

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

02/01/13

Mark Dipnall (MEd, MMusSt, BMus (Perf), GradDipEd) (University of Melbourne).

Profile of Respondent:

- Highly experienced senior music educator in music teaching, music education research, solo performance teaching, conducting music performance ensembles and music administration.
- Full time, ongoing DEECD instrumental music teacher for the last 28 years.
- Full time Coordinator and Team Leader in Instrumental Music.
- Former full time Principal Musician with the Australian Opera and Ballet, Sydney Opera House. Former casual musician with Melbourne Symphony and Principal Musician with Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.
- Member and Officer of numerous Committees in Music Education, Vice President of Victorian Music Teachers' Association (VMTA), Treasurer to Victorian Chapter of Australian Society for Music Education (ASME), former Vice President to Clarinet and Saxophone Society of Victoria (CLASAX).
- Examiner and Eisteddfod Adjudicator.

This is a personal and general response to the eleven terms of reference to this inquiry. The responses are borne of experience from one who has been directly and permanently at the point of delivery for music education in Victoria. The responses are abbreviated.

Evidence supporting music education in schools.

1. Benefits to society and to individual students wanting to pursue music as a career:

Society is enriched by the provision of artistic (music) pursuit. A society without this is devoid of depth and expression. Artistic pursuit and achievement are intrinsic factors within the construct of all societies. Music expression is intrinsic to humanity both in historic and real terms. To question this is to question to the nature of humanity.

Students who pursue music as a career are fulfilling their roles as important and responsible members of the community expressing contemporary and historic perspectives of commentary and reflection upon intrinsic factors of reality. Their role within society is of high value and merit. It should be encouraged financially at all levels, particularly the school level. The present high standards in the Music Schools Spectacular, Rock Eisteddfods, Regional Concerts and VCE Showcase Season Of Excellence admirably testify to this.

2. General benefits to students as a result of music education:

Students benefit from music education by being able to source a means of personal expression that can be stated individually and in groups thus enhancing their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-expression. Music education enables greater facility with numeracy and literacy skills, spatial comprehension, auditory comprehension, cultural comprehension, resilience and task-based delivery. Music enables a way of expressing emotions. It enhances all members of society through direct experience as a listener and as a performer. Music education creates an awareness of history and cross-cultural identity within the world. Music education develops leadership and group-cooperation skills. Music awareness and experience add to a person's total value and identity.

Music education creates employment possibilities as a performer, teacher, composer, orchestral musician, orchestral manager, librarian, local and international conductor, recording technician, sound technician, music editor, publisher, music retail distributor, music retail salesperson, music educational advisor, consultant, promoter, graphic designer, computer software designer, games designer, marketing, animation, music therapist, music researcher, music academic, musicologist and administrator. Music education should receive prioritised high funding at all levels, particularly the school level.

3. Benefits to student academic performance as a result of music education:

It is generally understood that music education enhances results in numeracy and literacy. Another way of putting this is that music assists with the reasoning skills involved with the computation of symbols involved with the reading (notation), spontaneous performance and considered interpretation of music repertoire.

Cognition, involving informed thought from strategic knowledge, cognitive knowledge and self-knowledge, combined with convergent and divergent thought processes, assists towards reasoned and spontaneous thought and action. These processes are all manifest within the execution of music statement. These processes are a concomitant and subtle aspect of music teaching, which, in turn, further enhances all other thought processes associated with the pursuit and realisation of academic performance.

Current provision of music education in Victoria.

4. Music education provided through specific funding for music education:

Music education demands funding comparable with any other academic discipline. In order to maintain best practice with high achievement education it would be wise to view the budgetary allocations for music as comparable to countries such as in Finland and England. Given that the Victorian Government has achieved an AAA rating, (the only such rating of any Government in Australia) and a surplus of \$155 million, rising to \$861million in the following year, it would be advisable to maintain continued

high priority allocation of budgetary expenditure so as to correlate this with high achieving and sustainable classroom and instrumental music excellence.

