

**“JUST SITTING THERE LEARNING”:  
CASE STUDIES IN NSW SECONDARY SCHOOL  
MUSIC AND MUSICAL PARTICIPATION**

**Madeleine Bell**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the relationships between school musical culture, adolescent musical preference and music teaching strategies in secondary school, in order to determine the extent to which these are factors influencing students' decisions to continue their musical participation, both in and outside of school. Case studies of two New South Wales high schools were conducted. Participants were junior secondary music students and their teachers from each of the selected schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, and observations of music lessons and activities. The study explored the perspectives, opinions and attitudes of participants in the chosen research settings. Data were analysed through open and axial coding. It was established that the factors that provided the focus of this research project – school musical culture, musical preferences and music teaching strategies – have a significant impact on the ways in which students perceive music both in and outside of school. These perceptions then influence their decisions to continue musical participation. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research and literature in this field and generate a number of avenues for future research.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this time of accelerated social and cultural change the needs, desires and aspirations of young people are constantly changing and evolving. “The ambition of widening (music) participation requires constant re-evaluation, since the societal and technological influences affecting young people’s lives now move at unprecedented speeds” (Price, 2005, p. 6). It is essential for teachers to keep in touch with these needs in order to provide meaningful educational experiences relevant to the lives of young people today. Adolescents are often particularly affected by the developments in society and the early years of high school represent a significant stage in their lives.

This study seeks to explore certain factors influencing adolescent opinions and decisions regarding their continued musical participation and involvement both in and out of school. This research does not aim to determine any ultimate conclusions concerning these decisions but instead aims to explore the perspectives, opinions and attitudes of both music teachers and students in the chosen research settings. The results and information from this study generate possibilities for further research to assist music teachers in catering for the needs of secondary school music students in NSW and also to contribute to the expansion of theories of innovation to enhance music education.

## **Significance of the study**

Research indicates that there is a significant decrease in music participation and education during the transition from primary to high school and also during the early years of high school. It is apparent that there is an “unsuccessful start” to secondary music education (Mills, 1996) with young adolescents dropping out at a disturbing rate. The question as to why this is the case has been the focus of substantial research in the United Kingdom and to some extent in various other countries and settings, but minimal research has been presented in Australia. The Australian culture, environment and education system are unique in many ways, therefore it is important to explore issues relating to music education, specifically in an Australian context.

Through close examination of relevant literature it is evident that there are certain factors that continually recur when considering and discussing the music education, ongoing involvement and participation, and interests of adolescents. The most prominent of these recurring factors are: adolescent musical preference, school musical culture and teaching methods. This study examines each of these factors in detail, in order to explore, investigate and outline the relationships between them. The question of the ways, impact, and extent to which these key areas and their relationships influence students' decisions to continue musical participation is then addressed.

Music can be considered, at least in Western society, "the primary leisure activity of adolescents" (Zillmann & Gan, 1997, p.162). A British study by North, Hargreaves and O'Neill (2000) investigating the importance of music in the lives of young adults, found that the average adolescent listens to music for approximately 2.5 hours each day, and that their most preferred musical genres were dance, pop and soul. This creates an important issue addressed in the current study; that of why adolescents, who value music so highly in their lives, experience a significant decline in musical participation during high school. The effectiveness, relevance and success of music education in secondary school should therefore be considered.

Music teachers are generally trained within the Western classical tradition (Green, 2002). This background greatly influences teaching methods and styles. Perhaps teacher musical preference and background make flexibility to cater for student musical preference a difficulty for some teachers. The specific influences of teacher musical preference in the classroom have received little mention in existing literature and research.

Through a close examination of relationships between school musical culture, adolescent musical preference and music teaching strategies in secondary school, this study builds on knowledge gained from existing research, outlined in greater detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Results and findings from the current study are discussed, compared and evaluated in relation to findings from previous studies of particular relevance, in order to supplement the wider body of research.

## **Research questions**

The research questions for this study are:

- 1) How, and to what extent, is school musical culture influential in shaping students' attitudes towards music?
- 2) What are the relationships between student musical preferences and junior secondary music education programs?
- 3) In what ways do the methods and musical preferences of educators influence student engagement in the classroom?
- 4) How, and to what extent, do all of these relationships and influences contribute to students' continued musical participation?

