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Please find attached my submission for the support of the Review into Music in Victorian Schools.

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Music Teacher

[REDACTED]

Submission for the Review of Music Education in Victorian Schools

The Committee,
Review of Music Education in Victorian Schools

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been a music teacher for 25 years, initially as an instrumental teacher (piano) in private schools in both Tasmania and South Australia. I have since been teaching Primary Music, Primary Generalist and now Secondary Music (including classroom, VCE, instrumental and ensembles) in state schools in northern Victoria.

The biggest aspect of the state of music education in Victorian schools is that there is not enough of it. As a teacher of Year 7s we welcome students from many primary schools in the Goulburn Valley and most of those do not have a music program. Those that do, have produced students who understand the basics elements of music and are ready to go further. Unfortunately they are held back because we have to teach the basics all over again to year 7s who have never done before. Yet somehow we are expected to report on these year 7s in June and they should be at VELS 4.25 with just 5 months education!!! Do you think that students could get through to year 7 without doing maths or English or PE and suddenly be at 4.25 by June of Year 7?? Unheard of! Would never be allowed!

Kindergartens should be places rich in musical experience through movement, singing and listening activities. Every Primary school in Victoria should have a sequential and continuous music program from P-6. I began a music program in a Goulburn Valley Primary school but because I was on a fixed term contract and the numbers were dropping I chose to accept my current ongoing position in a nearby Secondary college. That Primary school then had no music for 3 years. Fortunately the parents and Principal know the value of music to their children's education and from 2013 music is again part of the curriculum.

Primary school music also needs to focus on the general experience and understanding of the elements of music through singing, playing percussion instruments and 'group' instruments such as ukulele and recorder. Resources such as 'Music Room' are easy to follow and reduce planning time, as well as being well-rounded programs. Be cautious of including 'band' programs in primary schools. Generally students are too small to hold and play most band instruments and learn incorrect technique due to the general lack of instrument-specific expertise of the teacher. In addition, we find as secondary teachers, that year 7 students who have come through a primary school band program become tired of their instrument and do not continue with it. If these students had waited until year 7 then could receive teaching from staff that specialise in the chosen instrument.

In contrast, primary school students should be encouraged to learn piano and strings from Prep level as these instruments are better suited to the small child and require longer to master, allowing them to be at an appropriate level to successfully complete VCE music if they choose.

To summarise my recommendations for music in Primary schools, there should be:

- A specialist classroom music program which includes for example, percussion, singing, ukulele, recorder, movement, composition and appreciation
- Instrumental lessons for piano and strings
- Choir/s
- Possibly ukulele and / or percussion ensembles

Depending on the size of the school.

I am fortunate that I work in a Secondary school that has a well-established music program. With 1250 students in total, about 400 are involved in music. We have a Concert band, Stage band, Mid-level band, Junior band, 7-12 choir (which is very new and still in the establishment phase), a small string ensemble and a variety of woodwind and percussion ensembles. Together with my colleagues we share the load of both classroom and instrumental music. We have dedicated staff and a supportive Principal. We also have 5 instrumental teachers who come in a day / week just to teach their instrument and run an ensemble.

However, we seriously lack facilities. Our music 'block' is a Jennings home built 25 years ago and which has not been refurbished since. We cram the bands into 1 room and use the other room for classroom. We have 9 year 7 classes every year plus the other year levels and we are expected, and have to, teach a quality program with these facilities. It strange that some state schools have performing arts centres and others don't – Wangaratta and Benalla high schools both have beautiful performing arts centres and this is one reason why both those schools are able to maintain a very high quality music program – they have an excellent reputation. Dance and drama also use those facilities, as does the general community. It is extremely difficult to maintain a successful and vibrant music program without adequate facilities. In turn, poor facilities affect the perception of the standing of music within the school. Schools with great facilities in turn have their music programs valued and supported. These programs attract students to the school and families want to be involved in music.

Please find attached links pertaining to research that supports the value of music education as well as an extract from *The Moremusic Toolkit* (<http://www.moremusic toolkit.org.au/advocacy-tools/62#WhyMusicEducationImportant>). It is widely documented about the social, physical and academic benefits of participating in music and learning an instrument.

Employers look for graduates who have done music as part of their education. Such students are known to have greater people skills, problem solving skills and creativity – all crucial requirements for success in today's ever-changing workplace.

Support music education in schools. Make it compulsory from Kinder through to at least year 8 and optional after that. Schools will in turn produce more versatile students who are happier and more creative.

Yours Sincerely,
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<http://www.musiceducation.edu.au/category/advocacy/>

http://www.muscepts.co.nz/benefits_os_music_education_2011.pdf

Why music education is important

Music is special.

Virtually every person every day experiences music. Every person has the capacity to enjoy and make music. Every culture in the world includes music in some form: for ceremony, relaxation, communication, celebration and enjoyment. The world would be inconceivable without music. Imagine the absence of music in our lives. Imagine a group of teenagers without an MP3 player!

It is through schools that every child could have the opportunity to find the joy of making and understanding music. Yet many children miss out on that opportunity because schools choose not to offer it, or do not offer enough.

