sensory capabilities, and capabilities of attention, cognitive, emotional and other skills all of which are driving forces behind learning.
- Music provides opportunities to develop and enhance multiple brain processes.
- Music can lift spirits, expand our inner self, express in musical terms those things that can be verbally difficult to express
- Music Education means much more than listening to music or playing recorded music. It is about engagement-singing, playing instruments, reading music, performing, composing music, analyzing and creating musical sounds and percussion.
- Music, like Mathematics is the universal language with a symbolic representation of the world.
- Music allows us to communicate with others and record insights about self & about mankind,
- Spatial skills are also enriched
- Music contributes to sensitivity (see Gloria Kiester's article Teaching Music for "feelingful intelligence).
- Music education provides for perceptual motor development.
- Music encourages team work and cohesiveness.
- Music fosters creativity and individuality.
- Music education adds to self-worth and confidence of participants.
- Music education fosters discipline and commitment.
- Music is a major source of joy and achievement.
- Music provides unique and distinct modes of learning (see article by Howard Gardner).
- Music is a therapeutic outlet for human beings.
- Music provides success for some students who have difficulty with other aspects of the school curriculum.
- Miller Frank reports that his studies show that instrumental practice enhances coordination, concentration and memory and also brings about the improvement of eyesight and hearing. He further reports that the process of learning to play an instrument refines the development of the brain and the entire neurological system. (Mueller, 1984).

Evidence very much leans heavily in favour of Music in the core curriculum improving students educational outcomes but it will not happen overnight. Music produces results over the long term and a Harvard University study called Project Study does caution against making causal associations between music and academic

performance in the short term. However the effect and impact of Music does produce results over the long term.

Evidence clearly demonstrates children develop through music an increased love of learning, are able to co-operatively work together, develop greater self-esteem, have heightened creativity and build a stronger community.

### **Arts and improved student outcomes Resources and references**

1. Music and arts initiatives have been shown to increase academic outcomes (Bamford 2006; Catterall et al. 1999),
2. Increased Intelligence Quota (IQ) (Schellenberg 2006),
3. Improved literacy (Bamford 2006; Hunter 2005; Spillane 2009) and numeracy (Catterall et al. 1999; Hunter 2005; Spillane 2009; Uptis and Smithrim 2003).
4. Participation in the arts has been shown to encourage changes within the cognitive functions of the brain (Koelsch et al. 2005; Levitin and Triovolas 2009; Parsons 2001; Sacks 2007; Schlaug et al. 1995a; Schlaug et al. 1995b; Schlaug et al. 2005; Sluming et al. 2007; Wetter et al. 2009).
5. Professor Shaw co- discoverer of the Mozart Effect “Keeping Mozart in Mind” Academic Press 2009. Study suggested that there is a positive relationship between music and language as well as music and math.

**It is not a question the jury is out –the jury has already concluded the immense intellectual and social impact that music provides.**

John Ruskin said, "*Great Nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts: the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last that is the Arts.*"

At the launch of the NAB ACER Schools First Julia Gillard declared that ‘All children have some gift and even some potential greatness within them. Finding that gift, nurturing it and bringing it to life is the responsibility of every single one of us’. This supports an intensely personal approach to learning.

Some researches and bureaucrats try to find a “silver bullet” in their never ending desire to lift so called scores. I contend that the solution is there -it is staring us in the face. It is called Music and the Arts.

Why then have we abandoned it? An effective music programme from early age will give us much of the improvement we are seeking.

However we have the shattering statistic from Dr Katrina McFerran, University of Melbourne, that only about **17 hours** of lectures and instruction is incorporated into many of the current tertiary establishments who are engaged in teacher training courses, and only **23%** of government schools provide a meaningful music education. Some schools do facilitate access to privately funded music tuition through external service providers.

The lack of music in schools is a problem that has ramifications far beyond the music industry. It reflects systemic problems that endorse inequality (88% of private schools provide quality music education).

Few students in Victoria have access to institutional or private music instruction that involves a balanced, sequential curriculum. And these conditions have a serious impact on our culture. Music is valued more as entertainment than for its contribution to the development of our cultural life .

And when I have visited Queensland for music conferences, I discovered the education system there appoints a music specialist to each school. What a contrast to us!

Australian Education Review 58, *The Arts and Australian Education: Realising potential* by University of Sydney academic Professor Robyn Ewing stresses that the Arts (dance, drama, literature, media arts, music and visual arts) must not be seen as servants to other curriculum areas.