Each of the research questions aims to explore a specific aspect or relationship regarding students' musical participation and is considered in reference to the two case studies involved in this project.

The first research question focuses on the school to provide a context in which to place the participants and investigates aspects such as the available music activities, the support and value given to music by the school, the encouragement students receive to explore their own musical interests and whether or not there is support for a variety of forms of musical expression. The students' perspectives are explored in the second question - the importance and meaning of music to students, both in their personal lives and as a school subject, as well as the role of peers in relation to musical preference. The third question explores the perspectives of teachers, looking at teaching strategies, the styles that are emphasised in the classroom, and the impact of teacher background and musical preference. The fourth, and final, question draws the three previous questions together in order to relate the findings and formulate conclusions to the research.

### **Definition of terms**

In order to prevent ambiguity, for the purpose of this study, explanations and definitions of the terms used in the research questions and throughout this thesis, are provided below.

***School musical culture:*** The musical activities promoted and permitted by the school (curricular and extracurricular) and the values associated with these activities

***Musical preference:*** An individual's preferred music genre(s) and style(s), music they would be happy to play or listen to for extended periods of time. Such preferences contribute significantly to definitions of adolescent self-awareness and identity.

“One's musical preferences can define which social groups one does and does not belong to, and this is particularly clear in the case of teenage music preferences” (Hargreaves, D. J. Miell, D. & MacDonald, R. 2002, p. 5).

***Musical participation:*** The extent of active involvement and engagement with music in both formal and informal settings

### **Organisation of thesis**

This thesis contains five chapters. Chapter 2 is a literature review discussing the findings of existing research relevant to the topic explored in this study. The review is divided into main topic areas, including adolescent musical preference, music teaching strategies, students' attitudes towards music both in and out of school, and related research conducted in Australia. Chapter 3 contains detailed information regarding the research methodology employed in this study. The research findings are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. The final chapter contains the researcher's conclusions, an outline of the educational implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Attitudes toward music in school**

The shift from primary to secondary school has been recognised as a significant stage in relation to decisions concerning continuation of musical participation and involvement (Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall & Tarrant, 2003; Marshall & Hargreaves, 2008; OFSTED, 1998; O'Neill, Sloboda, Boulton, Ryan, 2002; Price, 2005; Sloboda, 2001). This period has been referred to as “the humpback bridge” in regard to music education (Marshall & Hargreaves, 2007) and is often associated with a decline in musical participation.

There are numerous reasons why this could be the case. The effects of change in classroom environment can cause a decline in students' level of perceived competence (Wigfield, Eccles, MacIver, Reuman & Midgely, 1991). During adolescence individuals often become more concerned with their abilities in relation to others, rather than focusing on their own personal development (Asmus, 1986). Secondary schools often have environments which can emphasise this competition amongst students, causing adverse effects in student motivation, particularly in students with a low perception of their own abilities (Austin & Vispoel, 1998). The changes in school culture, particularly in relation to music, that students experience during this transition, might result in a decline in musical involvement (Stewart, 1991). It has also been proposed that schools may not supply the necessary educational and social environments for young adolescents to meet their psychological needs, thus affecting their motivation and enthusiasm (O'Neill, et al., 2002).

Durrant (2001) raises the fundamental question as to whether the decline in musical participation is a result of ineffective teaching strategies, a reflection of the status of music in schools, or merely the nature of adolescence in relation to musical behaviour. He also considers the argument of whether or not it is the music teacher's role to enter the musical world of the adolescent within the school context. In contrast, research by Hayes (1996) and Walker & Hamann (1995) has found that both curricular and co-curricular secondary school musical experiences have a

substantial impact (both positive and negative) on continued musical involvement of students during schooling, and in the years after leaving school.

While it should be recognised that there are several instances of music teaching providing adolescents with inspiration and encouragement, there are also numerous criticisms of school music supported by a body of research. A large scale project report (Harland, Kinder, Lord, Stott, Schagen & Haynes, 2000) investigating art, drama and music in secondary schools in England, concluded that Music is “the most problematic and vulnerable art form” (p. 4) at GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) level. The study found that the majority of students displayed an absence of “enjoyment, relevance, skill development, creativity and expressive dimensions in music” (Harland et al., 2000, p. 4).

