

Report by Nicole Alexander for VOSA

Victorian Music Workshop

Hosted by AMUSE

Melbourne High School

Saturday, April 21st.

To continue the work begun by the National Review of School Music Education (2005) and the National Music Workshop (2006)

From the Overview, pp 1.

The Victorian Workshop aims to come up with actionable responses to three of the important issues raised in the National Review:

- *Teacher education, training and teacher professional development*
- *Curriculum (policy and content focus)*
- *Curriculum (provision and implementation)*

Outline of day

Session 1 – Plenary

Ian Harvey, Australian Music Association (AMA)

Rod Kemp, Federal Senator

Richard Gill, OAM

Dr Neryl Jeanneret, Melbourne Uni

Mandy Stefanakis, Head of Music

Louise Downie, Principal

Session 2 - Discussion Groups

1. Elevate Status of Music – Ann Blore
2. Establish a National Model Music Curriculum – Mandy Stefanakis
3. Integrate the Music Curriculum (fitting it into the school day) – Loise Downie
4. Extend Teacher Training – Associate Professor Robin Stevens
5. Create a National Music Education Resource – Helen Champion
- 6.

Performances

Eltham East PS choir

Blackburn HS Concert Band

Session 3

Presentation by discussion groups

Summary of actions decided

Overall impressions

- The day was a positive and affirming event for music teachers
- There was a range of participants including teachers, industry, private companies and politicians
- Clear, common needs emerged from discussion
- There is general dissatisfaction with VELS framework
- Music to be separate subject/discipline
- There was some conflict evident between those who emphasised music literacy and those who emphasised creativity
- AMUSE running the day wonderfully and are to be commended for the organization, venue, catering and thanks.

Summary of Important Action Points Raised (drawn from my observations of the presentations)

WE need to

- **Recognize the huge role played by organizations such as Kodaly and Orff in supporting, networking and educating music teachers**
- **Un-integrate the arts and have a separate MUSIC in Vels**
- **Considerably increase the number of training hours (and skill requirements) for pre-service teachers, both specialists and generalists, VIT and University both need to be involved**
- **Create and share more resources**
- **Increase mentoring and use best practice examples to show what can be done**
- **Have a developmental, sequential music curriculum**

The day began with three excellent speakers who presented the issue of the “crisis” in music education from three angles. Ian Harvey, president of the Australian Music Association (AMA) an advocacy body for music education began. He outlined the progress thus far, beginning with the National review, the subsequent National workshop and now the formation of a working group in Victoria to make proposals to those who control the money.

Key points raised in Mr Harvey’s speech were:

- There were 6000 responses to the Review, compared to an average of 100-200 for similar reviews
- A working group has or will be formed following today’s workshop
- A national web portal will be created
- In May the Federal Government is beginning a \$350,000 program to improve the status of music in schools, there will be an event in September headed by Julie Bishop (Federal minister for Education)
- There is a push for a model national curriculum
- When Ms. Bishop first took office there was a delay in endorsing the report from the National Workshop but now this has happened things should move faster
- Key actions agreed by stakeholders will be taken to parliament.
- **Ian Harvey felt that we should engage the Victorian government within the current framework (ie. VELS) rather than attempt too big a change at this point**
- 87% of parents expect music to be taught
- **The relationship between literacy, numeracy and social skills and music should be highlighted to parents, principals, politicians in support of our cause.**
- **The goal of the day is for a policy framework and people to be involved in implementing this**
- We are attempting to change 30-40 years of neglect in the field of music education.

The second speaker, Senator Rob Kemp provided an extremely valuable insight on how best to approach the political system. His speech was notable for being free from a political agenda, perhaps as he explained because he is about to retire from politics. He addressed in an extremely practical way **the question of how to change things by engaging the political process.**

Key points raised by Senator Kemp were:

- The word “crisis” as originally proposed to him by Richard Gill was not included in the Report.
- The current system doesn’t reflect the wants of parents and teachers or the needs of students.
- The amalgamation of music into the Arts happened without public debate.
- The “crowded curriculum” is a myth – what is required is a will to provide music education
- We should be more ambitious, extend the policy framework as is being done with literacy and numeracy.
- Music teachers know what is necessary for a quality education – we should be confident in pushing our barrow.
- “Arts Literate” as a requirement with separate performing and visual arts
- Present minister with a yes/no checklist eg. Hours, teachers, subject, resources.
- We have a like minded audience that wants to see action
- Argue with vigour
- Create a Cheer squad comprising *politicians of both parties and journalists* - who are subscribed to our agenda and prepared to talk about it in the public sphere.
- **Three Key Recommendations**
 1. **Be Ambitious**
 2. **Be Practical – specify aims and money required**
 3. **Get up a cheer squad.**
- This is a time for significant change in the education beaureacracy.
- Quotes by Plato and Woodrow Wilson, example of Richard Gill
- Quality music education is every child’s right.

