

## **Submission to the Committee for the Parliamentary Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools**

**From: Jeremy Ludowyke, Principal of Melbourne High School on behalf of the Melbourne High School Council and school community.**

I present this submission from the perspective of an experienced government school principal with an extensive, informed and passionate professional experience of music education.

In this submission I do not intend to address those aspects of the Inquiry's terms of reference that deal with the benefits of music education as in my view these have been ably addressed in other submissions to the Inquiry, including that prepared by Dr Anne Lierse on behalf of the Melbourne High School Music department and community.

I believe I am well credentialed to provide informed advice relevant to the Inquiry's terms of reference having served for over ten years as a Principal representative on Regional Instrumental Music reference committees in Eastern, Northern and Southern Regions as well as contributing to the last state wide review of instrumental music resource allocation undertaken by the Department of Education in 2002-3. I have also served as the Principal of schools recognised as exemplars in music education; Princes Hill Secondary College and Melbourne High School.

On the basis of this experience of grappling with the complexities of relevant local and systemic provision issues, I intend to present and explore a specific provision model the committee may wish to consider to promote and nurture effective music education in Victoria.

### **The future of music education curriculum:**

The release of the ACARA Australian curriculum shaping paper for the Arts provides an opportune backdrop to this Inquiry. It identifies five Art strands and proposes the explicit teaching of all five across the F-6 years. This poses a number of challenges in Victoria.

The provision of Primary Arts education in general and music education in particular is haphazard across Victoria's Primary schools. Many Primary schools have no explicit art curriculum and in many cases, no specialist art teacher. The number of music specialist teachers or primary teachers with any pre service training in music is even more negligible. Therefore there are grounds to believe that the universal delivery of Primary music education foreshadowed by the shaping paper will require explicit intervention and support.

At the same time there is an argument for music being recognised as the preferred and default art discipline in Primary schools. Music is the most universally practiced and accessed art discipline at the level of the individual, nation, internationally and across cultures. Whilst few of us will have an ongoing relationship with other art disciplines, the vast majority of us will have a lifelong engagement with music.

The evidence base suggests that music education has a very strong correlation with and is a key contributor to general academic achievement and engagement. It is revelatory that the five highest performing education systems as ranked by the OECD PISA program all have mandatory music education programs. This correlation is directly borne out by our experience at Melbourne High School. As a selective entry academic school, our students are selected solely on the basis of academic ability. On entry less than a fifth have any previous instrumental music training, yet between a quarter and a third of each intake take up an instrument when given the opportunity.

This inquiry should recommend that every Primary school should provide a mandatory music education program. This will raise difficult but not insurmountable resourcing issues. The Inquiry should also recommend that all pre service primary teacher training should include a music education component and as a long term goal; that every Primary school should be resourced to include at least one specialist music educator as is the case in Tasmania and Queensland.

The focus of the F-6 Australian music curriculum requires that students must *'make and respond'* to music. This will require that in addition to the fundamentals of music appreciation, music performance will also be required. This also presents a major challenge.

It is ideal but impractical to resource every Primary school to provide effective instruction in a range of musical instruments. Where such provision currently exists, the costs of tuition are usually passed on to parents. Two accessible modes of instrumental music education suggest themselves. The increasing availability and effectiveness of digital devices, ranging from iPads (such as the use of iPads at the Victorian College of the Arts) to keyboard labs (such as the Soundhouse program) present one practicable mode. A choral program is a more traditional but potentially more accessible and effective mode.

This is undoubtedly the experience of Melbourne High School. Melbourne High is to my knowledge the only school in Victoria with a mandatory instrumental music program across all year levels. Every student undertakes at least one session of choral singing and voice tuition at least once per week and performs repertoire at least once per term. The School is recognised nationally and internationally as a music education exemplar and received the prestigious ABC national 'Flame' award in 2011 for music education excellence.

**I invite the Inquiry committee to visit the school to witness an exemplar program in action.**

The focus of the Australian Arts curriculum at Years 7-12 is markedly different, proposing that schools will specialise in the provision of at least one Art discipline. This is consistent with Victoria's *'Towards Victoria; a learning community'* position paper that recommends increasing specialism in secondary curriculum as a policy intent. This implies that not every secondary school will opt to offer an ongoing core and instrumental music program to Year 12 and that some will opt to offer no music program at all. Secondary school resourcing support should therefore also be targeted.