Music, particularly at junior secondary level, has also been described as a “failing arts subject” (Ross, 1998). An Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED, 1998) report of 1997/8 revealed that, of the 3000 students participating in instrumental music in South England, over fifty percent withdrew from this musical involvement during the transition from primary to secondary school. Various authors have identified possible reasons for these poor attitudes toward music in the UK. Swanwick (1996), Rainbow (1990) and Hargreaves (1986) suggest that, teaching strategies often do not sufficiently promote continuity because the curriculum places too much emphasis on Western art music. Also, educators do not have a detailed understanding of the creative procedures involved in music. It has also been proposed that secondary teachers commonly do not present adequate educational challenges for their students (Mills, 1996). Furthermore, Mills claims that the decline in quality of secondary music teaching practices is more substantial than for any other subject.

### **Adolescent musical preference**

In relation to adolescent musical preference an important aspect to consider is the concept of musical identities, and how young adults use music to portray a self-image

...music can be used increasingly as a means by which we formulate and express our individual identities. We use it not only to regulate our own everyday moods and behaviours, but also to present ourselves to others in the way we prefer. Our musical tastes and preferences can form an important statement of our values and attitudes, and composers and performers use their music to express their own distinctive views of the world (Hargreaves, Miell & Macdonald, 2002, p. 1).

It has also been said that the type of music to which a person listens is an essential aspect of announcing to surrounding people not only “who you want to be ...but who you *are*” (Cook, 1998, p.5). This emphasises the significance of the development of musical identity during as having an impact on adolescents’ musical opinions and preferences.

Research supports the evidence of the importance of music in the formation of personal and social identity, development of relationships and friendships and the regulation of emotion and mood (Crozier, 1997; Larson, 1995; Hargreaves & North, 1999; Zillman & Gan, 1997). There is also evidence to suggest that the ability to appreciate a broad range of musical styles differs between age groups. It has been shown that most individuals have acceptance or tolerance for a range of different musical genres during childhood and late adolescence, but that this broadmindedness declines significantly during early adolescence (Hargreaves, 1982; LeBlanc, Sims, Siivola, & Obert, 1996).

A study investigating music and adolescents found that teens often listen to and play popular music rather than classical music. The reasons for this include “to enjoy the music; to be creative/use their imagination; to relieve boredom; to help get through difficult times; to be trendy/cool; to relieve tension/stress; to create an image for him/herself; to please friends; and to reduce loneliness” (North, Hargreaves, O’Neill, 2000, p. 263). In contrast, the results of this study indicated that adolescents generally listen to or play classical music in order to please parents and teachers.

## **Music outside of school**

“The authenticity of secondary school musical experience, and its relation to music outside school, is an important issue for teachers as well as pupils” (Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall & Tarrant, 2003, p.230). When addressing the efficiency and success of music education in secondary school, the significance and function of music in the lives of adolescents outside of school must be considered. “The distinction between ‘music at school’ and ‘music at home’ is particularly marked for pupils, especially in the secondary school” (Lamont, et. al, 2003, p.231). A study by North, Hargreaves and O’Neill (2000) surveyed 2465 thirteen and fourteen year-olds in the North Staffordshire region of England to examine how much time was spent listening to music at home, thus reflecting its importance in their lives. The results showed that the average adolescent listens to music for approximately 2.5 hours each day, and their most preferred musical genres were dance, pop and soul.

A study by Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001) draws attention to the significance of the contexts of music making, particularly for secondary school students. This study found that students preferred listening to music at home, associating this with enjoyment, emotional mood and social relationships. In contrast to this, school listening was linked with learning and information.

In today’s culture, technology is rapidly expanding and changing, meaning music listening and involvement is becoming increasingly multifarious. As our society becomes more networked, digitalised and globalised, musical involvement and experience, both in and out of school, will become progressively more diverse. In this rapidly changing society many schools are struggling to maintain the needs of students. In his article, ‘Reconnecting Music Education with Society’ Regelski writes:

schools are increasingly in direct competition with the media and information technologies, particularly with television, film, and the Internet... students are often learning more and more of relevance and interest to them, formally or informally, from these sources than they are from school. For students, it is difficult not to assume that school is less and less relevant to what they think they want or need to know (2006, p.3).

