

Robin Pascoe
The National Review of School Music Education
Centre for Learning Change and Development
Murdoch University
South Street
Murdoch
Western Australia 6150

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Dear Mr Pascoe

RE: National Review of Music Education in Schools

The Music Council of Australia is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this most important review. The Music Council members are united in the belief that music education in schools is vital to the lives of individuals, communities, the music industry, and the health, heritage and future identity of our nation.

The Music Council of Australia is a national peak music organisation with a membership of 50, drawn from across the music sector. It includes representatives of fourteen national music organisations and members elected to positions assigned to various levels of music education, creation, performance, production, dissemination and infrastructure.

This submission is made in the knowledge that an expert review team has been employed for an extended period in researching the practice of music education in Australia and abroad. It therefore has not been thought necessary to provide extensive references, although these are present where there is a possibility that new knowledge is being added. We would be happy to substantiate points made here, upon request of the review team.

This submission deals with the following issues:

1. The context for change
2. The broad relevance of, and benefits accruing from a school music education: individual, institutional, national/economic
3. The need for universal provision and the essential role of schools
4. The need for expert teachers and teacher training
5. Approaches that might elevate music among the curriculum choices of school systems
6. Specific issues around the effective inclusion of music in the school program
7. Cultural diversity in the community requires diversity of choice in music education, carrying forward the heritage and creating the future
8. The need for school programs to interact with the community and recognise that school age children may also receive music education in the community
9. The need for community support

1. The context for change

Among the circumstances justifying change are the following:

- Research shows that music's place in the curriculum as a discipline in its own right has been legitimised on philosophical, sociological, psychological, and cultural grounds. However,

despite rhetoric contained in education curriculum documents in regard to the value placed on the arts/music, music programs have continually suffered from poor resourcing and staffing, insufficient time in the instructional schedule, inadequate facilities and equipment.

- In many school systems, there is no coherent provision of music education to children in the crucial primary school years. This has been the conclusion of reviews stretching back 30 years. Not only have major recommendations not been implemented, but there has been continuing further decline.
- The pre-service music education of primary classroom teachers is for the most part risibly inadequate so that many schools cannot deliver an adequate music education, even should they so desire.
- The clustering of the arts into a single Key Learning Area did achieve the retention of the arts in the school curriculum but resulted in the division of school arts time among music and other art forms, making it likely that none are adequately taught.
- In a report of a survey of Australian government primary school principals titled *Our Future*, many principals were concerned that they were unable to provide music and physical education due to the need for higher staff levels, staff with specialist skills, and suitable learning areas.

2. The broad relevance of, and benefits accruing from a school music education: individual, institutional, national/economic

Intrinsic benefits

- Effective music education provides individuals with the skills and knowledge to develop their innate musicality and prepares them for life-long learning and engagement with music.
- The MCA strongly believes that music education in schools must be supported for its intrinsic benefits. These benefits are recognised in schools with healthy music programs and reflected in the school culture and ethos. Students' sensitivities, self-expression and creativity are awakened and fostered. The shared feeling of joy and emotional elevation in the realisation of a fine music performance is immeasurable and is instantly recognised by performers, audiences and the school community.
- Further to the previous point, there is a knowing which is a musical knowing. It cannot be described adequately by the tools of other forms of knowing, such as verbal tools. It is complete within itself, although it can inform other forms of knowing such as the emotional, and can be informed by other forms of knowing such as physical movement or verbal description. But it does not depend upon them, nor does it need to be justified in their terms.
- To achieve broader and deeper musical and emotional outcomes, students need an extended, sequential, balanced program of active listening to, performing and creating music.

Extrinsic benefits

- Research has sought to demonstrate the extrinsic benefits of music education for the child such as brain function and growth, academic achievement, and social skills. To the extent that it has been successful, these are powerful arguments for bringing music to the centre of the school curriculum. No doubt the review team has explored and evaluated this research, since it has been so much to the fore in political advocacy for music education.
- Where credible, the research offers strong additional support for the value of music education. However, some of this research has been assessed as methodologically weak. The credibility of the review should not be compromised through dependence on poor research.