Despite the growing body of evidence pointing to educational and wider social benefits of the Arts, to date equitable provision and resourcing of the Arts and monitoring teaching quality in arts education has received insufficient attention in Australia,” Professor Ewing said. “Similarly, provision of quality teacher preparation in the Arts and ongoing professional learning has been almost nonexistent.”

Many successful arts programs have been established by philanthropic groups. Professor Ewing argues that such initiatives should be the province of government through both educational and broader social policy. She calls upon Australian governments to invest in high-quality arts education initiatives as well as high-quality research and evaluation of these initiatives.

According to Professor Ewing achieving the demonstrated educational and social benefits of Arts in education will require a change in thinking by policy makers to ensure that cultivating imagination and creativity become the priorities rather than ‘add-ons.’

School reform efforts follow a predictable pattern throughout the world. An improvement initiative is launched with great enthusiasm, only to be buffeted by confusion, criticism, and complaints.

Many educators then abandon the initiative and continue their quest for the quick fix that will result in deep cultural changes that are unaccompanied by anxiety and concerns. But many have concluded that substantive change inevitably creates discomfort and dissonance as people are asked to act in new ways (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Fullan, 2005; Sarason, 1996).

We cannot avoid the discomfort, but we can determine how we will respond when the going gets tough.

It is the problem of persistence of effort.

**Australia cannot afford to ignore the virtues that the discipline of music teaches young people. If we want to educate the WHOLE CHILD and we think we must, then Music must be a core subject.**

I have noticed when children are engaged in Music (and the Arts) something changes in their lives,

I am not attaching photographs of smiling students (but I could) for I know that is not going to get the reader to change or retain a view on Music education. But anecdotally I can say something magic happens to children when music becomes part of their lives. The following anecdote is an example of this.

This morning, when the staff were attending a Stop Work, one student arrived for school. She is a Grade 6 student and a School Captain, I set Breannan some tasks so I could continue writing this submission. Later she came to my office to show me what she had done and enquired what I was doing. After telling her about my task she left to finish what I assumed were her own tasks. Some half hour later she brought this essay back me saying “this is how I feel about music in our school”. Here is her unsolicited essay:-

*I believe that musical education is important in schools because if we didn't have music this world would be a horrible place. All of the children in schools all around should have a musical education. It can also prepare them and give them more practice in music if they wanted to be a musician when they grow up. I am so lucky to have grown up in a school that believes in musical education! Music is my passion and if it weren't for this school I don't think I would be able to play an instrument or read music sheets like I can now. This school has some amazing opportunities for the children attending the school. Monbulk Primary has helped me a lot in musical education and I want children in other schools to be as fortunate as I am. Monbulk Primary is all about music and if I ever went to a school that didn't have music, even if it was a brilliant school I would certainly not be attending it. I love this school itself, but with the amazing music programme we have, it just gives me something extra to look forward to. I want to have lots to do with music when I am older and I still do now. I play recorder, guitar and I sing in the school choir. This school is amazing always but without the music I would be very sad. Do you really want children without these opportunities to suffer? That's just cruel. Get music into more children's lives today! MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!!!!!!!! By Breannan Timmermans. Monbulk Primary School Captain 2013*

Brennan lifted my spirits this morning.

*Civilizations are most often remembered for their art and thought. We must teach them the rich artistic inheritance of our culture and an appreciation of how fine music enriches both the student who studies it, and the society that produces it. The existence of strong music and fine arts curricula are important to keeping the humanities truly humanizing and liberal arts education, truly liberating." John Ruskin*

We must present and repeatedly reinforce why music is basic and share with the students and parents what our goals are.

Successful schools striving to educate the Whole Child have a much more demanding culture—

***hunger for improvement,  
promoting excellence,  
& holding hope for every child***

The school framework describes an environment of safety, respect, support, and challenge for all school members across a full range of domains: physical, emotional, social, ethical, civic, and intellectual.

If we want:

- \* **Success in society**
- \* **Success in school**
- \* **Success in developing intelligence**
- \* **Success in life**

Then Music –the universal language needs to be imbedded in the curriculum.

#### **CLOTHS OF HEAVEN**

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

**HAD I THE HEAVENS' EMBROIDERED CLOTHS,  
ENWROUGHT WITH GOLDEN AND SILVER LIGHT,  
THE BLUE AND THE DIM AND THE DARK CLOTHS  
OF NIGHT AND LIGHT AND THE HALF-LIGHT,**

I WOULD SPREAD THE CLOTHS UNDER YOUR FEET:  
BUT I, BEING POOR, HAVE ONLY MY DREAMS;  
I HAVE SPREAD MY DREAMS UNDER YOUR FEET;  
TREAD SOFTLY BECAUSE YOU TREAD ON MY DREAMS.