Regelski also states that, although many primary aged students enjoy the kinds of activities generally carried out in the music classroom, these activities are often unrelated to the musical lives of adolescents; "...as students approach adolescence, such activities, done for their own sake, with no connection to their musical lives outside of school, often seem increasingly childish and irrelevant to them" (2006, p.5). Perhaps further incorporation of adolescent musical preferences in the classroom would aid in lessening this division between school music and music outside of school. Thus, students will become more motivated and involved, resulting in a greater percentage of students continuing their musical involvement throughout secondary school and possibly beyond.

### **Music teaching strategies**

Students' lack of enthusiasm for learning music in secondary school may be the result of poor or inappropriate teaching strategies. Music at secondary level, at least in Britain, has been rated as one of the least well taught subjects (Welch, 2001).

Although teachers have recently shown more positive attitudes towards incorporating a wider variety of musical styles in the classroom, teaching methods often remain traditional. In her article concerning the attitudes of secondary music teachers, Green (2002) discusses the fact that the majority of music educators are trained within the Western classical tradition and how this training affects teaching strategies. Green believes that teachers from a classical background may feel inexperienced in relation to the teaching of other styles of music. This view is shared by Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall and Tarrant (2003) who state that this model of teaching may be unsuitable for the needs of secondary school students.

Green's book *How Popular Musicians Learn* (2001) highlights how many musicians in Britain have either neutral or negative views of the relevance of their school music education to their later musical pursuits. The book examines the nature of learning practices among popular musicians and discusses the potential positive outcomes which informal popular music learning practices may contribute to formal education.

It has been suggested that it is not only teaching strategies that remain relatively unchanging, but schools themselves, "...schools remain frozen in certain basic

instructional and curricular paradigms established long ago” (Regelski, 2006, p. 2). Schools are often struggling to keep up with changing technologies and educational philosophies. A recent article discussing visual arts education argues for the timeliness of a “reconceived paradigm for understanding and advocating the relevancy of arts practices in the wake of the Information Age” (Rolling, 2008, p.15). The article reconsiders the notions identifying art in a time of “shifting paradigms” and questions the relevance of arts in education. Similarly, perhaps it is necessary to consider the impact of the “Information Age” directly in regard to music and education practices.

In 2004, a four year action research project entitled Musical Futures began in the UK. The project’s main aims were to implement innovative approaches to music education adopting informal learning practices, and to promote student engagement and enthusiasm through the amalgamation of students’ musical interests and involvement outside of school with what is being taught in the school music classroom (Green, 2008). The Musical Futures approaches and curriculum place an emphasis on performance-based work and were developed in consideration of student specifications of what makes music learning enjoyable and productive (Price, 2006). The curriculum incorporates informal learning strategies and was administered by a number of “music leaders”. These leaders, who assisted in mentoring students, were not only school music teachers but also others with various musical backgrounds or training.

Price (2006) reports on a study, as part of the Musical Futures project, asking young people aged 11-19 to identify the elements that are important in successful music learning. Their responses included: “positive music leaders; opportunities; encouragement; access to resources; positive guidance; freedom to experiment; inclusivity (everyone is involved)” ( p.3). Price emphasises the correlation between these elements and the qualities presented by music teachers or ‘music leaders’. Price also states that when pedagogy or facilitation discount the emerging voice of students, particularly between the ages of 11-14, this results in young people losing interest and disengaging with school music.

Although the action research phase of Musical Futures is now complete, the initiatives and suggestions proposed by this project continue to influence music teaching in the United Kingdom. Teachers and practitioners in England outside the pilot project are now beginning to adopt and adapt the Musical Futures teaching strategies. This project has challenged many assumptions in relation to music education, proposing that teaching methods are in need of adjustment in order to secure a worthwhile future for our education system. The project has put forward and established alternative strategies and approaches towards teaching and learning. The results of the project suggest that these approaches have led to increased student motivation, with pupils responding positively (Green, 2008). Also, the emphasis on personalised learning has encouraged the development of more positive relationships between students and teachers and also between students and their peers. Results from the Musical Futures project suggest that there are benefits which can be gained from incorporating different teaching strategies and student musical preferences and interests in the classroom.

