

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

SUBMITTED BY: Name, Address, and Phone (email?) Date	Gary McDonald [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] Date: 26/1/2013
Job Title: Instrumental Tutor	Drum Kit / Aux Percussion
SCHOOLS OF EMPLOYMENT:	
SCHOOL 1	NAME: Wodonga Middle Years College PRIVATE OR STATE: State Head Of Music: Julie Taylor (HUME regional coordinator)
SCHOOL 2	NAME: Wodonga Senior Secondary College PRIVATE OR STATE: State Head Of Music: Jannet Turovich
SCHOOL 3	NAME: Rutherglen High School PRIVATE OR STATE: State Head Of Music: Peter Scott
NOTE:	Living I Albury / Wodonga I teach in both NSW (Albury) and Victoria (Wodonga/Rutherglen) so I also currently teach at: -Scotts School Albury -The Albury Murray Conservatorium of Music -Custom Music / Albury Music School (Instrument retail store) -All Music (Instrument retail store) I have also, but no longer teach at: -Wodonga Primary School (privately) -Billy Hydes, Hi Fidelity Wodonga (now closed) -Catholic College Wodonga -Bethanga Primary School (Privately) -Frayne College Baranduda (Privately)

BENEFITS TO SOCIETY AND TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS WANTING TO PURSUE MUSIC AS A CAREER

- INDIVIDUALS YOU HAVE COACHED THAT HAVE GONE THROUGH TO A PROFESSIONAL MUSIC CAREER.**

Over the 10 years I have been teaching music I would say only four or five of them have gone directly into playing music professionally. However, I don't kept in touch with students beyond year 12 and to expect teachers to know the answer to this question is odd. Also I personally see this question as having only a minor relation to the importance of music in the education system. And it seems to be a very flawed question that gets asked to justify why music should or shouldn't be funded.

If we drew comparisons to other subjects you have to ask how many students that do Math go on to become mathematicians, and how many students who study physics go on to become physicists. or how many people who study LOTE go on to become translators. I would say the answer would be similar... a very small percentage

- **COMMUNITY AND PROGRESSION TO PROFESSIONALISM.**

One major benefit that society gets from students getting an education in music is that all aspects of the performing arts continue to be fed. Although some students may stick entirely to music, Music its self allows students to the see importance and relevance of other performing arts such as Dance, Theatre and Sound engineering. Students are introduced to these other forms through music. For example they may play in the band for a theatre production and get inspired to give acting a try when they otherwise might not. Or they may see the importance of recording / sound engineering by playing in bands. Because of this involvement they usually want to be involved in both fields as well. All areas of the performing arts can benefit from students studying music.

- **OBSERVATIONS YOU HAVE MADE REGARDING YOUR WORK'S BENEFIT TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.**

- Many times there are things going on in the life of student that most people don't see or know about.

Many instrumental teachers become almost a friend or councilor to their students at times.

At a lesson a student gets to spend time one on one with someone away from other teachers, parents "friends" and that time is sometimes the only time they feel comfortable, and can express themselves openly. especially if they feel they don't fit in, are being bullied or are depressed in some way. I have had various students of all ages from little kids in primary school to Adults open up to me about the following.

- Divorce and Family Break up
- Bullying
- Thoughts of attempting suicide
- Parental neglect
- Depression
- Deaths in the family.
- Various family problems

All of this I can report (and have reported) on the appropriate people. This can be a great way for schools to subtly monitor student welfare. This alone should be worth keeping the program going. Add to this the benefits of studying music and you have a very powerful tool in the education system.

- Music adds a large cultural element to the school that makes students realize there is more to school than classrooms and assignments. Things such as school ensembles that play at school events, musicals, tours and end of year concerts.

- Most students who **don't** study music tend to stick within their own year / age group unless their forced not to. This limited social skills and can cause misunderstandings and conflict between different years, age groups and backgrounds. Music ensembles cause students to socialize and perform with people from different age and year groups. This gives them a better understanding of real world social structure.

-Parents attending the schools concerts get to see their child working as part of group and partaking in social activities. This bridges the gap between parents and teachers, Parents get to meet the teachers and talk to them about the child progress. This in turn causes a better social structure around the school environment.

- For setting up concerts and excursions Music teachers at the school are forced to work together with principals, office staff and people outside their subject area. Teachers from subject areas other than music are not forced to do this as much and tend to only socialize in the school staff room. This restricts their social skills and allows for a misunderstanding of the roles other people play around the school. Again this affects the social element of the school.

THE POSITIVE EFFECTS TO STUDENTS OF ANY CHORAL OR ENSEMBLE WORK.