#### **Resourcing secondary music education:**

Before the implications of these policy directions are addressed, it is worth reflecting upon the history of resource support for music education in government schools. Prior to 1990 a range of music education resources and support were provided at a central or regional level. These included:

- A central music education branch and music education consultants in every region
- Development of state wide curriculum materials and professional development programs
- A central music library and central and regional musical instrument banks and loan schemes
- Regional networks and professional development for school-based music educators

Over the past 25 years, these state wide resources have been downsized, devolved and expunged. The only specific resourcing and support for music education remaining is the funding of instrumental music teachers (IMT) provided by DEECD centrally but then dispersed to and coordinated at a regional level.

The provision of specialist instrumental music teachers (IMT) is a vital, but complex issue. Currently most regions utilise differing and inconsistent criteria to allocate IMTs to individual secondary schools. Some regions utilise some of their allocation to directly employ regional music coordinators

who monitor IMT allocations and facilitate professional support to schools. Given that the provision of IMT is currently the only direct central resourcing of music education, the neglect and lack of effective and efficient deployment of this essential resource should be a key priority of this Inquiry.

The first resourcing question to be addressed in relation to IMT provision is the level of overall funding and how this is to be calculated and deployed. An outcome of the 2002-3 provision review was to deploy central IMT funding as a cash grant rather than staffing EFT as previous. This has resulted in the real and continuing prospect of the funding level diminishing in real and relative terms over time. It is essential that an adequate level of funding for IMT is established and secured. It is self evident that existing levels are inadequate and this Inquiry should recommend a substantial and ongoing improvement in the resourcing of IMT.

The current IMT provision model entails calculation of regional allocations predominantly based on a School Resource package formula (per capita by regional student enrolments with weightings for SFO, etc). Given the changing role of regions, the rationale for deployment to regions must be questioned particularly given the inconsistencies and lack of transparency or accountability for IMT allocation that has occurred across regions. This would represent a key change to current provision but I urge the Committee to consider if any compelling reason for dispersal to regions (or networks) exists. I shall argue later that it is possible to design a direct to school allocation model and process. A central allocation model is also consistent with the process the Department of Education has used to assess eligibility and provide funding for other forms of program specialism.

One allocation model often proposed is to provide every secondary school with a SRP based allocation. This would disperse even an enhanced IMT resource so thinly as to render the resource meaningless and would quickly lead to the demise of almost every IM program in the state. It is important to recognise that IMT were conceived as being a specialist high-level resource to be deployed to some but not all secondary schools. It is essential to note that this is entirely consistent with the specialism proposed by *Towards Victoria; a learning community*' and the Australian Arts curriculum and I would argue strongly that this principle must be reasserted. I would also argue that dispersal of IMT resource and allocation to networks or clusters would be ineffective for the same reasons and that again, there is no compelling rationale for this.

It is also the case that no secondary school regardless of the size and scope of its music program could hope to fully fund IMTs from local funds and resources. It must also be recognised that as the scope of a school instrumental music program grows, its need for a range of IMTs with expertise in expanding range of instruments will grow proportionally. This implies that the level of central provision required to sustain an instrumental music program should be proportional to the size and scale of the program offered.

There is a strong case to be made that secondary schools seeking to specialise in music education and wishing to access IMT funding should demonstrate that they have made a matched commitment from local funds that may be a combination of allocation from their SRP allocation and locally raised funds, including parental contributions to the costs of IMT. It is sometime argued that such a funding model will privilege school communities with more capacity to raise local funds however it also must be borne in mind that schools with less capacity to raise local funds and those in isolated areas already receive compensatory funding through the SFO component of the SRP.

I urge the Committee to recommend that IMT funding be allocated to secondary schools who can demonstrate an exemplary commitment to music education only. If this is adopted, what criteria should be used to determine how IMT resourcing is to be distributed and how should fulfilment of

criteria be assessed? I believe it is possible to set of clear and transparent criteria to achieve this. A set of base eligibility criteria should be met before any secondary school can apply for IMT funding:

- Has the school identified music as its Arts specialist program in its Strategic Plan/Compact?
- Does the School offer a compulsory core music program up to and including Year 10?
- Does the School offer and run at least two Unit 3-4 VCE or VET equivalent music study designs with a specified minimum level of student enrolment?
- Does the school have a specialist music facility and instrument bank to a specified standard?

The first and third criteria can be assessed by data readily available to DEECD whilst the other criteria can be easily verified. Schools meeting this base eligibility could seek IMT funding allocated on the basis of a formula driven by verifiable performance indicators such as:

- Matched employment of IMT through SRP or locally raised funds
- Audit of the number of students receiving instrumental tuition and performing in ensembles
- Weightings for range and complexity of instruments and ensembles provided
- Weighting for number of students completing Unit 3-4 music units
- Weighting for rurality and isolation and other specified complexities

Most Regions currently allocate IMT funding utilising some combination of these or similar criteria and have found little difficulty in assessing and verifying school eligibility. I urge the Committee to recommend the creation of a central allocation formula utilising these or similar criteria.