Valuing

- Music education is valued by parents. Research shows, and principals in secondary schools agree, that parents want their children to go to a school where there is a music program. (Lierse, 1998).
- Having their music ensembles (bands, choirs, orchestras and music theatre) perform at school and public events is highly valued by schools, parents and the community.

National musical competence and identity

- It is important to engender a sense of national competence that can overcome the 'cultural cringe'. This includes competence in music making, not least because music is such a large part of young people's lives and identity. Children need to know that good music comes from Australia as well as other countries. They need to be given the skills of creators as well as listeners. It will follow that they too can be competent creators of music.

Music industry

- Lack of a music education is a handicap to the music industry which is potentially a generator of both a national musical identity and significant income.
- The exact annual turnover of the Australian music sector is unknown but has been estimated at \$5 -- 6 billion. This sum probably excludes important contributors to the industry such as education or broadcasting.
- The most recent data shows Australian export music royalties were \$74 million (ABS). Some part of the value of the Australian music industry can also be counted as export substitution.
- Evidence from a Swedish study of the export success of its own music industry shows that it depends in particular on the quality and accessibility of music education. Swedish music export royalties per capita are 700% those of Australia. (MCA has provided the review team with a copy of this study.) The Swedish provision of music education plainly exceeds by far the Australian provision. The potential contribution of Australian music to the Australian economy may well be significantly hindered by the inadequacies of our music education provision.

Source of employment and investment

- For the musically knowledgeable, the sector provides opportunities for employment or investment in music education, music creation, music performance, operation of music venues, music production (live performance, recording, TV, film etc), music publishing, music broadcasting, other forms of electronic dissemination, musical instruments and equipment, wholesaling, retailing, music press, music journalism, ancillary functions such as music agents, managers, copyright and legal, and others. The possibilities are rich, but referring to the previous paragraph, are probably constrained by relative lack of success of the music industry.

3. The need for universal provision and the essential role of schools

- The Music Council of Australia supports the concept that all students should have the opportunity to receive a music education throughout their school years: through singing, playing a musical instrument solo and in ensembles, listening to, understanding and creating music.
- The right of everyone to freely participate in the cultural life of the community is recognised as a fundamental human right conforming to the principle embodied in Articles 22 and 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in Article 15 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The lack of an education in music constrains the ability to freely participate in the musical life of the community.
- There are many roads to a music education, through private instruction (for those who can afford to pay), through community settings, and through the formal education system. However, it is probably only through the latter that universal education can be achieved.
- It follows that the value of music education for the child needs to be reflected in government policies stipulating that all students in Australia must have access to a music education.
- The Music Council of Australia believes music education should start at the earliest age and that there should be community provision for infants and for children at pre-school levels. This should also be supported by government policy and provision.
- There is an important equity issue in the provision of music education, with schools in lower income socio-economic areas and some country areas disadvantaged. It is primarily the role of governments to address such inequities.
- The cost of developing and maintaining an effective music program is high, especially the employment of instrumental teachers. Many local school communities cannot meet this cost and

many students are deprived of the opportunity to learn an instrument. The cost needs to be covered by governments, possibly Commonwealth and local as well as state.

- Universal provision includes provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Governments should also support such provision.
- Universal provision includes appropriate support to students especially talented in music. If this provision is made through specialist music schools, they should be sufficient in size, number and location to accommodate this population and be resourced to a level where they can prepare students for successful careers in music.
- It would be highly beneficial if links were made between early childhood music education and music education in primary school and that the transition in music making between primary and secondary school was subject to coherent intervention, so that children have a clear pathway of access to music making from 0-18 years. Active participation in group music making is also elemental to the health and well being of children throughout this span and is a key to continued participation throughout life.
- Families with young children benefit from access to high quality music education, and experiences in sharing music strengthens family connections and provides parents with music resources to use in the rest of their family life.

4. The need for expert teachers and teacher training

Primary school music teaching

- There is strong evidence that the use of the primary generalist teacher to teach music is, in a large number of cases, depriving students of a quality music education. Problems lie in the fact that so many of these teachers are very ill-prepared by their pre-service teaching training, have had no formal music education, and therefore do not have the necessary skills, confidence, and willingness to teach music.
- There are arguments for and against the teaching of music to primary school children by classroom generalist teachers vs. music specialists. The Music Council has not invited a debate on this issue among its members and therefore will not take a position at this time.
- However, if schools continue to use generalist teachers to teach music, then they must be adequately trained and there needs to be a national standard for that training.
- There is an urgent need for drastic reform of primary teacher music training in Australia.