- Self esteem and self confidence: The ability to stand in front of their peers and speak and or perform
- Most students who **don't** study music tend to stick within their own year / age group unless their forced not to. This limited socialization can cause misunderstandings and conflict between different years, age groups and backgrounds. Music ensembles cause students to socialize and perform with people from different age and year groups. This gives them a better understanding of real world social structure.
- Students learning to work as part of a team so as achieve their performance outcomes.
- Students learning respect for the cost of equipment and instruments due to having purchased their own or wanting to upgrade.
- Students learn that typical stereo types such as being older, in a higher year level or being more physically developed doesn't matter. IE: A younger student who practices a lot can be better and outperform older students who don't. This again reflects the reality of society.
- Students learn that effort, practice and patience are important and do pay off. They learn that you can't just get what you want straight away, you have to work for it, (Music teaches work ethic.)
- Students learn that their element / role is part of something more important, and that they can't go off and do it all by themselves, and that many times they will need other peoples help to get the end result.
- Music also teaches that you need certain skills and knowledge to be taken seriously in a particular field. If you don't have the skills and knowledge, people won't want you in their ensemble. It makes students realize that skills and knowledge are an important parts of social structure.
- Students also start to realize and recognize their own learning style, they are willing to ask me (the teacher) explain the information differently and talk easily about whether they understand what you are teaching, especially in a one on one teaching situation when they would normally not feel comfortable wanting to discuss this in front of other students.
- **POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE YOU MAY HAVE OBSERVED IN THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT DURING YOUR TENURE.**
 - More students wanting to be involved after seeing friends and other students being involved.
 - More students continuing with music studies when they would otherwise stop.
 - The growth of performance opportunities for students.
 - The merging of music departments from different schools due to the obvious success of the music program.
 - Musicians outside the school environment wishing they could be involved in it.

(2) GENERAL BENEFITS TO STUDENTS AS A RESULT OF MUSIC EDUCATION AND THE POSITIVE EFFECTS TO STUDENTS OF ANY CHORAL OR ENSEMBLE WORK.

- See above

Terms of reference 4,5 and 6:

Current provision of music education in Victoria:

(4) MUSIC EDUCATION PROVIDED THROUGH SPECIFIC FUNDING FOR MUSIC EDUCATION;

The instrumental programs at the schools I work for are funded by the Department of education, I am paid using the Education Support award. Which recently changed from "Para Professional" due to a change with the Victorian Institute of Teaching legislation stating instrumental music teachers are no longer required to be registered.

- **HOW PAYG TAXATION IS CATERED FOR IN EACH CIRCUMSTANCE.**

As per award wage.

- **HOW SUPERANNUATION/SICK LEAVE/WORKCOVER IS CATERED FOR IN EACH SCHOOL.**

As per award wage

- **HOW IS YOUR ENSEMBLE TIME REMUNERATED? CONCERTS AND PERFORMANCES?**

My understanding is that this is typically done on a case by case (teacher by teacher/ week by week) basis depending on who is partaking in what activities and ensembles and whether that teacher is doing more or less work than is dictated by their contracted hours. Typically the extra work teachers take on for doing concerts etc is accepted as just "part of the job" It depends somewhat on the importance of the teachers role in the music department, the time of year and whether they are doing other work outside of the school to supplement their income.

However, this system relies on an understanding by music department heads, the school and the instrumental staff involved of what is expected during the school year and the understanding that we as instrumental staff are paid for school holidays when other people are not. so work outside school hours is to be expected during the school term.

- **DO YOU RUN ENSEMBLES DURING CLASS TIME OR OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR TIMETABLE?**

Rehearsals are typically at lunchtimes or after school hours, although there are some year level music practical classes that rehearse during class time.

- **HOW DOES YOUR SITUATION FINANCE THE PURCHASE OF SCORES AND EQUIPMENT?**

Requests for equipment and scores are made to the Dept Head and if funding is available it may be purchased (usually from a local music store, so as to support local retail business). I believe the funding comes from both the school with a small amount collected through instrumental music tuition fees that are charged to the students. But you would have to verify this with the department head.

- **WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTED TO DO WITHOUT REMUNERATION?**

It's expected that instrumental music teachers working for the dept will need to do some out of hours work due to the fact we will be paid for Christmas holidays and term break holidays.

- **ARE YOU EXPECTED TO MANAGE THE GST AS A PRIVATE PROVIDER?**

The times I have worked as a private provider I am expected to deal with all administration myself.

