

# Submission to the Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools.

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Dear Sir / Madam

Music Victoria is the music industry peak body for Victoria; an independent and non-profit organisation established to represent and support the growth, participation and development of the Victorian contemporary music industry across all genres.

This submission is made on behalf of Music Victoria's Education Advisory Group. The Education Advisory Group was established to assist and advise Music Victoria in relation to its mission to champion music in Victoria, specifically relating to policies, procedures and other issues associated with music education. Representation on the group includes Victoria University, RMIT, NMIT, Box Hill TAFE, JMC Academy, VCA and Monash University.

Rather than duplicate the valuable information being submitted to the inquiry by key bodies such as the School Music Action Group and the Music Council of Australia, this submission seeks to complement and reinforce those submissions.

## Benefits to society and individual students.

### **Economic benefits:**

The key economic benefits derived from the increasingly important Australian music industry provide an important justification for the provision of music education in schools being as necessary as mathematics or English. Students provided with music education throughout their primary and high school years develop a skillset that equips them to enter the music industry workforce and to use their skills to contribute to the growing cultural economy.

Research demonstrates that Victoria's music industry plays an extremely important role in affirming Australia as a world-class culture and economy. The size and value of the Australian music sector in 2005-06 was valued at almost \$7 billion<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, live music contributed an estimated \$501 million to the Victorian economy in 2009-10 and employed a further 17,200 people full time.<sup>2</sup> The significance of this economic contribution can be fully appreciated when compared to the size of Australia's other major industries including:

- Forestry and fishing (\$2.5billion)
- Electricity (\$13.9billion)
- Manufacturing (\$2.7billion)

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Hoegh-Guldberg: *The Value of the Music Sector*, Music Council of Australia Music in Australia Knowledge Base. [http://musicinaustralia.org.au/index.php/The\\_Value\\_of\\_the\\_Music\\_Sector](http://musicinaustralia.org.au/index.php/The_Value_of_the_Music_Sector).

<sup>2</sup> Deloitte Access Economics (2011): *The economic, social and cultural contribution of venue-based live music in Victoria*. Report for Arts Victoria. [http://www.arts.vic.gov.au/.../DAE\\_live\\_music\\_report\\_Exec\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.arts.vic.gov.au/.../DAE_live_music_report_Exec_Summary.pdf)

- Printing, publishing and recorded media (\$11.3billion)<sup>3</sup>

In order for Victoria to further capitalise and develop its cultural economy through music, a higher importance must be placed on providing in-depth music education to students to equip them with the necessary skills early on. School graduates with musical and academic skills and knowledge are able to contribute more fully to society in general. This is in terms of their social, cultural and economic engagement through music, particularly through the live music industry that generated \$1.2 billion during 2009-10, being played to almost 42 million patrons across Australia<sup>4</sup>.

In addition to the economic contributions discussed above, Victoria draws a significant number of cultural visitors to its theatres, concerts and performing arts events. 30% of domestic and international visitors attended performing arts events in Victoria in 2010 compared to 23% of visitors across Australia<sup>5</sup>. The cultural significance of Australian music is further demonstrated by Tourism Victoria's publication of a Melbourne Gig Guide in its promotional materials.

Live music is used as a drawcard not only for attracting visitors, but also for attracting new residents. The Deloitte Report found that, of 23 surveyed performers, 83% believed in greater performance opportunities in Victoria, providing an incentive for them to relocate to Melbourne. What we are seeing is the State Government proudly promoting Victoria's music culture, but not necessarily forming the educational curriculum in a way that feeds this culture. Providing music education from an early age will ultimately assist in achieving the Federal Government's goal of creating successful learners who are confident, creative, active and informed citizens<sup>6</sup>, capable of pursuing careers in the broader entertainment and business industries. These jobs include:

- Instrumentalists and vocalists;
- Writers/arrangers/orchestrators/copyists;
- Artist managers and bookers;
- Instrument technicians;
- Production crew;
- Marketers, promoters and distributors;
- Jingle writers;
- Soundtrack produces, editors and mixers;
- Music librarians;
- Sourcing;
- Music video writers, producers and technicians;
- Music therapists;

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<sup>3</sup> Hoegh-Gulberg, *ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst & Young (2011): *Economic contribution of the venue-based live music industry in Victoria*. Report for the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA).  
[http://www.liveperformance.com.au/site/\\_content/.../00000198-source.pdf](http://www.liveperformance.com.au/site/_content/.../00000198-source.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, *ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (2008): *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.  
[http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/national\\_declaration\\_on\\_the\\_educational\\_goals\\_for\\_young\\_australians.pdf](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/national_declaration_on_the_educational_goals_for_young_australians.pdf)

- Copyright and contract specialists;
- Radio production and presentation;
- Music critics, journalists and on-air presenters;
- Musicologists; and
- Music teachers (at government or private schools, TAFEs, universities, private teachers, studios and instrument shops).

### **Cognitive Benefits:**

We are confident that the Music Council of Australia and the School Music Action Group will go into considerable depth about the extensive cognitive and academic benefits of music education. This submission will not therefore go over this ground again in detail.

Suffice to say that there is a significant amount of evidence supporting increased overall academic capability in students that learn a musical instrument from an early age. Decades of studies reach the common conclusion that music education improves brain function and development in those undertaking regular instruction<sup>7</sup>. Among many other skills, students are shown to develop greater:

- Coordination, rhythm and listening skills relating to reading the music and playing the instrument accordingly;
- Confidence, expressive and social skills derived from performing with and in front of others;
- Problem solving, literacy and mathematical skills associated with the visualisation of numbers and proportions;
- Creative skills associated with creating, playing, listening to and experiencing music;
- Language skills particularly when learning languages relying on tonal communication (i.e. Asian and South-East Asian languages); and
- A developed understanding of the cultural and emotional significance of certain types of music and their impacts on other societies and eras.