**“AND EVERY DAY AND EVERYWHERE OUR CHILDREN SPREAD THEIR  
DREAMS BENEATH OUR FEET  
AND WE SHOULD TREAD SOFTLY “** K.ROBINSON



Principal for the Monbulk Primary School Community

**Article by Richard Gill AOM**

**Wake up, Australia, or we'll have a nation of unimaginative robots.**

School is back and it is a matter of regrettable fact that large numbers of children in state and independent schools will be subjected to a style of teaching directed exclusively to producing satisfactory results in national literacy and numeracy tests and consequently scoring high ratings with My School.

I want to make my stance very clear from the outset: NAPLAN tests and My School have *nothing* to do with the education of a child. This abhorrent and insidious method of assessing children, teachers and their schools needs to stop now. Principals, teachers and parents need to stand up and be counted and resist this unnatural activity, which only succeeds in turning education into some sort of cheap competition in which the last consideration seems to be the mind of the child.

Screaming the words literacy and numeracy from Canberra does not constitute having an educational policy. In fact, the race to become the most literate and numerate schools with the best rankings nationally is exacting a terrible price.

Evidence is now available that schools all over the country are cutting back on arts education to devote more time to subjects that will make children literate. It can be demonstrably proven that activities used in

teaching for the national tests destroy individuality, stifle creativity, stultify thought and make all children respond in the same way - a sort of educational circus in which the children are the trained animals and the teachers the poorly paid ringmasters.

The very things that promote literacy and numeracy are the arts, beginning with serious arts education in the early years. If we want a creative nation, an imaginative nation, a thinking nation and a nation of individuals, then we must increase the time for arts education, especially music education. If we want a nation of non-imaginative robots who can do tests, then we are well on the way to achieving that condition.

Parents need to know that it is through participation in arts subjects that the mind, imagination, spirit and soul of a child are stimulated. Through this stimulation comes a bonus in all other areas of learning.

***Music, for example, when it is properly taught, requires an extraordinarily high level of listening and concentration from the student. It requires the student to have a capacity to work in the abstract, an ability to work across several skill areas simultaneously and the ability to rationalise this verbally.***

***Children's involvement in musical activity has a profound effect on the development of the child's general learning. It is now proven beyond doubt that children who are engaged in arts activities, especially music, have advantages in all areas of learning. The research is in, proven and beyond doubt. Why, then, with the evidence so overwhelmingly supporting children's involvement in arts education, would schools decide to reduce teaching time in these important fields?***

In supporting statements of this nature, let's examine one school in Victoria, the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School, where senior students spend half a week on the academic curriculum and half a week on their chosen arts discipline. Each year the students from this school seem to do extraordinarily well at the year 12 examinations in spite of only spending half the time on academic work.

How can this be? My view is that they are highly motivated children who have, early in their lives, encountered enlightened parenting and teaching and are motivated to work hard in all disciplines in an environment that promotes creativity, imaginative thinking and individuality. In short, most of them have had early, prior opportunities.

All children in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark seem to have such opportunities; why can't all Australian children? By ignoring arts education we say to our children: "You are too stupid to have good education in the arts - your brains will never cope with intense learning in music, for example, so we will only do the bare minimum with you in any arts education and really concentrate on getting you through your NAPLAN tests."

Wake up, Australia, before it's too late. Teachers, parents and children need to let governments know that we are heading into a cultural and educational crisis unless we address these issues now.

**Richard Gill is the music director of Victorian Opera at the time writing this. He is also consultant for our school and Dandenong ranges Music Council.**

Assoc. Professor Katrina McFerran Melbourne University

Our Professional relationship grows over the past years and Dr Mc Ferran oversaw out Music Specialist grant with Professor John IZARD supervising the collection of data. This final report of will be able shortly of the impact of the programme. Following is her essay of her study of Music in Victorian Schools

### **Supporting evidence for Music in Schools**

**Paper by**

**Ass. Professor Katrina McFerran  
Melbourne University  
Music Faculty**

**Permission to attach paper was given to us by Dr. Mc Ferran  
She is our Music Consultant in our School Music Specialization**

### **You're the Voice**

*"For my community at this time, this is the right decision. Schools need to be a reflection of their community, a part of their community and I've got a community that values that."*

The Hon. Peter Garret epitomizes the thrust of this report. He knows that music is a powerful tool for communicating about important issues. And he knows that you don't have to be an opera singer for people to enjoy your music.

