

Friday, June 3, 2011

Ms Susan Halliday
Chair
Victorian Institute of Teaching
PO Box 531
Collins Street West
Victoria 8007

Dear Ms Halliday,

Instrumental Music Teachers (IMTs)

As the peak body for classroom and instrumental music teachers throughout Victoria we have been working to support teachers, Directors of Music and Principals with changes to the VIT guidelines introduced in 2011.

We understand that the VIT has been receiving many calls and emails from Principals trying to clarify the position of instrumental music teachers in their schools. This is proving to be a very worrying time for the hundreds of instrumental music teachers whose employment has or will soon be directly affected by these changes.

We would like to meet with you to discuss the range of concerns being raised in relation to the employment of instrumental music teachers, as we feel that their role in the professional may have been overlooked during the drafting of the new guidelines.

We support the VIT's statement, *"Like other professions occupying positions of trust and responsibility, teachers are required to be registered in order to practise their profession. All practising Victorian school teachers must be registered by the Institute"* and would like to work with you to ensure all instrumental music teachers working in Victorian government, Catholic and independent schools are registered in order to continue to develop the highest possible professional standards across our discipline.

The main concerns include:

1. Whether or not instrumental music teachers without a formal teaching qualification – of which there are over 1000 across the state – are required to hold VIT registration
2. Why this would be in question when they are considered part of the teaching profession, and deliver part of the authorized curriculum within schools
3. The fact that the IMTs seem to fall into an unusual category and it appears that they do not fit comfortably within the current VIT categories
4. How currently unqualified instrumental music teachers can undertake a suitable teacher training course when there are no specific instrumental music teaching courses in Victoria
5. How we can ensure IMTs meet with the current expectations for professional development, mandatory reporting and other teaching standards

In response to the new VIT guidelines:

1. Many Principals of state government schools are advising their IMTs that their positions will be advertised at the end of this year and that they will not be re-employed

2. Many independent school Directors of Music and Principals are recommending that their IMTs opt out of VIT registration
3. Many IMTs in both sectors are opting for no VIT membership

Anxiety exists because:

1. There is currently no teacher training course offering IMT training, so even those who are keen to enrol in a teacher training course are unable to do so
2. Many unqualified IMTs (particularly older teachers or those who have been in the system for many years) do not see the need to enrol in teacher training course
3. State schools are to employ qualified IMTs over unqualified IMTs which is squeezing out unqualified but very experienced teachers
4. Under the new guidelines, IMTs without VIT registration are not considered to be 'teachers', thus undermining the profession
5. IMTs without VIT registration and not considered 'teachers' are unsure about how their employment conditions will be affected, eg pay/increments/leave entitlements/hours of duty
6. The terms 'authorized curriculum' and 'required curriculum' are being interpreted in many different ways

We would like to meet with you to discuss some strategies to help alleviate the confusion and anxiety in our profession by:

1. Clarifying the concerns raised
2. Considering the development of a separate category for Instrumental Music Teachers
3. Establishing professional standards/code of conduct for IMTs in Victoria
4. Exploring the possibility of support for IMT teacher training course/s in Victoria

I thank you, in anticipation of a prompt reply, on behalf of:

Sue Arney	<i>Association of Music Educators</i>
Anne Lierse	<i>Victorian Music Teachers' Association</i>
Yolande Van Oosten	<i>Eastern Metropolitan Region Instrumental Music Co-ordinator</i>
Lesley Qualtrough	<i>Australian Strings Association</i>
Joanne Heaton	<i>Australian Band and Orchestra Directors' Association</i>

Yours faithfully

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cc : The Hon. Martin Dixon MP
Minister for Education