### **Related research in Australia**

There is not a great body of research investigating factors relating to young people's continuation of music participation in Australia. However, some concern with the quality and provision of music education is apparent in the commissioning of research studies such as the *National Review of School Music Education* (Pascoe, Leong, MacCallum, Mackinlay, Marsh, Smith, et al., 2005) conducted over 2004-2005, and the study of trends and provisions in school music education by the Music Council of Australia (Stevens, 2003). These studies set out to research current practices in school settings in order to propose suggestions for enhancing and improving the quality of the music education system in Australia.

While this National Review recognised numerous successful factors of school music in Australia, it also identified the significant drop-out rate from music that occurs in secondary schools. The Review discusses the fact that, while many young adolescents have a genuine interest in music, they clearly do not follow this interest through school music. In this way secondary school music education can be seen as a "missed opportunity" (Pascoe et al., 2005, p.115). The Review also outlined

implications for secondary pre-service teacher education programmes, including the need for increased focus on broader repertoire and different kinds of learning.

The recommendations of the National Review were discussed in 2006 at a Music Workshop in which a plan for action was developed. This plan discussed the benefits of taking particular actions to improve the value, status and quality of school music. Among a number of actions, the plan proposed that establishing a national model music curriculum would enhance the provision and quality of music and increase access to resources. Extending teacher training in areas of practical music skills and music pedagogy skills was seen to enhance school music education. Also, making music programs more accountable in terms of reporting and measurement was discussed as a necessary action (Australian Music Association, 2006). Although this Review and plan indicate an overall national concern for the quality of music education, few Australian studies have investigated young people's personal perspectives and opinions of music participation both in and out of school.

One case study by Barrett & Smigiel (2007) investigated the significance and appreciation of the arts in the lives of Australian children. The researchers found five central themes regarding young people's perceptions of participation in music youth arts settings. The study showed that children credit participation in these settings to: "a love of performance; a shared unity of purpose; a desire for challenge; the quality of relationships developed and sustained in these settings; and, the opportunities for individual growth and well-being" (Barrett & Smigiel, 2007, p. 39). The authors relate these five factors to education, raising questions as to whether our music education system caters for these needs. The article concludes that "challenge" is a crucial component to children's educational experience, a finding that coincides with the responses given by students in the Musical Futures research, previously mentioned in this review. Barrett and Smigiel also state that the children "exhibit a desire to integrate music experience into their lives, their relationships and their sense of purpose" (Barrett & Smigiel, 2007, p. 47).

An article by Temmerman (2005) discusses the cultural contexts of school, home and the community in relation to children's music education and participation in Australia. The author states that these three contexts all play an important role in

children's music education but that presently in Australia they are insufficiently connected. The paper proposes suggestions for action to help build these linkages, and ensure young people's ongoing engagement with music. These suggestions are to change Australian educational policy to include a statement similar to the National Curriculum of England to promote links between the home, school and wider world and to include practical and useful examples of how to establish meaningful connections between in- and out-of school music activities. Although these actions would be likely to have a positive impact on the quality of Australia's music education system, they would be difficult to implement in the short term and would be unrealistic in certain situations.

A study by Oyston (2004) investigated students' motivations to take school music as an elective in Year 8 and Year 11. The study found that while there are numerous factors which potentially influence students' decisions to take elective music, it was evident that generally those choosing to continue valued music as a significant feature of their lives. These students generally had strong musical backgrounds with a variety of previous musical experiences and considered themselves to be musically competent.

A survey by the Australian Music Association investigating Australian's attitudes to music, (2001), states that, early adolescence is "the most vulnerable time" in relation to withdrawing from musical instrument tuition. The study found that thirty percent of "lapsed players" gave up their tuition by the age of twelve years; and, in addition to this, a further thirty percent discontinued by the age of fifteen. The results of this report showed that the mean age for "lapsed players" was seventeen years, but that the most common age for discontinuing was in fact twelve years. This supports the suggestion of the transition from primary to secondary school as being a crucial period concerning the continuation of musical participation.

As discussed in this review, the existing literature and research suggests that the early years of secondary school are a significant stage concerning decisions of adolescent musical involvement, often resulting in a decline in music participation. The literature also supports the current notion of music in school and music outside

of school as being substantially unrelated to each other. Projects such as the Musical Futures program indicate the benefits that can be gained from adjusting teaching strategies and incorporating student musical preferences and interests in the classroom. With more specific findings across a wider range of areas, further and more definite conclusions can be drawn regarding the impact of these factors on student motivation and enthusiasm to study music and participate in music-making.