- **DESCRIBE YOUR ROOM, AND FACILITIES. DO YOU HAVE A PURPOSE BUILT SOUND-PROOF WORKROOM, OR ARE YOU SHARING THE CANTEEN, OR PERHAPS WORKING OUT OF A CUPBOARD?**

In previous years I have had to teach in store rooms, corridors, portable classrooms with no power or ventilation and poor instrumentation. I have had to carry equipment all over the school.

However, in the last two to three years many of the schools I teach at have received funding for new wings, classrooms and in some cases entirely new school campuses, **this has helped immensely!** with new studios, halls and offices being build that the music department can use. The last five years I have seen a great jump in the quality of facilities around the area.

- **ARE YOU WORKING IN A TEAM OR ON YOUR OWN?**
Usually in a team or three to six other teachers depending on the school in question.
- **ARE THERE INSTRUMENTS IN THE SCHOOL AVAILABLE FOR HIRE?**
Yes, although the list is limited and there are problems with instruments going missing and being damaged.
- **DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO PD FUNDED BY THE SCHOOL, REGION OR GOVERNMENT FUNDS?**
Yes, However I'm am unsure how the funding works, where it comes from etc.
I am also unaware of how much funding is available. but do attend organized PDs when possible.

MUSIC EDUCATION PROVIDED THROUGH PARENT CONTRIBUTION

- **IS YOUR WORK DIRECTLY PAID FOR BY PARENTS AS A 'USER PAYS SYSTEM'?**
I have worked for both systems over the years and the state system as it stands is far superior. At the moment my income is provided by the school through the department of education. This means my income is stable, legitimate, legal, reliable and safe.
User pay systems are unreliable, parents constantly try to hold back payment or want to under pay you if they can. This can cause arguments and problems that can become unsafe. The income is very unstable and very stressful. Cash in hand work is not as legit and can cause Tax problems. and much of my time is wasted chasing people up in regards to payment when it should be spent teaching or doing PD related work.
- **HOW SUPERANNUATION IS CATERED FOR IN EACH SCHOOL?**
As per the award wage
- **DO PARENTS DONATE THEIR TIME, FACILITIES OR RESOURCES TO HELP WITH THE PROGRAMS?**
Sometimes but rarely though, sometimes during excursions or concerts some parents are requested to help.
- **ARE THEIR VISITING ARTISTS, INCURSIONS, MSO VISITS/WORKSHOPS OR OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT PARENTS PAY FOR THAT CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR WORK AND THE CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES?**
Sometimes yes, but rarely, it depends on what is available to the schools in the area and the cost.

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.

- **IS MUSIC HIGHLY VALUED IN THE SCHOOL?**
I believe it is by most. However, there are some who sadly don't see the point as they consider their own subject as more important, or they don't understand the benefits of studying music.
- **DO ALL YEAR LEVELS HAVE ACCESS TO CLASSROOM MUSIC EDUCATION? HOW MANY MINUTES PER WEEK?**
All students have access to instrumental music lessons, but not classroom music. I am currently unsure of the details of classroom music as it isn't my area, you would have to contact the school for details on this.

- **ARE THOSE LESSONS DELIVERED BY A SPECIALIST TEACHER QUALIFIED IN MUSIC OR BY A GENERALIST TEACHER?**

They are delivered by music specialist teachers. However, there have been times when some music classes have not been taught by a specialist music teacher and as an instrumental music teacher I see a major difference in quality of the teaching at those times. Music specialist teachers are far better at teaching the subject than a generalist teacher.

- **DO YOU FOLLOW A METHODOLOGY IN YOUR INSTRUMENTAL TEACHING? PLEASE DESCRIBE.**

In brief.

- Introduce the student to rudimental elements such as music reading skills and the ability to read drum patterns that are found in real world music.
 - Get the student playing real world songs that use the skills they have just learnt. So as to reinforce why those skills are important.
 - Repeat this concept various times giving elements, concepts and songs that increase in difficulty and skill level. (encouraging the student to join ensembles when they feel ready)
 - Over time as the student increases in ability introduce other real world songs that use elements of other musical styles, so as they can get a gentle introduction to styles they may not otherwise like.
- For example:** Many beginners that like heavy metal don't listen or like classical music. So when they are good enough I might choose a heavy metal song that features an orchestra.
To enforce the importance of a choir I might use a piece that used a choral group in the music.

I then get the student to play the typical drum kit part from the song. Then after they have managed that. Hand them the "orchestral" snare drum or percussion part for the same song. so they get to play music they like, but from the classical position that they would otherwise not be open to. This method slowly breaks down the barriers between different musical styles instead of forcing them to do something they simply don't like. I see students evolve and embrace other styles a lot more because of this method. It also shows them how musical styles change, evolve and crossover and the importance of ensemble groups like the school concert band.