All children should have music as a core component of their education, from the first year of pre-school through to their senior school years.

Enriching students' lives.

An education in music enriches students' lives by providing:

- joy and pleasure,
- a transforming human experience,
- a unique way of knowing,
- access to our musical cultural heritage,

- an enhancement to quality of life,
- an opportunity to develop potential,
- an avenue for creativity and self-expression,
- a means for self-realisation and self-fulfillment, and
- a unique avenue to succeed at school.

Music is able to do this because it has many unique qualities.

Music is unique.

Music provides a unique means of communication and expression through sound.

Music provides a context for the understanding and transmission of beliefs and values.

Music has its own body of knowledge and skills.

Music functions as a means of entertaining, celebrating, relaxing and expressing.

Music brings joy and satisfaction, fosters creative expression, challenges thinking and stimulates imagination.

Music learning contributes to intellectual and cognitive growth through the development of skills, techniques and processes.

Music learning contributes to social and personal growth.

Music engages all aspects of a person: cognitive, emotional, sensory, physical and spiritual.

Music is an abstract, creative medium which allows for unique individual expression.

Music is valuable in its own right - however, it also has other qualities that bring additional benefits to students.

Recent research illustrates how learning music can help students improve

in other academic and social areas of their lives.

Music Therapists believe that teenagers need the following in order to be happy:

autonomy (choose own music to listen to / play), achievement or competence (i.e. the ability to self-regulate their mood through music listening or instrumental skills) and relatedness (with peers, ensemble or important adults).

MUSIC MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Music is a wonderful skill for any child, but new research shows how learning music can help your child in so many more ways:

Improved reasoning capacity and problem solving skills

Improve maths and language performance

Better memory

Greater social and team skills

Why should my child learn music?

For many years, we have believed that children should learn music 'for music's sake', because music was an excellent accomplishment and part of a well rounded, balanced education. And so it is.

But these days, children are expected to learn so many more skills and parents have begun to ask which subjects their child could ignore or drop. The answer is: not music!

As every parent knows, their child is a mixture of nature and nurture. A newborn baby already has all his or her brain cells and as the child develops he or she naturally builds pathways between these cells or neurons. These pathways (referred to as neural pathways) are there for life.

Learning music from an early age enables those neural pathways to grow in ways that can help your child maximise the potential they were born

with. Research shows that playing music can make significant differences to children's abilities related to learning, memory and social interactions.

Music is still an excellent accomplishment, but it can also make the difference for a child.

So when should a child start to learn music?

Any time is a good time, but the earlier the better. Ages given here are indicative, because children develop at different paces. Your music teacher will be able to advise more specifically for your child.

The important thing is to match your child's musical experiences with their developmental stage and to establish playing music as an ongoing part of their life.

From six months to around three years: musical experiences are important during these years. Many teachers run group classes where children develop rhythm, pitch, concepts such as high and low or fast and slow, use their voices and internalise sounds. This helps the child internalise the precepts of music and prepares them for learning to play an instrument.

From around three years to six years: children's brains and motor skills have now usually developed sufficiently to begin to consider learning to play instruments such as the violin, keyboard or piano. The child's ear is more fully developed, and they are learning to master language and abstract concepts.

From six years onwards: by now your child's fine motor skills have begun to develop and they can master a more wider range of instruments, such as a flute, percussion, guitar or trumpet. Now an important consideration is also to find an instrument that suits your child - for example, drums and percussion require a strong sense of rhythm, brass and wind instruments need well developed fine motor skills, and a string instrument requires the ability to hear the note when they tune and play.

Music teachers can advise and recommend the most appropriate instrument. In this age group it's also important for children to continue to enjoy music making in groups such as choirs, school music and drama, bands, orchestras and community music groups.

Everyone has musical ability

It's true. Every child is born with musical ability, but if it's not tapped into early enough then it can fail to develop. i Being 'unmusical' is more likely to be an outcome of poor training or lack of opportunity than it is from lack of ability, and everyone has the capacity to improve their musical skills.

Research published in early 2001 indicates that all babies are born with perfect pitch - it's how they are able to recognise their mother's voice and to learn language. But if they don't learn to use their perfect pitch, they then lose it. Early music lessons help a child to retain that fundamental musical skill, which is also so critical in learning a mother tongue as well as foreign languages. ii

Playing music increases memory and reasoning capacity, time management skills and eloquence

A series of research experiments in Hungary in the 1950s explored why children studying at special music kindergarten and primary schools had higher academic scores than those at the mainstream schools. The studies concluded that learning and playing music improved not just academic performance, but also memory, reasoning, working as part of a group, time management and the ability to think in the abstract. iii

Playing music improves concentration, memory and self expression

A massive two-year study in Switzerland run with 1200 children in more than 50 classes scientifically showed how playing music improved children's reading and verbal skills through improving concentration, memory and self expression. Younger children who had three more music classes per week and three fewer main curriculum classes made rapid developments in speech and learned to read with greater ease.