Unfortunately, the Australian Government is yet to empower schools to draw on the potency of music as effectively as Midnight Oil drew attention to indigenous and environmental issues in the 1980s. Instead, school principals are required to utilise creative accounting strategies to fund music programs, and since this often means parent fund-raising, public schools struggle with this requirement more than private schools in affluent suburbs. And despite the potential contribution music can make to literacy and numeracy outcomes in the early years, music is no longer embedded in the curriculum. Work songs are not used by the vast majority of early years teachers because they are no longer trained to sing.

According to research, music enhances learning. According to School Principals, music builds communities. According to the Department of Education music is an important part of the curriculum, but funding is not forthcoming. This report outlines an agenda for change. This change will result in better numeracy and literacy outcomes in the early years, and improve retention and attendance in secondary school. It is grounded in an ambitious research plan that will inform much required systemic change. It is time to make a change.

### **Music in Schools: Overcoming the Obstacles**

There isn't much music happening in Australian Schools. The Stevens Report shows that only 23% of public schools provide a meaningful music education, although some schools do facilitate access to privately funded music tuition through external service providers. The lack of music in schools is a problem that has ramifications far beyond the music industry. It reflects systemic problems that endorse inequality (88% of private schools provide quality music education). Research shows that music can enhance cognitive outcomes (Schellenberg, 2004), which means that it helps children learn. But in the current status quo, only some young Australians are accessing this advantage. Theory also suggests that shared music making builds relationships that nurture respect for diversity (Cross, 2008). Building stronger partnerships between students, with teachers and also with the community is critical for the development of Australian schools, which are diverse by nature. Mainstream schools are now the primary site for the provision of services to all children – of various learning abilities, from varied backgrounds, and non-traditional family units. The provision of a range of musical opportunities in schools addresses important systemic problems and builds a future for all Australians.

### **The Data**

This report results from a symposium for school principals hosted at The University of Melbourne on Friday the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 2011. The specific focus of the meeting was to deliberate the role of music in schools. School leaders were recruited through the networks of *Music Play for Life* (MPFL) and invitations were sent to 384 Victorian principals who had participated in the *Music: Count*

*Us In* campaign in 2010. This campaign focuses on a week of music making across Australia that encourages school communities to make music in order to encourage ongoing musical participation. 13 school leaders expressed interest in participation and 9 attended the four-hour meeting. The group comprised 4 principals, 3 assistant principals and 2 music coordinators. Of the 7 school leaders, 2 were from secondary schools, 2 were from special schools, and 3 were from primary schools. Each school leader described a range of music programs provided within their school, from music embedded in curriculum to lunchtime choirs. Some schools were committed to large-scale musical performances within their community, whilst others described minimal programming. A diversity of musical engagement was evident within the group.

The focus group discussion was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Analysis involved categorization of the data into inductively derived themes that were then re-analysed in relation to the ecological context. The analysis revealed a number of key themes that will be elaborated in this report. Discussions pointed to logistical obstacles to the provision of music in schools, namely challenges with time and money. The solutions posed by school leaders involved making a values-driven commitment to music by prioritizing it within budgets despite constraints, combined with creative accounting that often drew heavily on community resources to supplement limited Departmental support. Significant hurdles were identified at a systemic level that demand more complex changes than creative budgeting. Our recommendation is that the specific implementation of change needs to be underpinned by action research and longitudinal data collection. The solutions posed in this report respond to these challenges and provide a way forward that is grounded in the opinions shared by the schools leaders in this study. The report concludes with a proposal for such a program labeled *You're the Voice*. This program would investigate the feasibility of re-embedding music in early years curriculum and nurturing musical cultures that build stronger school communities and improve student wellbeing.

### **The Principal's Voice**

#### **The Right and the Fight for Music**

*"If we believe music is important and the hierarchy doesn't believe that, then we just have to do what we believe"*

The school leader's that attended the symposium were committed to the importance of music in schools, although there was significant variability in how much music was provided in each of the sites represented. A number of principal's elaborated on their commitment to music and their determination to maintain a presence for music in their school, despite logistical hurdles. The lack of infrastructure for supporting music curriculum was described as "appalling" and hard examples were offered of diminishing staff numbers in the department. "The performing arts advisory group in NSW just went from 23 to 3 staff; and changed from having one key person for each of the art groups to not even having one for each – music is shared with science."