## **Provision of music education in Victorian Schools.**

### **How Music Education is taught and to what degree:**

Despite a study into the provision of music education in regional Victoria<sup>8</sup>, it must be noted that there is a distinct lack of readily available data detailing the overall provision of music education in Victorian schools. This poses a difficulty in terms of being able to fully address points 4-7 in the Terms of Reference. This section therefore draws primarily on anecdotal information as appropriate.

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<sup>7</sup> As discussed by Stevens M. Demorest and Steven J. Morrison : ‘*Does music make you smarter?*’, Music Educators Journal, 87 (2) pp. 33-39, 58.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Heinrich: *The Provision of Classroom Music to Regional Victorian Primary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study*, Music Council of Australia. <http://www.musiceducation.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/corrected-final-thesis-for-printing.pdf>

Australia-wide, 63% of primary schools and 34% of secondary schools do not offer government-supported music education<sup>9</sup>. The lack of similar Victorian specific data raises the question of the importance accorded to music education by both educators and governing bodies themselves. One could easily surmise that music education is viewed as a subject requiring little or no monitoring, inadvertently pushing it to the fringe of the core school curriculum. It does not seem to be accorded the same importance as, for argument's sake, sport and physical education, despite the decades of research into its benefits.

A State Government report addressing the benefits and mandatory requirements relating to sport and physical education in Victorian schools<sup>10</sup> can be found using a simple Google search. However, a similar search for music education turns up no such results. This raises the same question as posed above. The comparison is made between music and sport simply due to their status as two of Australia's largest entertainment providers nationally and internationally; with the AFL and cricket being accorded iconic status in Australia and its schools.

Rather than music being isolated as an 'indulgent' subject (as with other arts subjects), and therefore given reduced significance in curriculum, the various skills that develop from learning music need to be emphasised and linked to other subjects. This could be done by incorporating music deeper into the school curriculum and thus provide students with the same opportunities to develop their skills in that field too.

Anecdotal evidence would tend to suggest that the extent of contemporary music education in schools may have a correlation to their proximity to live music and/or cultural clusters in metropolitan Victoria. The closer a school is to such a cluster, the more likely that music education will feature highly in the curriculum. It would clearly be preferable that the extent and type of music education in schools was consistent across Victoria.

The level of importance placed on music education also influences the type of music teacher that is employed. One corollary of this, for example, is the growing practice of schools engaging private instrumental music teachers<sup>11</sup> (often with limited music qualifications and no educational qualifications) to 'run' school music programs, instead of engaging fully qualified music teachers as members of the school staff. This arrangement results in parents having to pay the private music teacher (rather than lessons being school subsidised), and means that both the music curriculum and pedagogy sits outside the school's main learning and teaching. What we are seeing from this lack of funding is the development of a "pay to play" system of education that doesn't fully strive towards the goals set out in the Melbourne Declaration<sup>12</sup>. It

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<sup>9</sup> Dr Irina Petrova; *What Makes Good Music Programs in Schools?* Doctoral Thesis for the University of NSW, 2012. [http://www.mca.org.au/images/pdf/research/other/IrinaPetrova\\_PhDThesisFinal.pdf](http://www.mca.org.au/images/pdf/research/other/IrinaPetrova_PhDThesisFinal.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Office of Government School Education (2009): *Improving School Sport and Physical Education in your School*, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne. [www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/data/data/1/hpeimprovsportbrochure.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/data/data/1/hpeimprovsportbrochure.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Dr Rachel Hocking: *National Audit of Music Discipline and Music Education Mandatory Content Within Pre-Service Generalist Primary Teacher Education Courses*, Music Council of Australia. <http://www.mca.org.au/research/research-reports/research-reports/659-national-audit-of-music-discipline-and-music-education-mandatory-content-within-pre-service-generalist-primary-teacher-education-courses-a-report>

<sup>12</sup> Melbourne Declaration, *ibid*.

reinforces the idea of music being reserved for the affluent, leaving students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds at risk of missing out.

## **Conclusions:**

### **Economic Contribution**

Given the recently documented extent to which the music sector contributes to the growing cultural economy and the wider economy generally, it is recommended that music education in schools is included consistently as part of the core curriculum of all schools in Victoria.

### **Cognitive Benefits**

In view of the well researched benefits of music education to students' learning across other disciplines, music should also be incorporated within the subject areas referred to in the Australian Curriculum.

### **Provision of Music Education**

In undertaking a review of research in this area for this submission, it has become apparent that there is little data available on the subject of the availability of music education in Victorian schools specifically, on what basis it is provided, by whom and how it is funded. This appears to be symptomatic of the low degree of importance afforded to music education in schools. The fact that music sits at the periphery of most schools' curriculum requires to be remedied as soon as possible.

Furthermore, there is a need to develop a centrally devised system to administer and monitor levels and standards of music education, ensuring that curriculum aims (at both state and national levels) are achieved in relation to the goals of the Melbourne Declaration<sup>13</sup>.

We thank you for the opportunity to make submissions to the inquiry and we look forward to seeing its report in due course.

Yours faithfully



Patrick Donovan  
CEO  
Music Victoria

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<sup>13</sup> Melbourne Declaration, *ibid.*