This study seeks to build on the body of research and literature on this topic and add to perspectives on Australian contexts in this field. This qualitative study will provide a detailed insight into the opinions and perceptions of music students and teachers in the selected secondary schools. The methodology used in this research project is outlined in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Qualitative methodology**

In order to investigate factors influencing adolescent musical participation, a qualitative research method was employed: that is, the detailed examination of a small number of cases and contexts to present authentic interpretations of data (Neuman, 2006). Qualitative research promotes the exploration of “a wide array of dimensions of the social world” (Mason, 2002, p.1). The qualitative researcher aims to “make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). In this study a mixture of music students from two selected schools were focused upon, as well as their teachers, to obtain opinions, personal experiences, introspections, observations and insights relating to decisions adolescents make regarding musical participation.

### **Research design**

The chosen methodological research design involved case studies of two different high schools from a coastal region outside the Sydney Metropolitan area. A case study is “an in-depth study of a single unit... The goal is to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the entity. In addition, a case study can result in data from which generalizations to theory are possible” (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen, 2006, p.32). The data collected are generally quite detailed, varied and extensive. Case studies entail research on a micro level to help understand issues on a macro scale (Neuman, 2006). Stake (2000) calls a case study that facilitates the understanding of another issue and offers insights and generalisations an “instrumental case study.” Further, he calls multiple instrumental case studies a “collective case study.” That is, the chosen case studies will “lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases” (Stake, 2000, p.437). The present study is a collective case study, comprising two instrumental case studies.

### *Sampling procedures*

The two case studies in this research project were chosen using purposive sampling, which involves selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind (Neuman, 2006). The researcher selected specific contexts and participants relating to the research. These were compulsory and elective music classes in secondary schools, and participants were students and teachers involved in the selected contexts. One school was selected to represent the independent education system and the other school was chosen as a representation of the public system.

Convenience sampling was also used in the selection of cases. Through convenience sampling, participants are generally selected in relation to “proximity, ease-of-access and willingness to participate” (Urda, 2005, p.3). However, the researcher was conscientious in that cases were not chosen to influence the outcome of the study but were selected specifically to represent a middle income socioeconomic demographic. Nevertheless it is noted that, owing to the limited scope of the study, research findings cannot be generalised to the wider population.

### *Triangulation*

The research strategy was designed to provide both ‘within methods’ and ‘between methods’ triangulation, thus improving the reliability and validity of data. ‘Within methods’ triangulation replicates a study to confirm a theory’s reliability.

Triangulation ‘between methods’ employs more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective, aiming for a convergence between independent measures of the same objective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In this study, ‘within methods’ triangulation was achieved through using the same system of data collection with several groups of students in varying years in two different school contexts. ‘Between methods’ triangulation was attained by using both interviews and observation to collect data in each case study.

## **Participants<sup>1</sup>**

Both schools selected for this study are from a coastal region outside the Sydney metropolitan area and are located a small distance apart. The first school selected represented the independent education system while the second school was a representation of the public system. As the schools are close in distance, a large percentage of students reside in similar geographic locations. Although socioeconomic background may have varied slightly among participants, particularly between those involved in the independent system and those attending the public school, in general participants were of middle to upper socioeconomic status.

The following descriptions provide a brief profile of each school involved in this study. The musical culture of both schools is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

### *Case Study 1: Scenic Cliffs Grammar School (SCGS)*

Scenic Cliffs Grammar School is an independent school comprising approximately 1200 students from Kindergarten to Year 12. It is divided into a Junior School (Years K-6), a Middle School (Years 7-9) and a Senior College (Years 10-12). The school has an interdenominational Christian background. The music department offers a range of different musical ensembles in which students from all years can participate.

### *Case Study 2: Tulari High School*

Tulari High School represents the public school sector. The school comprises approximately 1300 students from Years 7 to 12. The school zone covers areas of middle and upper socio-economic backgrounds, and has a prominent beach culture, being located close to a beach suburb. While there is no music ensemble program available, the school places emphasis on the performing arts and the school participates in The Rock Eisteddfod each year.

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<sup>1</sup> For copies of relevant documentation see Appendix C – Principal Information Statement form; Appendix D – Principal Consent form; Appendix E – Teacher Information Statement form; Appendix F – Teacher Consent form; Appendix G – Parent Information Statement form; Appendix H – Parent Consent form; Appendix I – Student Information Statement form; Appendix J – University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee Letter of Approval (copy); and Appendix K – NSW Department of Education and Training Letter of Approval.