The curriculum standards for the provision of music in schools were considered to be “appalling” in comparison to previous decades. Frequent references were made to the lost requirement that primary school teachers should be able to play an instrument and sing. This was previously supported by training in music embedded within tertiary education that flowed on into primary school education. The general picture was of low standards of expectation and minimal support, even when school leaders were deeply committed to the inclusion of music in schools.

### **Music Strengthens Communities**

*“It’s not only reflecting a community, it’s also establishing and building a community.”*

The power of music to build communities was a powerful theme of discussion within the symposium. Numerous descriptions were offered regarding the role of music for supporting the development of shared cultural values in less affluent suburbs.

“So the first public performances we did I had to tell parents that this was an event they needed to attend the whole performance, you don’t leave after your child has performed. They’ve been to the football but they haven’t been to the theatre. They don’t know you don’t bring your food in, and you have allocated seats, and you turn your phone off.”

Similar stories were shared in order to communicate how beneficial music had been in these contexts. School leaders reflected on the potency of music in building a community over many years, with bigger productions and better participation.

“We have higher attendance for the school concert than for any other event that we run. And every year when we have the concert we need to get a bigger venue and over time you build that culture in your school that music is accepted.”

Partnerships between the school and the broader community were also seen as an important asset to the school culture, and these were fostered by musical participation. Diverse opportunities for partnership were described, from ANZAC day services to Carols By Candlelight. “Music is the vehicle that promotes schools within the community.”

### **Missing Opportunities in Curriculum Development**

*“There is no forum for staff to discuss doing something really good in music. It’s not celebrated or even acknowledged at regional or state level. It makes it tough to celebrate something that’s really important in school. There are no pats on head for a good music program.”*

School Leaders described the almost exclusive focus of the Government on achieving literacy and numeracy markers as a challenge. Whilst this was recognized as a global trend, the local consequences were made clear by principals.

“The pressure of accountability processes impact because they are all about literacy and numeracy. The only other kind of data you get to

discuss is wellbeing, and even that is in relation to how it is impacting literacy and numeracy.”

There was agreement that the students who are doing music seem to be the ones that are doing well. “We always find that kids in the music program are the ones that are doing well in numeracy and literacy. They understand about high standards” The contradiction between striving for good academic outcomes on the one hand, and not drawing on the potential of music to promote learning was noted.

### **Possibilities for Enhancing Engagement**

*“Things like the music program that we do link up to student attendance.”*

The use of music programs to engage students in school and learning was noted by many of the school leaders. Using music as the first activity of the day was described as a successful strategy for getting students to school on time. Using music to re-energise students and stimulate their brains at down times of the day was another frequently used strategy. For some leaders, the use of music in the background of reflective classroom activities was felt to reduce anxiety and promote a culture of engagement and participation. The connection to self-esteem was also noted by a number of school principals, both within the special school context and across the mainstream sector.

“Performing gives them self confidence. They start at school assemblies.

We get the whole school together and they play in front of one another. It gives them confidence like no other subject.”

For children with communication problems, the effect was thought to be even stronger. Specifically tailored music programs were described as building relationships and building self-esteem.

“Music is an amazing part of our program. It connects kids to other kids and provides a positive leisure activity that is appropriate across the school.”

### **The Need for Decent Resourcing**

*“I’ve been told to cut programs by the department because they are over the budget. It’s something they can identify and cut quite easily.”*

In order to fund music in schools, all principals described drawing heavily on community and parental support. Fund-raising was one common strategy, drawing on community organizations such as Lions and Rotary. The alternative in affluent suburbs was to have a user-pays curriculum.

“I worked out the costs of having to run what had been a very successful music program. I ran a survey of 200 families and got back 104 – everybody was in support of the performing arts program, but the parent’s pay for it. The issue is funding.”

Major performances were seen as being an important part of acknowledging community involvement, but this incurs a significant cost. “The big shine spectacular is looked upon favourably but it’s huge number of dollars to resource your involvement in that.”

The financial commitment described by Principals had other unexpected implications. “The worst thing with any specialist program is to get someone who isn’t outstanding. So I drive people away unless they are amazing.” Given the poor employment prospects for arts teachers, this creates a nearly impossible situation. Small contract positions do not attract or retain quality teachers and a flourishing musical culture can be immediately destroyed by the departure of a part-time staff member.