Other effects revealed by the study showed that children learned to like each other more, enjoyed school more (as did their teachers) and were less stressed during the various tests, indicating they were better able to handle performance pressure. iv

Playing music improves the ability to think

Ongoing research at the University of California-Irvine and the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh v demonstrate that learning and playing music builds or modifies neural pathways related to spatial reasoning tasks, which are crucial for higher brain functions like complex maths, chess and science. The first studies showed that listening to a Mozart sonata

temporarily improved a child's spatial abilities. Further studies compared children who had computer lessons, children who had singing lessons, children who learned music using a keyboard and children who did nothing additional. The children who had had the music classes scored significantly higher - up to 35% higher - than the children who had computer classes or did nothing additional. vi

Music training improves verbal memory

A preliminary study at The Chinese University of Hong Kong has shown that adults who had had music training before the age of 12 years had an improved ability to recall spoken words - ie. verbal memory.

The study tested 60 adults of which 30 who had had six years or more of training with a Western musical instrument, and the balance had some training through to none.

Learning music helps under-performing students to improve

Researchers at Brown University in the US discovered that children aged 5-7 years who had been lagging behind in their school performance had caught up with their peers in reading and were ahead of them in maths after seven months of music lessons. The children's classroom attitudes and behaviour ratings had also significantly improved, and after a year of music classes were rated as better than the children who had had no additional classes. vii

Music students are less likely to be delinquent

High school students who participate in the performing arts, including the school band program, are far less likely to be involved with drugs, crime or have behavioural problems, according to a longitudinal study being pursued in the US. Called Champions of Change, the study is being undertaken by a number of researchers including those at Harvard, Stanford and Columbia. This finding is supported by the Texas Commission on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, which reported in 1998 that 'secondary students who participated in band or orchestra reported the lowest lifetime and current use of all substances' (alcohol, drugs, tobacco).

To download a PDF of this information, or to order free printed copies of this material in brochure format, contact: info@australianmusic.asn.au viii

Another research paper has been undertaken by The Song Room, entitled

“Bridging the Gap in School Achievement through the Arts” It can be read here:

<http://www.songroom.org.au/images/stories/Bridging%20the%20Gap%20in%20School%20Achievement%20through%20the%20Arts.pdf>

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ii Professor Jenny Saffran, *Infant Learning Centre, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Developmental Psychology journal, January 2001*

iii F Sandor (ed). *Music Education in Hungary. 1969*

iv E W Weber, M Spychiger and J-L Patry, *Musik macht Schule. Biografie und Ergebnisse eines Schulversuchs mit erweitertem Musikunterricht. Pädagogik in der Blauen Eule, Bd17. 1993.*

v Various studies by Dr. Gordon Shaw (University of California-Irvine) and Dr. Fran Rauscher (University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh), with others. Including those published in *Nature 365:611* and *Neuroscience Letters 185:44-47*

vi E L Wright, W R Dennis & R L Newcomb. *Neurological Res.19:2-8. 1997*

vii Agnes S Chan, Yim-Chi Ho, & Mei-Chun Cheung, Dept of Psychology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. *Music training improves verbal memory. Nature 396:128*

viii M F Gardiner, A Fox, F Knowles & D Jeffrey. *Learning improved by arts training. Nature 381:284. 1996.*

The impact of the arts on learning: CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

Champions of Change is the title of a publication of The Arts Education Partnership and The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities in the USA. It presents the reports of seven teams of researchers examining a variety of arts education programs using diverse methodologies to

discover their impact on broader learning and socialisation.

The discoveries overall must be of interest to the music community and indeed the community at large. Especially relevant to the musical world is the study by James S. Catterall of the Imagination Project at the University of Los Angeles. Catterall analysed data on more than 25,000 students from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS) to determine the relationship of engagement in the arts to student performance and attitudes, and also investigated the impact of intensive involvement in instrumental music on student achievement.

For the full story go to <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/champions/pdfs/ChampsReport.pdf>

Can Music in School Give Stimulus to Other School Subjects?

Recent reports on the effects of musical activity in school shed a very positive light on the topic addressed in this paper, the effects of musical activity on extra-musical learning and achievement. For example, the highly recognized weekly magazine The New Scientist reported on the Swiss school experiment with extended music education (called "Music makes the School") in an article titled "Children learn faster to the sound of music." Nature did similarly in presenting the results of an experiment with a special arts training in eight first-grade classrooms in Rhode Island, USA, under the headline "Learning improved by arts training." The German monthly magazine, Psychologie heute, portrayed an experimental school in Berlin, Germany, under the title "Musik macht Kinder klug" ("Music makes children smart").

As a researcher who for many years has dealt with extra-musical outcomes of music and music education, I too feel quite confident to confirm these reports and to answer "yes" to the question in the title, but: things are not quite that conclusive. We should not be simplistic about the positive outcomes of music education, and I will, after this short introduction, elaborate on five qualifications as regards this positive reply.

For the full story, go to <http://www.mca.org.au/publications/music-forum/magazine-articles/music-education/35-can-music-in-school-give-stimulus-to-other-school-subjects>