Following this speech was a performance by Eltham East Primary School Choir

The third speech in the first session was by Richard Gill, an internationally respected music educator, opera and music theatre conductor and a champion of music for everyone from five year

olds at his SSO concerts to adults in Operatunity. Richard's speech must be read in full as it had an eloquence and passion that cannot be expressed in dot points but I will try...

- Richard gave historical examples of music education, for example in 19th century London 93% of primary school children could sight sing accurately, at the turn of the century kindergarten teachers in NSW had to be able to sight-sing and play the piano
- **He emphasised the importance of good music teaching for all, expressing forcefully that today's curricula (with examples from NSW and Victoria) are lacking in rigour, with an nonsensical emphasis on 'how children feel' and expressing their opinions.**
- Qld was held up as an example, with Tasmania a second, while the NSW curriculum was lambasted as meaningless, weak and ineffectual as it offers no guide to developing children's aural perception.
- Richard gave examples of how this curriculum could be taught by generalist teachers in a way that didn't develop any music understandings.
- **Richard claimed and the audience applauded that the documents under public domain are selling out music as a stand alone subject.**
- **He outlined his ideals for music education, music is worth teaching because it is essentially good, sound before symbol, depth of repertoire, improvisation and creation of musical works, valued and substantial repertoire, sequential learning, vocally based.**
- Music can co-exist with the arts without co-habiting the domain.
- Entertainment and education are becoming confused.
- We shouldn't teach music only because it is music that the children like
- **We teach music so children can think about the way music works and use these principles to create their own music. The Process is 1. analysis 2. thinking 3. creation**
- NOT important how you feel, rather how you think, how a child thinks about a piece of music.
- We must guide children to enter the complex world of sound (then symbols) on a road which leads to composition
- Not challenging children is insulting to them
- **Commercial music not inherently bad but may be transient, expedient, lacks depth and complexity.**
- Current education policy has nothing to do with children or teachers, needs to be broader and deeper.

Following morning tea there was a panel session with three speakers, again an interesting cross-section of interests was represented. The first was Dr. Neryl Jeanneret, a lecturer in music education at Melbourne Uni speaking on the action point of teacher education, training and teacher professional learning.

Her speech looked at both immediate and long term goals, highlighted from the inside the dramatically insufficient hours of music classes (12 at Melbourne University) within the four year Bachelor of Education Degree.

Key points were:

- Aim for music specialists in all schools in the long run but what are some practical short term solutions? Visiting teachers, consultants
- Generalist teachers lack confidence, music of the 12 hours is spent building this
- Subjects such as maths are given more emphasis because teachers must report on it.
- Pre-service teachers usually begin from a Grade 12 level in Maths and English but this is NOT the case in the arts
- Semesterization of music in tertiary and secondary institutions causes problems.
- Ongoing support is needed for beginning teachers for them to teach music successfully
- Accountability – portfolios and reporting
- State authorities hold power for pre-service hours, document mentions “the arts” once in 20 pages
- The government has produced documents outlining music curricula but doesn't currently provide the support to allow teachers to teach it
- Let's call for a real commitment to supporting the documents they design!
- Music consultant – 1 for NSW
- NSW there is a resource distributed for free to all state schools

The second speaker on the panel was Mandy Stefanakis, a music teacher and curriculum consultant who outlined a possible national model curriculum. It would be good to obtain a copy of this speech.

- It should begin with a Rationale statement, describing music in the arts and what is unique about music
- Music provided connection, identity, wholistic wellbeing, physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development.
- It is abstract and communicative
- Goals of the curriculum – to achieve in the following processes, Composing, listening, interpreting, listening and responding, performing.
- These would be divided into sub-processes, plotted level by level according to a developmental timetable
- Descriptors would then be written for each sub-process at each level
- Assessment and reporting on SKILLS and Knowledge could use these descriptors
- Knowledge is divided into acquired – eg. Keeping the beat (easily marked on a checklist or rubric) and Applied or creative knowledge in which difference in outcomes (eg. A composition) is desirable.
- We should be assessing difference in creative work
- Descriptors could link to hot links with lesson plans
- Policy statement should ensure that curriculum could be delivered
- Begin with curriculum, then work out teachers, resources, money
- Take into consideration sound stress on music teachers
- Music teaching that is wholistic, student centered and realizes the uniqueness of music, that it is the most complete area of learning
- We must mandate in order to have a sequential and developmental music program
- Sequential Prep to 10 after that choices
- Using music literacy and singing
- Recognize contribution to student wellbeing – music makes children happy

The third speaker was Louise Downie, a principal from a small school who spoke about the challenges of teaching music without a specialist. She drew on the example of her own training which had equipped her to teach music and play the recorder in contrast with current graduates who do not have these skills or confidence to teach music.

There followed Discussion Groups and Presentation of suggestions, summarised above.