### **Music at All Levels**

*“All my teachers are too scared to sing. They rely on CDs to get the music going”*

Stories abounded of classroom teachers lacking the confidence to sing and use music as part of the curriculum. Even within the group of musically committed school leaders, musical confidence was low.

“I don’t have a musical bone in my body”

“I’m not musical”

Older school leaders reflected on the change in expectation over the past decades in relation to the use of music within curriculum. 17 hours was quoted as the average number of music training offered in the best University courses in Australia. The diminished training has had an impact. “It used to be compulsory. Now it’s difficult to get teachers to do it, even if you make the resources available.”

Some school leaders described innovative strategies that were being employed to address this lack of musical confidence.

“We have an APT provider who is a music specialist who provides tuition for the teachers and helps them develop resources. It reduces anxiety and gives them the confidence to use music. “

Special education and primary school leaders were the most disadvantaged by this situation because possibilities for embedding music in curriculum could not be actualized. The provision of instrumental learning could be more easily outsourced to organizations designed for this purpose.

“We provide music through a company of music teachers and they’ve been able to also provide a teacher for one hour a week to run the band so that we haven’t had to pay any extra.”

### **Overcoming the Obstacles: Musical Futures**

The most obvious challenges described by the school leaders at the symposium were time and money. However, to the credit of the Principals involved, both the lack of space within the curriculum and the need for creative accounting were seen as obstacles that could be overcome. This is not to downplay the serious under-resourcing of music in schools, but rather to emphasise a much larger problem.

A negative cycle is at play systemically that undermines the power of music to enhance curricular and wellbeing outcomes for young people in Australian schools. A lack of music skills in teacher training leads to a lack of confidence in

the use of music to support the acquisition of academic skills such as literacy and numeracy. This is particularly detrimental in the early years where music has long been used in the form of work songs and rhythmic chants to memorise information and group music making to promote the development teamwork skills. The loss of this effective and engaging teaching method has long-term implications for individual academic outcomes, as confirmed by evidence-based research. The implications for community development are equally devastating.

Musical participation provides a forum for developing, sustaining and enriching communities. Many of the school leaders described how music fostered their partnerships with their community – peer-to-peer relationships; engaging parents in the school community; garnering participation by community groups; and providing opportunities for positive and enjoyable experiences that transcend socio-cultural status. By drawing the lens further back on the daily, specific situations described by the participants in this research, it is possible to see cultural implications that resonate beyond school years.

A significant hurdle to be overcome within the school context is the belief that musical participation is only beneficial for the development of music skills. This feeds into the negative cycle of beliefs whereby music teaching is only seen to be of benefit to musicians, and by association, anyone who is not a ‘musician’ does not believe they are able to ‘do music’. This needs to be understood within a broader socio-cultural context that embodies the belief that musicians should work for pleasure and not pay. This circular thinking is detrimental to everyone involved and yet it is becoming deeply embedded in Australian culture.

### **The Solution: You’re the Voice**

A twofold solution is necessary to address the problems identified by the school leaders who participated in this project; solutions that are supported by a wide variety of research from a wide variety of relevant disciplines including music education, music therapy, music psychology and music sociology.

<b>Embedding Music in Early Years Curriculum</b>	<b>Nurturing Musical Culture in Schools</b>
<b>Research Method:</b> RCT	<b>Research Method:</b> Action Research
<b>Sample:</b> Exemplary Schools already utilizing music within curriculum design; plus standard schools with no music programming as control	<b>Sample:</b> Schools without existing music programs – range of special education; primary and secondary introduced in cycles following analysis of previous program.
<b>Quantitative Data Collection:</b> Pre and post testing on numeracy and literacy scores in early years	<b>Research Aim:</b> To develop capacity for sustainable musical participation in each school
<b>Data Analysis:</b> Test for significant differences between control and exemplary conditions	<b>Data Collection:</b> Identify what strategies have been helpful / successful in supporting music making in school. Identify moments of

	significant change.
<b>Descriptive Data Collection:</b> Document strategies used in exemplary schools and collect artefacts such as songs, games and other musical strategies	<b>Data Analysis:</b> Identification of general principles relevant across different contexts. Identification of unique successes in specific contexts. Collection of data on attendance and retention.
<b>Simultaneous Lobbying of Government:</b> Importance of musical competency in teacher training.	