## Data collection methods

The primary methods of data collection in this study were interviews and observation.

### *Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with students and teachers involved in the relevant music activities in both schools.<sup>2</sup> In each selected school, small group interviews were conducted with compulsory music students, either Year 7 or Year 8, and with elective music students from Year 9. Students were interviewed in groups as it was thought that this may assist them to feel more comfortable than in the confrontation of a one to one situation. All students involved in each group setting were from the same school year and class. Thus, the students knew each other well and were relaxed in the company of the group. The researcher endeavoured to ensure that all students participated equally, and to manage the dynamics of each group effectively to prevent certain students from dominating the conversation and thus distorting the collective outcomes of the interview (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

*Table 1: Interviews*

<b>Case study</b>	<b>Class Year</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Date</b>
Scenic Cliffs GS	Yr 8	6 students	26 May 2008
Scenic Cliffs GS	Yr 9	6 students	11 June 2008
Scenic Cliffs GS		Head Music Teacher	26 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 7	4 students	30 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 7	10 students	30 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 9	2 students	11 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 9	5 students	27 June 2008
Tulari HS		Head Music Teacher	27 June 2008
Total Number of Participants Interviewed: 33 students and 2 teachers			

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for a copy of the Student Interview Guide and Appendix B for the Teacher Interview Guide.

All interviews were semi-structured in nature, providing a direction, so that the content focused on the critical issues of the study while still allowing flexibility in responses (Burns, 2000). Student interviews were prepared in relation to the research questions, exploring topics such as: students' attitudes towards music, their musical preferences, musical backgrounds and the extent of student involvement and participation in musical activities both inside and outside of school. Questions and conversation aimed to investigate whether or not students intended to continue their music studies, what aspects of music students enjoy most in the classroom, what they would like to do more, and how important students considered music to be in their lives and how important as a school subject. Ad hoc follow-through questions were used by the researcher to keep the conversation flowing around relevant issues while allowing breadth of response (Freebody, 2003). Also, during interviews students often instigated conversation relating to relevant issues such as their thoughts about their music class in previous years or opinions of topics they were currently studying.

Teacher interviews were conducted with the head music teacher in each school. The purpose of these one to one interviews was to ascertain and assess issues from the perspective of teachers. Questions were asked in relation to each teacher's beliefs concerning which musical styles are most valued in the school, the degree to which the teachers believed their own musical preferences and backgrounds influenced their teaching and what teaching methods, if any, were being used to integrate students' musical preferences in the classroom.

All these interviews were aurally recorded, and later transcribed for the purpose of further analysis.

### *Observations*

“Observation is the act of perceiving the activities and interrelationships of people in the field setting through the five senses of the researcher” (Angrosino, 2007, p.37). Non-participant observations were carried out in each of the selected schools in both compulsory and elective music classes, and one other musical activity. The non-participant observer aims to unobtrusively investigate the selected events (Burns, 2000). However, it is understood that an observer, though nominally non-participant, is implicitly a participant in the field who may affect what is happening.

Observations were carried out by the researcher in two class sessions of both compulsory and elective music classes in each school. The researcher placed particular attention on the similarities and differences in student attitudes and teaching strategies between classes. Impressions and perceptions recorded in the field notes from all these observations were used to assess relevant factors, such as the trends and contrasts between schools. Non-participant observation was also performed in one other music activity in each school, such as the school orchestra.

*Table 2: Observations*

<b>Case study</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
Scenic Cliffs GS	Yr 8 Music Class	19 May 2008
Scenic Cliffs GS	Yr 8 Music Class	23 May 2008
Scenic Cliffs GS	Yr 9 Music Class	21 May 2008
Scenic Cliffs GS	Yr 9 Music Class	23 May 2008
Scenic Cliffs GS	Senior Orchestra Rehearsal	21 May 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 9 Music Class	11 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 9 Music Class	27 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 7 Music Class	27 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 7 Music Class	30 June 2008
Tulari HS	Yr 10 Performance Night	30 June 2008

Data collected during these observations was in the form of field notes taken by the researcher. These field notes included both descriptive and reflective accounts (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen, 2006). The descriptive field notes recorded information such as a detailed depiction of each setting, interaction and communication between teacher and students, roles of individuals, account of events and descriptions of people and their reactions. The reflective field notes recorded information concerning the researcher's personal impressions about the events, such as the overall atmosphere or tone of the lesson and occurrence of events, students' level of engagement and interest. These reflective notes also contained information about any problems, ethical issues or speculations that occurred during the observations.

