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October 7, 2020

The Hon. James Merlino  
Minister for Education  
Level 3, 1 Treasury Place  
East Melbourne Vic 3002  
[james.merlino@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:james.merlino@parliament.vic.gov.au)

**RE: School Operations Guide (4 October 2020)**

Dear Minister Merlino

We write to you today on behalf of our members and the broader music education community to express our deep concern regarding the sudden and blanket prohibition of brass and woodwind instruments and singing in schools as outlined in the Schools Operation Guide communicated on 4 October 2020. We seek the opportunity to work with Health and Education Officials to implement COVID safe practices which protect our community in a return to holistic music making in our schools.

The Australian Music Association is the voice of the musical instrument wholesale and retail community and is a strong advocate for Music Education. This blanket ban not only cripples our members in the short term but also jeopardises this part of our industry in the long-term. With recruitment and retention activities scheduled to happen within schools in term 4, this blanket ban jeopardises students' availability of meaningful and sequential music education within 2021.

Sequential and meaningful music education is not just a 'nice to have' within a school community. For the teachers and students directly involved, this is a fundamental part of a holistic education. The research is in Minister, meaningful and sequential music programs give our students a more enriched education for not only today but develops a love and skill for lifelong learning. I have attached a recent study into the benefits of Music Education to this letter outlining why music education is no longer a 'nice to have' but a critical part of a child's education.

We understand this policy has been put in place to protect people. We think there could be a better balance struck to ensure a safe learning environment for these students. I have also enclosed the Department of Education QLD's COVID safe practices in Music Education. These guidelines we feel have the best interest of the student in mind (a balance of COVID safe processes with access to

quality education). All other states including NSW, who recently spent significant time looking into this, have been able to find this balance. We believe Victoria should be able to.

The Australian Music Association, on behalf of our members and the broader community, urgently requests the opportunity to discuss our concerns and most importantly be collaborative on a plan for a safe return to music making for all students in our schools. We believe music education and music making will be an integral part of bringing our communities back together post COVID. We should be doing everything we can to ensure all stakeholders in music education are given the opportunity to flourish and are no longer treated as a nice to have within society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Walker', written in a cursive style.

Rob Walker  
Executive Officer