Another allocation model sometimes proposed is to identify schools by geographic distribution similar to the music 'lighthouse' schools that existed previously. I would argue that this is an ineffective and failed model. Whilst the previous 'lighthouse' music schools had substantial preferential IMT resourcing there is little evidence to suggest that they offered the most effective music program. Once identified as a 'lighthouse' school, there is no incentive or accountability to meet performance criteria such as those identified above. Nor is it evident that they provided any effective outreach or support to nearby schools, in fact it has been the experience of nearby schools that the existence of a 'lighthouse' music school served to weaken local music programs and also led to distortion in local primary to secondary enrolment patterns.

Melbourne High School is itself evidence of the failings of this model. Without being a 'lighthouse' school it nevertheless has the highest ranking against the majority of eligibility and performance criteria currently utilised by our region.

There is a case for seeking a commitment from schools accessing IMT funding to provide outreach support to other Primary and secondary schools. This is to be encouraged and in keeping with existing practice. As a condition of funding IMT schools should be required to negotiate a service agreement with the centre obligating them to provide professional support to other schools.

### **The role of the centre**

It is clear that the respective roles within DEECD of the centre, regions, networks and schools are changing and it would be useful if the recommendation of this Inquiry reflect this. It is worth considering carefully in this context what these respective roles, if any should be.

In comparison to other curriculum domains, music education does require the centre to play both a policy and resourcing role as it is currently beyond the capacity of any school to resource a music education program from its own funds. At the Primary school level it is essential that the centre (and this inquiry) must:

- Provide advice to schools regarding their obligations to music education within AusVELS
- Establish mandatory pre service training standards for Primary teachers in music education
- Resource the provision of a music education specialist in Primary schools.

At the secondary school level, the centre must:

- Establish a criteria, formula and process that will enable secondary schools that meet base eligibility criteria to apply for IMT funding allocated by the centre
- Require that schools in receipt of IMT funding enter into a service agreement to provide outreach support to other schools

In the past, the allocation of IMT funding to individual schools has been devolved to regions. I have argued that given the changing roles of these entities there is no justification for this in the case of music education and that it is possible to design an efficient and effective direct to school IMT allocation model that is centrally coordinated.

As has already occurred, DEECD should allocate oversight of music education and IMT allocation to a relevant officer who would convene an expert reference group to have carriage of the allocation process and monitor performance and accountability. This replicates current regional best practice but avoids the significant duplication and inconsistencies that would occur if this responsibility was again devolved to regions or networks. I again submit that there is no rational justification to devolve this responsibility and the present shambolic management of IMT across regions is sufficient evidence of the failure of this approach. A central allocation process will also remove significant inefficiencies resulting in duplication and inconsistencies of practice across regions or networks.

#### **Conclusion:**

The committee must confront significant issues if it is to provide advice that will provide a coherent approach to music education in Victoria. I ask that this submission be considered as a companion piece to other submissions such as that of Dr Anne Lierse on behalf of the Melbourne High School Music department which present and informed and cogent argument for the benefit and purpose of music education.

This submission focuses upon the key resourcing issues which must underpin the provision of music education. It argues that it is beyond the scope of the resources of any government school to afford even a basic music education program and this implies that the government must continue to provide explicit resourcing to music education or bear witness to the demise of programs across all government schools. It proposes that in the light of the Australian Art education framework there are different resourcing needs at Primary and Secondary level.

In keeping with the directions of the government's *'Towards Victoria; a learning community'* position statement and the intent of the, it argues for targeted funding of instrumental music support to secondary schools that demonstrate a direct commitment to music as a specialist program. Allocation criteria and formula should be based on a mutual obligation model that requires any central funding to be matched by local contributions from each school's SRP grant and locally raised funds. It proposes a central allocation process and formula informed by eligibility and performance based criteria that will ensure effective and accountable targeting of IMT funding.

I commend this submission to the attention of the Committee and restate my invitation to invite the Committee to visit Melbourne High School to observe an exemplar music education program in action. This includes an informal invitation for any member of the Committee to attend the Melbourne High School House Choral competition at the Melbourne Town Hall between 10.00am and 12.30 on Thursday March 21<sup>st</sup> if they wish to witness the impact the joy and gift of music can engender in a school.

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