Accreditation

- It is also recommended that there be an assessment and accreditation of training programs for secondary school music teachers, early childhood and primary music specialists.
- In the search for expert teachers, it is recommended that each state allow for the provisional /restricted registration of expert instrumental teachers who do not have the required undergraduate and teaching qualifications.
- Research tells us that one of the most important attributes of a successful music teacher is an enthusiastic personality. Conducting interviews before admitting students into music teacher training courses is recommended

Private contractors

- Some schools contract with private providers of instrumental music programs. These providers are tending to use as teachers undergraduates, and even school students, without any training in pedagogy. The result is in too many cases detrimental to the ongoing music education of the school children, leading to development of poor technique and attitudes. There is an urgent need for accreditation of these organisations and the individual teachers to ensure appropriate professional skills.
- Furthermore, schools making use of the programs described in the previous dot point frequently do not take responsibility for supporting them with a classroom music program and do not properly coordinate them into the school program. They should accept this responsibility.

Professional development

- Music teachers need to have the opportunity to view best practice, and attend regular music enrichment sessions. There is a need also for greater departmental encouragement, and reward. The award of credit points by universities towards post-graduate studies for the participation in single-subjects or professional development courses is also recommended.
- Beyond the regular enrichment sessions noted above, music teachers need to be given greater support in implementing the broad curriculum already in place by accessing the resources available through external providers of quality programs, such as those currently offered by some of the major performing arts companies.
- There is an urgent need in some states for universities to offer off-campus or part time evening Diploma of Education and undergraduate music degree courses so that effective practising unqualified teachers can access courses without giving up their teaching positions.

5. Approaches that might elevate music among the curriculum choices of school systems

- Clarify and publicize the institutional advantages to schools of having an effective, exciting music program. This is well handled in the best-resourced private schools that offer both academic and music scholarships and put so much into their music programs.
- Confirm that a music education is an essential part of a rounded education and is the right of students in both state and independent schools.
- Note the evidence that effective music programs have had a very significant impact on attendance in high truancy schools.
- Note the evidence that effective music programs have had a strong positive impact on the academic performance and socialisation of disruptive students.
- Note the evidence from research projects such as *Champions of Change* that an extended involvement in school music instruction and performance can have a positive influence on non-music outcomes.

6. Specific issues around the effective inclusion of music in the school program

- Sufficient time in the time-table needs to be allocated to music instruction so that students can develop skills and knowledge necessary to proceed through the State's articulated curriculum frameworks. A token time-allocation gives students strong messages that the subject is not important. They behave accordingly.
- Schools need to recognise that for music classroom programs to be effective there needs to be flexibility in relation to class size and mix, time-tabling, and use of facilities. Whereas choirs and some ensembles can be taught in large groups, small groups are needed for such activities as creative music ensembles, keyboard laboratories, and instrumental instruction.
- The allocation of rooms set up with desks, and where the production of noise is problematic for adjoining classes, inhibits the effectiveness of music teaching
- It is recognised that in some instances the scheduling of large ensembles such as bands and choirs can cause difficulties. They may then be 'relegated' to meeting times outside of class hours. We say 'relegated' because such scheduling can be interpreted to indicate lack of seriousness or importance. This problem would be addressed if it were understood that the scheduling is intended to address a scheduling problem, that students receive full credit for participation and, most importantly, that teachers are paid as part of their regular salaries for all time spent in preparing for and conducting the programs.
- It should be noted that because students find participation so interesting and fulfilling, it is possible to run these classes outside class hours. In the context of the crowded curriculum, they offer a special positive opportunity for music. Applied to other subjects, the 'opportunity' may be seen as remedial or even punitive.
- Schools need to appreciate the difficulties for music teachers in developing an effective music program if they are employed part time. This especially applies to the large number of teachers working in isolation and in rural settings.
- Schools need to appreciate that the nature of the work of the music teachers frequently requires them to rehearse when curriculum and other policy meetings are taking place. This potentially

disadvantages the music program when resources are allocated and future planning is put in place.