I also believe that teachers should only use real world music songs in their teaching. (that is commercially available and easy to find) Not the poor quality M.I.D.I style play along replications that are commonly found in course books such as the A.M.E.Bs CPM series. These are not real songs, they are poor quality replications that students often don't enjoy, they also do not reflect the human elements that make up music such as melody, harmony and dynamics. I only use this type of medium if a student is doing a music exam and needs some sort of play along song to complete the exam.

- **WHAT WAS THE EXTENT OF YOUR UNIVERSITY TRAINING – SPECIFICALLY IN MUSIC?**

None. I have real world experience in a vast array of performance situations, several grades via the AMEB and have work as a professional musician and teacher for years.

- **DO YOU WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH OTHER ENSEMBLE LEADERS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS?**

Yes.

- **IS THERE AN APPOINTMENT OF A MUSIC COORDINATOR?**

Yes.

- **ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES TO EXTEND BEYOND THE SCHOOL TO EVENTS SUCH AS THE VICTORIAN STATE SCHOOLS SPECTACULAR, THE WAKAKIRRI, REGIONAL CONCERTS, WORKSHOPS, PD AND THE BILLY HYDES BANDS FESTIVAL ETC?**

Yes, the music co-coordinators are constantly looking for new events and ways to get students performing. However I fear that many of these major events are somewhat limited to major metropolitan areas such as Melbourne due to the time and cost it takes to travel to an event from a regional area such as Wodonga.

- **HOW ARE THE GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS ACCOMMODATED?**
This depends somewhat on the student and the instrument they play.
- **WHAT PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES ARE ON OFFER?**
Concert Band, Rock Bands, Choirs, Class Ensembles. All perform at School Events, Award ceremonies, Primary school tours, Excursions / tours, Eisteddfods, and the HUME Regional Band.
- **AS AN 'ITINERANT', DO YOU FEEL PART OF A TEAM? WHAT LEVEL OF OWNERSHIP OF THE PROGRAM DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE? DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT SUPPORT IN THE SCHOOL? DO YOU KNOW WHO TO APPROACH FOR ADVICE?**
The current team I work with works well together. The department has proven that it can work somewhat independently of the school to develop ideas and concepts for the music department.
- **ASSESSMENT PACKAGES – DO YOU CURRENTLY USE AMEB OR ANZCA WHY?**
Not unless it is requested by the student or parent. As a teacher and musician and someone who has done them myself I see the importance of these types of graded systems, However In my experience most students find the technical work from these types of systems boring and they tend to want to play things more modern and relevant to their interests. I see one of my primary aims is to keep students interested more so than worrying about grades and high end results thus I tend to get students into them later on when they are a little more mature. The other flaw with them (like any certificate / graded course) is that people may achieve a grade, then stop playing but still wave the certificate around claiming they have the skills when they have forgotten or are no longer able to play at that level. This allows someone to mislead others about their exact skill level and makes the certificate pointless. That being said Certificates are good for those wanting to go to university or want to undertake tertiary music education because it shows you are willing to do specific dedicate work in areas you may find dull.
- **ARE THE CURRENT VIT PROCESSES EFFECTIVE IN ENSURING QUALITY INSTRUMENTAL DELIVERY?**
I personally believe VIT (Victorian Institute of Teaching) is an inefficient and somewhat pointless entity when it comes to instrumental music and education in general. It has caused more problems for both instrumental music teachers and standard teachers alike. Problems such as registration, communication (with teachers, the Department of education and schools) and document and file keeping are all heavily flawed. The entire government entity that is VIT needs to be heavily reviewed.

Terms of reference 8, 9, 10 and 11:

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools:

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

- **WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE?**
As someone who never had the chance to learn music at school but has still gone on to be a professional musician and teach in both in both NSW and Victoria in primary schools (both private and public), High schools, (both Private and public) as well as for private enterprises such as The Murray Conservatorium of music and various music stores. (Billy Hydes Music etc) I feel that the Current Victorian Governments Instrumental music program that is run through the department of education is far superior than any private sector concept that currently exists. If it can't be expanded it must at least be maintained at its current level.
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL, HEAD OF DEPT OR PRINCIPAL COULD DO DIFFERENTLY TO IMPROVE MUSIC AT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL?**
Consultation with the music department over the time tabling of events so other activities don't clash so much with instrumental music lessons, rehearsals and concerts, students need a routine to maintain progress, having events constantly interfere with the music time table throws students off and they don't achieve the outcomes they otherwise could, become discouraged and drop out. Many schools have sports awards but very few have music awards, this gives the impression that sport is more highly valued than any other subject, especially music.

