



**MONASH** University  
Arts

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## **SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE EXTENT, BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS**

The Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music at Monash is ranked among the best music schools in Australia, (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in Go8) with a history of achieving excellence in teaching, and research. Whether it be performance and composition opportunities or researching musics of the world, the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music's vision is progressive in both the local and global contexts.

This submission is based on the perspective and observations of a tertiary institution. I have read other submissions and so not go over 'old ground' I have made a couple of points I think are important.

### **Benefits to society and a career in music:**

The Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music at Monash University believes that we should be developing musicians that can adapt and understand what is the complete 21st century musician – A musician that specialises with musical diversity.

This parallels the diversity of choice for our students seeking employment in music related fields. Most of these music career options don't offer an adequate sole income. So, for many musicians they simultaneously work in several music related fields. For example, it is common for musicians to work as a freelance performer, recording their musical projects, some composition (film or television) as well as some private instrumental

teaching. This is why a music education needs specialisation with diversity. Also, the skills learnt from a music education are **transferable** to many careers that are not music related. An example of this is the advisory group McKinsey that inquired if we could suggest any of our students that they could interview for their traineeships. They had identified that a musicians had skill-sets and insights that were important to the sort of person that they were interested in employing.

### **Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the best education is a balanced education – this can be noted by the highest achieving schools in Victoria (VCE) having excellent music programs including Melbourne HS, McRobertson HS, Loreto College and the John Monash HS. Monash University and the rest of the Go8 universities all have Schools of Music (Conservatoriums) (which mostly operate at a deficit).

Monash University has had a history of excellence in the sciences and humanities but has identified that to be a balanced institution there is a need for a strong creative arts program which of course includes music.

It is our belief a basic training and understanding music is imperative in any student's education – not just for the people who can afford it.

The foundation of music education is ear-training, and the best way to achieve this is training in singing (choir). We believe this should a basic requirement in all schools as the absolute minimum music education.

The fundamental skillset a student learns is to vocalize information - most students internalise when learning and memorising.

There is a well known saying in music education made famous by legendary violinist and conductor Isaac Stern, “ ...if you can sing it then you can play it”

This develops skillsets in:

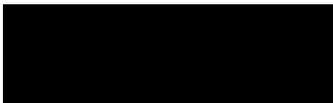
- Memory
- Co-ordination of vocalising cognitive information
- Rhythm and listening
- Creative skills
- Music comprehension – repertoire – styles

- Foundation in ear-training
- Confidence in performing in front of others

The other important skill-set is improvisation which gives students an understanding of composition, structure and musics of the world.

I hope this submission helps with this inquiry.

Best Wishes



Robert Burke