Budgetary allocations are recommended to develop prioritised funding for specialist classroom and instrumental music teachers in the Primary and Secondary School Sectors. An argument is mounted that Music Education funding has been a consistent aspect of the Victorian Government and that this should continue vigorously without question. Music Education is in need of administrative reform, which will require a consistent source of Government funding contingent upon best practice with the inclusion of a visionary perspective.

5. Music Education provided through non-specific funding, for example, general student resource package funding:

An argument can be put that music funding be addressed by merit through a DEECD global budget allocation to all schools. Whilst in principal this addresses diversity and equality it also requires accountability. There is little point in a school divesting its global budget towards music education unless there is an entrenched view towards a systematic implementation of resources in progressive curriculum embracing primary and secondary school participation, assessment, highly qualified staff and community aspiration.

Music Education budgetary allocation is a specialist resource that demands a fully supported network of accountable and visionary administration. This administration should be planned, monitored and serviced from a central bureau of senior, highly qualified personnel, nurturing, advising and implementing policy and being finally accountable to the Minister of Education.

6. Music education provided through parent contribution:

Music Education in the government system generally requires the parent contribution of a levy towards assisting the expenses required for the purchase of resources and the maintenance and repair of equipment. Parents who have their children enrolled in music programmes should be encouraged to pay levies as this gives a clear message of commitment to the programme from both the parent and the student. Staffing, salary and conditions expenses for classroom and instrumental staff should continue to be borne by the current disbursement of global budget allocation with the view to all conditions being preferentially, ideally and finally permanently administered from a central bureau, as referred above.

7. The extent and quality of music education in Victorian schools:

The present situation in schools suggests that there has been an overemphasis upon diversity and equality where the teaching resource is spread thinly. There are clearly some schools who are highly successful with concert band, stage band, orchestra, massed singing, chamber ensembles, string ensembles and marching bands. Other schools

specialise in areas of music such as rock bands and school musicals. Other schools may have only a recorder consort and class singing.

There seems to be a lack of uniformity with the music aspirations of schools accompanied similarly by a lack of uniformity in budgetary allocations. There seems to be an imbalance of staffing in some schools with highly visible and successful programmes in contrast to others with less visible success. This is not a reflection on schools with less success but more so on the allocation of staffing and regional infrastructure.

Future optimum provision of music education in Victorian schools.

8. Optimum governance and oversight arrangements:

The governance of music education should be organised centrally from one bureau of specialist, senior, highly qualified and experienced managers and administrators familiar and qualified with music education. This government bureau would be responsible for music education policy, staffing, supervision oversight, productivity, fiscal management, training, assessment and accountability. It is suggested that regions be viewed as clusters of schools involving Primary and Secondary Colleges, which are staffed collectively from the central office. Clusters would need to demonstrate their ongoing aspirations, commitments and objectives before allocation of staff and resources.

Administrators would visit clusters of schools and cluster leaders at least three times a year to assess the ongoing progress of programmes. The administrators would then give their reports to Managers who in turn are overseen by one Senior Managing Executive. Do the music programmes have sustainable numbers within their student participation network and is there accountable quality and productivity in performances within the school cluster and the broader community?

The amount of cluster productivity and the quality of productivity would need to be assessed as well as the quality, productivity and expertise of the teaching staff. An assessment would be required for the definition of “cluster” with all its associated geographical and socio economic parameters. A similar assessment would also be required for the availability of suitable staff allocation and whether there were sufficient graduates available to accommodate teaching and staffing requirements.

9. Optimum use of targeted funding:

The amount of music cluster networks in Victoria would need to be assessed relative to the availability of budgetary allocation. In an optimum sense, this definition of cluster would assess the number of Primary and Secondary government schools throughout Victoria and then form these into “clusters” with the common aim of high-standard music performances and academic outcomes in VCE and/or programmes within

AMEB and VET creating clear pathways leading potentially to VCAL or Degree Programmes in TAFE and Universities.