- **WHAT DO YOU THINK THE LOCAL REGION COULD DO DIFFERENTLY TO IMPROVE THINGS?**

Maybe allow students from nearby local / regional schools to visit and get lessons from teachers at other schools if their school doesn't have a dedicated music department.

- **HOW COULD PARENTS GET INVOLVED TO IMPROVE MUSIC EDUCATION LOCALLY?**

Actually attending the concerts their students play in would be a start. Music teachers are constantly fighting the apathy / disinterest in the parents of students, who do not see the point or are not interested in music themselves or see music as a pointless hobby because they do not understand music themselves.

- **HOW DO YOU THINK THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT CAN PLAY A ROLE IN IMPROVING MUSIC EDUCATION?**

1. Maintain or boost support for the current Instrumental music programs in schools.

2. Review the VIT department and its processes. address communication and file keeping between VIT, Schools and the department of education in regards to terms, contracts, registration, paperwork etc.

3. Understanding that having a university degree in music and or teaching is not the be all and end all of being a successful music teacher. Forcing people to wind back or leave their employment and or up root and move so as to gain degrees in music and teaching has serious flaws and will only limit experienced and passionate musicians (such as myself and many others) from being able to pass on our skills to the next generation. Recognition of grades in music (such as AMEB), professional experience, references, short courses, VET courses such as TAE/TAA should all be considered as qualifications. I hate to see experienced musicians that have done more study and work than someone with a degree be turned away because they haven't had the same opportunities in life and thus didn't or can't go to university.

4. Contract lengths and job security need to be addressed. To expect instrumental music teachers to have only 12 month contracts and live in a life of uncertainty not knowing if they are going to have a job at the end of the year and not being able to get bank loans etc makes them want to leave and do other things with their life that have more financial security. Instrumental music teachers should be valued more.

5. Make sure that teachers, schools and parents are all aware of the benefits of learning music not just the music dept. Music teachers are fully aware of it but most other people are not.

6. Gain the understanding that composers / music directors, people with Degrees and PHDs (especially academics) don't always understand the instruments they make legislation and rules for. For example: Just because someone is a renowned composer and or has a PHD in music it doesn't mean they fully understand the difficulties in learning all musical instruments. Especially if they've never played that instrument for an extended period of time at a professional level. Instead they should talk to people who actually play the instrument properly at a professional level. Not someone who thinks they know what it takes to play the instrument at a professional level.

For example: Many tertiary education centers accept students who play piano or guitar only, However someone who plays drum kit is expected to be good at both Drums and play Piano to about grade Six as well... However, if those who designed these "rules" understood the instrument and the skill level that they're expecting they'd realize that grade 6 on Piano (as well) is an extreme expectation. (Your expecting students to start playing music in primary school and do little else) A student starting music in grade 7, 8 or 9 doesn't have a chance to enter tertiary education because they don't consider drum set to be a serious musical instrument. Many places overseas such as Berkley University now do, leaving Australia behind in its ideas of what the instrument is capable of and how difficult it is to play.

**HOW COULD THE VIT PROCESSES BE IMPROVED?
WOULD RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING BE USEFUL?**

See above (point 3) and directly below...

- **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED IN THE TERTIARY SECTOR SPECIFICALLY FOR MUSIC EDUCATION.**

I believe a VET course "Certificate 3/ 4 / diploma in Education Support / Music" (education support, specializing in music) could easily be designed. It could be a mixture of the units from the Training and assessment course, the Education support course and the Contemporary Music course.

Core units are education and education support based
Electives are music performance and music production based.

I feel that this would be a great way of giving instrumental teachers a qualification in the area without having them having to go to university for a full degree.

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- Any possible solutions – best practice that you would like to see adopted across Vic?

- **Do you think instrumental music should be administered by individual schools, or 'centrally' by Regions and /or specialist school(s)?**

From my perspective I believe the current method of state funding works. it just needs to be made more stable so teachers aren't worried about their income and job security every year.

- **Do you have suggestions for improvement in tertiary level training for instrumental teachers?**

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FURTHER COMMENTS:

I believe that there is also a lot to be said for one on one instrumental music teaching in regards to the psychological health of young people.

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At a lesson a student gets to spend time one on one with someone away from other teachers, parents "friends" and that time is sometimes the only time they feel comfortable, and can express themselves openly. especially if they feel they don't fit in, are being bullied or are depressed in some way. I have had various students of all ages from little kids in primary school to Adults open up to me about the following.

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