The overall aim of this research agenda is to develop knowledge that can be applied in schools to increase musical participation across special, primary and secondary schools. Particular emphasis should be placed on schools from low socio-economic backgrounds that do not have access to supplementary resources to develop adequate music programs.

*End of article*

# Newspaper Report on Music in Schools

## The Age May 2011

Richard Gill OAM\*\*\*

Dick Letts OAM\*\*\* Executive director of the Music Council of Australia

Quoted in the article

\*\*\*These eminent persons have a close association with our school

## Music failings spark chorus of complaint

A recent Magic Flute production thrilled children, but state school students too often miss the joy of music, writes Elisabeth Tarica.

'OOOH, there's Tamino,' whisper an excited group of 10-year-old boys as the young prince, chased by a giant, green sparkling serpent, scurries onto the Playhouse stage.

More excitement follows as Papageno — the part-man, part-bird character in Mozart's mythical opera The Magic Flute — appears.

Surprisingly, many in this 500-strong group of primary students are familiar with the characters in this classic reworked by the Victorian Opera. When Papageno sings his aria, a few in the audience even know the words, singing along happily and loudly about the clever bird catcher.

Opera and children. It's an unlikely mix.

Yet more than 2000 primary school students, some from as far away as the wheat-belt town of Pyramid Hill, recently came to the Arts Centre to see the company's cut-down, onehour productions, developed for just such an audience. For most, it was their first time at the Arts Centre, let alone an opera — and judging by their animated reactions and enthusiasm they loved it.

"This is a fairytale opera designed just for you," announces Victorian Opera's music director Richard Gill, who has worked tirelessly to get four of these first-time productions to the stage.

Although it has required almost the same time and energy it takes to stage the company's main stage production, Mr Gill, one of Australia's leading conductors, is ebullient. "This is an introduction to an operatic experience," he says later. "Other than just saying, 'Here is The Magic Flute, guys, make of it what you will', we are trying to teach children about how this art form works."

The Victorian Opera is known for its innovative attempts to engage younger audiences, through workshops and classes for students and teachers, but this is the first time it has pitched itself to a primary audience.

Turning the plush Playhouse into a giant classroom is part of a more fundamental message: that learning music is fun and something all children should experience.

The reality is quite different.

Many young people are missing out on the joys and benefits of music, despite extensive evidence here and overseas that it not only promotes brain function and social skills but helps improve literacy and numeracy.

Leading musicians, including Mr Gill, and peak musical bodies say the state of music education in schools has been an issue for years and isn't getting any better. Little has changed since a national

review in 2005 found that as few as two out of 10 state schools offer their students an effective music program.

While it pointed to some excellent programs, it also highlighted neglect and inequity — particularly in geographically and socially disadvantaged areas.

The figures are bleak. One in 10 Australian schools did not have a music program, while one in three had great difficulty finding properly trained teachers. Two-thirds of schools described their music education as “variable and patchy”. Of the people teaching music in schools, 13 per cent had a teaching qualification and 20 per cent had no music qualification.

Recent research conducted for The Song Room, a nonprofit organisation that provides free, long-term music and arts-based programs for children in disadvantaged communities, estimated 700,000 primary school students across Australia are missing out on music education.

The gap between public and private schools is also stark. In some state schools, students are receiving little if any music education. The subject is often seen as an optional extra, delivered in an ad hoc way and taught by teachers, not trained specialists.

Mr Gill says the way music education in state schools has been allowed to run down is a national disgrace and that it should be a central part of every child’s schooling.

“It is an embarrassment that large numbers of school-age children are not receiving any music education at all,” he says. “It is also disgraceful that huge numbers are receiving substandard, watered-down versions of music.”

This is in stark contrast to the independent system, where music is compulsory from prep to year 8 and is run by teams of specialist music teachers.

“It is ridiculous there are private schools with facilities like conservatoriums, practice rooms, recital halls and every instrument known to mankind because the parents can afford it and the school can afford it and the divide between the rich and the poor, between state and private, is getting bigger all the time,” Mr Gill says.

Among state secondary schools there are pockets of excellence. University High, Blackburn High, McKinnon Secondary College and Hamilton Secondary College are among those that have impressive performing arts programs, but they are the exception rather than the norm.

Under the Victorian curriculum, schools are required to teach a range of arts, from the visual to performing arts such as drama, dance, media and music. The reality for many schools, especially those short on time or money, is that this means choosing one or two.

It is this ability to cherry-pick arts subjects that worries music advocates about the place of music education in the new national curriculum. Under the blueprint developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, the arts — including dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts — would be offered to every student from prep to year 8 for a minimum of two hours a week from next year.