- Given the totality of the arguments put in this submission, it is difficult to see how an adequate music education can be delivered in a context where music shares the time normally allocated to a single subject with four other arts subjects. It is not possible to achieve the expected benefits of a music education in these circumstances. As noted, an effective music education (especially for a performer because of the need for highly developed motor skills *inter alia*) must be sequential and extended. Every violinist in the symphony orchestra in your member of parliament's city almost certainly began instruction at around the age of five and practised daily for the next twenty years before gaining a position. We do not suggest that school music education should be founded on the premise that every student is headed to a career in a symphony orchestra. On the other hand, to achieve a level of competence as listener or player which gives personal satisfaction needs more than one year of exposure out of every five. Indeed, it needs continuing education throughout the school years, at least to say Year 9 when students are invited to begin to make preferences among subjects.

7. Cultural diversity in the community requires diversity of choice in music education, carrying forward the heritage and creating the future

- Music education needs to celebrate and reflect the diversity of the various heritages and musical preferences of its students and should allow the school choice in the selection of the genres such as classical, European, contemporary popular, jazz, indigenous and ethnic styles of music, to be studied in depth.
- Music is an important avenue for children to experience cultural diversity, and to value their own and each other's cultural traditions, including indigenous traditions. It needs to be presented as a living activity.
- Music is a doorway and insight to other cultures and can be incorporated into the teaching of other subjects such as cultural studies, geography, languages.
- Complementary to traditional approaches, creating the world of sound using students as composers performing on non-traditional instruments and non-traditional notation can engage interest and enhance creativity
- Desirable is a balance between having a program where music is re-created, thus bringing forward a 'classical' heritage, and a 'creative' program where students improvise and make their own music. There is a need to train teachers to guide students in both of these activities – and also in the use of music technology.

8. The need for school programs to interact with the community and recognise that school age children may also receive music education in the community

- Community organizations, professional performing arts companies or individuals may be able to offer specialist skills or experiences that cannot be made available at school.
- These can include performances in genres alive in the community, such as ethnic musics, and the different traditional teaching methods that are part and parcel of those practices
- Schools should collaborate with other music education providers such as the private studio teachers, pre-tertiary 'regional conservatoriums' or community music schools. They become a rich source which otherwise would not be available, particularly in country towns.
- Probably, most of the students presenting for acceptance at conservatoria have acquired their edge through private music instruction outside the school setting. The value of this instruction must be recognised although for school purposes, it must enhance but not supplant school music programs.
- A direct connection between school music activity and the 'real world' of music in the community, on the airwaves etc can bring a stronger sense of relevance and motivation to school music makers. Much school music is in genres not heard on commercial radio and presumably can seem to be music found only in schools. This may also account in part for the large number of students who cease playing music when they leave school.
- This direct connection can be achieved by bringing professional musicians into the school setting to perform and to teach, and by taking school performers into the community, including into settings where there will be contact with other music performers including professionals. Students might be encouraged to participate in community ensembles as well as school ensembles, especially as they move towards graduation, the latter so that they are better able to make a transition from school music making to community music making.

9. The importance of community support

- Decisions about the existence, status, and resourcing of school music programs are increasingly made locally. It is important to find ways to ensure that the arguments in favour of school music education are made to and register with parents, principals and other decision makers.
- The efforts of campaigns and resource providers such as *Music. Play for Life* should be supported by all levels of school music education.
- School music teachers need training in how to advocate their case, and in how to build support among parents, colleagues and principals.

In closing, we note the enormous interest of the music community in this review. The efforts of the review team, combined with the flood of informed information that we know is reaching you through public submissions, offers the wherewithal for a school music education policy proposal that can be a world leader. The Music Council wishes you every success in your work and with you, hopes that the government may be persuaded to take visionary and generous action.

Yours sincerely

Dr Richard Letts AM
Executive Director
for
Dr Sylvan Elhay, Chair
Dr Anne Lierse, Chair for the Submission
and Members of the Music Council of Australia