Targeted funding would then be disbursed to each cluster dependent upon government resources and Treasury funding. Ideally, each cluster would receive the same funding, dependent on annual productivity, assessment and accountability. There would, however, be a contingency for highly specialised clusters or academies devoted to outstanding excellence and perhaps based on audition and pre requisite entry requirements.

In order to fund these clusters, salaries would then be remunerated from the central office. Resources in expensive equipment could be centrally purchased and allocated to clusters that would in turn hire this from the central bureau. Taxation write offs and depreciation schedules could assist the funding of equipment, however, staffing salaries and administration would be the responsibility of the bureau. Qualified music teachers' salaries would be commensurate with industry awards. A well qualified, full time, experienced teacher and staff member on current salaries would receive approx. \$90,000.00. Administrators would receive a similar wage. Managers would receive between \$90,000.00 - \$120,000.00. The Senior Managing Executive would receive a very high salary comparable to the highest senior management within the public service sector.

10. Optimum balance of central mandates and supports:

An overriding issue is the concern for policy at a central level. The author's view is that music education should be a routine provision within Primary and Secondary Sectors. Less emphasis should be placed on the "elective" component of music and more emphasis on a core curriculum activity with emphasis on music classroom, massed singing and instrumental music taught as core subjects from Years 4, 5 and 6 in the Primary Sector continuing with the same emphasis into Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, within the Secondary Sector. This will provide optimum music education outcomes for achieving advanced levels towards VET and VCE music subject choices with continued study into the Tertiary Sector.

The need for communications to staff at the central level can continue under the present "edumail" arrangements enabling quick, thorough and meticulous consultation through regular meetings in management. Support structures are reiterated as a pyramid of function ranging downwards from the Senior Managing Executive to the Managers and Administrators, then to Cluster Leaders and Teachers. Some support personal assistants and secretarial workers, including school office personnel, would be required throughout the organisation of administration.

11. Optimum balance of music specific funding, non-music specific funding and parent contribution:

In terms of allocating specific funding the central bureau of music administration would bear the vast majority of cost working in consultation and cooperation with

Treasury and DEECD budgets. The significant cost would be in personnel, salaries and resources for the Senior Managing Executive, Managers, Personal Assistants, Administrators, Cluster Leaders and Teachers. Further funding may be required for professional development opportunities although this could be incorporated within cluster budgetary allocation.

The non-specific music funding would be assisted by the application of levies to all parents. If the policy of core – participation within inclusive curriculum for music education was initiated, then this could be strongly supported and assisted by this levy. Under some school arrangements levies range from \$80.00 to hundreds of dollars per annum. A higher order of levy would substantially assist costs and funding amongst cluster networks. Subject levies are a normal requirement for education funding. The administration of this levy would be charged and disbursed at the cluster level thus financially assisting resources and administration.

Closing comments:

Music Education in Victorian Schools is a specialist activity. It should be managed as a specialist division of DEECD encompassing senior, highly qualified and experienced personnel. Management of this specialist resource should be overviewed and supervised throughout “music education clusters” in Victoria.

In order to maximise this specialist resource it is recommended that music education be viewed as a regular core curriculum activity from Years 4 to 10 leading to VCE choices in Years 11 and 12. The consequence will be significant progress in music administration leading to a cohesive achievement of diversity and excellence in music participation throughout Victorian Schools and, by extension, the Tertiary Sector.

Music Education in Victoria has been demonstrated historically as an ongoing curriculum concern within DEECD priorities. Clear progress has already been achieved with the establishment of educationally high pathways towards the completion of VCE and VET programmes. Much of what has been achieved in Music Education has already been celebrated and has acted as a testimonial towards the success of DEECD programmes. As such, schools that have implemented music programmes have a dedicated and vibrant staff that without question frequently work many extra hours towards concerts and weekend rehearsals for productions, spectaculars and evenings of excellence.

It is timely to encourage the continuity of these programmes with a highly sustained DEECD priority in budgetary allocation accompanied by a centralised, authoritative and visionary senior administration.

Mark Dipnall (MEd, MMusSt, BMus (Perf), DipEd) (University of Melbourne).