“While it is terrific that arts education is going to be there,” says Mr Gill, “the issue is that we don’t want schools having choices and saying, ‘We are just going to do drama and dance and nothing else’.”

Sydney University academic Robyn Ewing has raised similar concerns, saying policymakers need to change the way they think about the arts, and treat it as a priority not an “add-on”.

In a review of research for the Australian Council for Educational Research, she calls on the arts to be entwined in the teaching of all subjects to cultivate creativity and reach those students bored by traditional subjects.

Professor Ewing argues that Western education systems too often place a greater value on maths and science than the humanities and the arts. She points to international research that shows students who are exposed to the arts achieve better academic results, enjoy school more, are less likely to leave school early, and have better self-esteem than those students who aren’t.

Still, she makes a sobering point: children from affluent families are more likely to be touched by the arts yet it is those who are disadvantaged or at risk who would most benefit from an arts education.

The problem with music education goes deeper, she says, pointing out that governments have not matched their commitment to arts with more resources for arts education and teacher professional development.

This line is also taken up by Richard Letts, executive director of the Music Council of Australia, who says primary teachers receive an average of 17 hours of music instruction at university.

In a submission to the Higher Education Base Funding Review, the music council highlights that with such little training — and no other musical expertise — teachers will not be able to effectively deliver the national curriculum in music.

“One reason that primary schools do not have effective music programs is that the classroom teachers are given only a token music education in study for their qualifying degrees,” Dr Letts says.

He argues that decisions about provision of music education appear to be in the hands of the universities, which must provide adequate music education and be funded to do so.

It pains him that in Australia the quality of the school music program can almost be mapped by postcode.

“Primary schools serving the affluent are likely to have effective music programs and other primary schools are not,” he says. “There is great inequity and this makes it much less likely that students from low SES background will pass university entrance criteria in music.”

Joining this chorus of support for more music in schools is former Melbourne University education dean Brian Caldwell.

Professor Caldwell’s latest research found students who take part in an arts program achieve better literacy results, and are less likely to miss class, be stressed or depressed than those who did not.

He says the research commissioned by The Song Room, which focused on grade 5 students in disadvantaged government schools in New South Wales, is significant.

Not only did it find much higher attendance rates in those that participated in the Song Room program but clearly showed that those students achieved higher grades in English, maths, science and technology and human society, as well as significantly higher results in national literacy tests.

It found a strong link between program participation and better well-being, including resilience and social skills.

“It was a remarkable set of findings because kids, who would otherwise not show up at school, were showing up because of this program . . . that level of engagement carries into academic subjects and shows that they can perform at higher levels,” he says.

“I find it astonishing that some schools don’t offer programs in the arts, particularly in primary schools. When you have such clear-cut international research findings . . . now confirmed in a disadvantaged setting, why you would not then place an absolutely top priority on getting these programs into all schools.”

*End of article*

## THE BREANNAN STORY

### Valentine's Day 2013

This morning, when the staff was attending a Stop Work, one student arrived for school. She is a Grade 6 student and a School Captain, I set Breannan some tasks so I could continue writing this music submission. Later she came to my office to show me what she had done and enquired what I was doing. After telling her about my task she left to finish what I assumed were her own tasks. Some half hour later she brought this essay back me saying "this is how I feel about music in our school". Here is her unsolicited essay:-

*I believe that musical education is important in schools because if we didn't have music this world would be a horrible place. All of the children in schools all around should have a musical education. It can also prepare them and give them more practice in music if they wanted to be a musician when they grow up. I am so lucky to have grown up in a school that believes in musical education! Music is my passion and if it weren't for this school I don't think I would be able to play an instrument or read music sheets like I can now. This school has some amazing opportunities for the children attending the school. Monbulk Primary has helped me a lot in musical education and I want children in other schools to be as fortunate as I am. Monbulk Primary is all about music and if I ever went to a school that didn't have music, even if it was a brilliant school I would certainly not be attending it. I love this school itself, but with the amazing music programme we have, it just gives me something extra to look forward to. I want to have lots to do with music when I am older and I still do now. I play recorder, guitar and I sing in the school choir. This school is amazing always but without the music I would be very sad. Do you really want children without these opportunities to suffer? That's just cruel. Get music into more children's lives today! MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!!!!!!!! By Breannan Timmermans. Monbulk Primary School Captain 2013*

Brennan lifted my spirits this morning.

