

Submission regarding the registration requirements of *specialist instrumental music teaching*.

I am concerned about the current move toward requiring instrumental music teachers in schools to obtain VIT qualifications. The two main points I wish to make are:

- 1. This is leading to a significant lowering of the standards of instrumental teaching in schools as teachers with teaching degrees are being employed over teachers with instrumental skill and experience.**
- 2. There is currently no degree available in instrumental teaching, meaning that instrumental teachers who would like to obtain VIT qualification need to study *classroom teaching* – an entirely different practise.**

I am a violin teacher with 15 years' experience teaching in schools, and more than 20 years teaching in private studios. I am also a freelance violinist with a BMus and MMus in performance. I have 20 years' experience playing professionally in orchestras, quartets and ensembles. Recently, I became aware that schools are starting to require a VIT qualification from their instrumental teachers. I have been told by the Association of Music Education (aMuse) that this is going to become increasingly the case in public and private schools, with an expectation that the government will make it mandatory for all instrumental music teachers to have VIT registration in the future. I know of colleagues who have been told they can no longer teach at their school (where in some cases they have been teaching for 10 years or more) unless they obtain a teaching degree.

Last year I started to look into obtaining this qualification, so I could feel secure in my position in the school where I teach and also increase my employability options in the future. I was dismayed to find that I now need to study a 2-year Master of Teaching (no longer a one-year dip-ed) at a cost of \$50,000 dollars.

I can only surmise that the reason for this is that schools, and the government, are wanting teachers to be more highly qualified and so increase the standard of education in Australia. This is a wonderful idea, but unfortunately, as I stated above, **in the case of instrumental music the move towards requiring VIT registration is leading to *less* qualified teachers, and a *lowering* of standards.**

The primary reason for this is that many professional musicians do not want to put their performing work on hold to undergo the study required to gain VIT qualification, to do so could have a considerable negative impact on their career. Many instrumental teachers pursue joint careers, and this is *good* for their students. So where professional musicians are not considered employable in schools because they do not have VIT qualification, the people who are being employed to teach

instruments very often do not have the experience and skill that is required to deliver lessons of a reasonable standard.

For the musicians who *are* interested in gaining the qualification, their only option is to study classroom music teaching. **There is currently no degree available for instrumental music teaching.**

There is an enormous difference between what a classroom music teacher does and what an instrumental music teacher does. What we do as instrumental teachers is to hand down our skills and craft which have been developed and honed through years of practise and mentorship from often highly accomplished soloists and performers. We are passionate about our instrument, not classroom music. Classroom music is about the theory of music, history, using software, and teaching basic general music skills. It is an important subject and one that warrants an enthusiastic and skilled teacher, but why train an instrumental teacher for something they have no intention of doing?

A good instrumental teacher will have reached a level where they can play professionally and have experience in the field. For many of these musicians the prospect of embarking on 2 years of full time study (or 4 years part time) is simply out of the question. As a consequence, the pool of properly skilled musicians who are or intend to be VIT qualified is becoming much smaller, meaning that schools are having to employ people with sub-standard skills and knowledge.

I am passionate about teaching as well as playing my violin, and I know that just because a person can play an instrument well does not necessarily mean they can teach well – especially to children. I can see that there would be a benefit to musicians having some training before undertaking school teaching positions, but this needs to be training **relevant to their work**, and of a **reasonable duration and cost**, taking into account the fact that anyone who has attained a Bachelor of Music in instrumental performance is highly skilled in their field, often already working as a professional musician. It is unreasonable and unrealistic to make them undergo such lengthy, expensive training. Ultimately, it is school students who are suffering the negative impacts from the lack of quality music teaching in schools.

I very much hope this can be reviewed and amended.

Although my letter is about instrumental music I believe there is a need to re-consider the recent changes of requiring a Master's degree of 2 years of study for *all* areas of specialist teaching.