In addition to the lesson observations, the researcher made general observations of each school and music department making reference to the geographical features, overall atmosphere and ‘soundscape’ of the music department in order to provide context for the research. The researcher also compiled profiles of the teachers involved in the research providing additional data on their background and experience, skills and attitudes and any other information of relevance.

### **Data analysis**

“Researchers form concepts as they read through and ask critical questions of data... In qualitative research, ideas and evidence are mutually interdependent... The researcher organizes data and applies ideas to create or specify a case” (Neuman, 2006, p.460). Data collected during this study were analysed using a grounded theory approach. In this approach the researcher begins with a field of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The purpose is to build a theory that remains faithful to the evidence (Neuman, 2006). This makes qualitative research flexible and allows the data and theory to interact.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe asking questions and making comparisons are “essential” for the development of theory. In the present study, analysis of collected data began with use of questioning. These questions were used to generate ideas or ways of looking at the data, as well as aiding in triangulation of data and evaluating relevance. Also, the use of comparison, both in case to case and theoretical comparisons, gave a means of examining the data objectively. These two operations help to counter the tendency to focus on a single case, and to examine and counter any bias the researcher may have.

The researcher also understands that context needs to be taken into account when analysing data. It is important that the “researcher notes what came before or what surrounds the focus of study” (Neuman, 2006, p.158). These complexities can lead to generalisations and interpretations that do not form an accurate picture of each particular case. “Qualitative research is characterized by an understanding that contextual considerations should not be assumed to operate as distinctive variables consistently or independently across a range of sites, somehow in isolation from one

another” (Freebody, 2003, p.42). Correct evaluations of context help to add validity and credibility to research conclusions (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen, 2006).

Once these operations were performed, a detailed examination of data could be undertaken by use of coding, where data is categorised and classified, resulting in the formation of a theory. There are three principal phases of coding data. These are open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding involves identifying, naming and categorising themes found in the data in a flexible and open manner. “Open coding brings themes to the surface from deep inside the data” (Neuman, 2006, p.461). Following this initial open coding, the move toward organising ideas or themes and identifying the ‘axis’ of key concepts is called axial coding. This coding can often raise new questions as well as reinforce connections between evidence and concepts (Neuman, 2006). Selective coding is the final stage of the analysis and involves selecting a “core category”, reviewing the data and linking all other categories to that category (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen, 2006).

### **Research limitations**

The nature of the qualitative paradigm is essentially subjective. Because of this, extensive consideration was taken in the process of analysis, in order to offset any assumptions or suppositions the researcher may have had prior to undertaking the research project. “Researcher integrity is central to qualitative research... Qualitative researchers emphasize trustworthiness... This ensures that their research is dependable and credible” (Neuman, 2006, p.153). It is recognised that “The researcher’s identity, values and beliefs play a role in the production and analysis of qualitative data” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 209).

Because of the limited scope of this study the researcher has endeavoured to explore with great depth and attention to detail each case involved in the research. However, it should be noted that owing to these limitations, the findings cannot be generalised to the wider population. The data gathered during this research provides an interesting and valuable exploration of opinions and perceptions of music students

and teachers in secondary school. These findings are presented in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter reports and discusses the findings of the study. The following description and interpretation of the data is structured sequentially in relation to the research questions examined in this study. Participants were asked a series of questions related to the research topic during interviews and the data emerges from the answers given. During the interviews, students' voices and expression varied – some seemed jaded, or attempting to be optimistic, while others wished to know whether their teacher would hear the interviews before they spoke more frankly. Also, as students were interviewed in groups they often spoke as if they were speaking to each other, not an outside interviewer. Teachers tended to use their 'official voice', and appeared to use the interview as an opportunity to commend their programs and approaches, at times in a promotional manner. They seemed somewhat reluctant to offer personal opinions about music; rather, they spoke from the point of view of their role as music educators.

In order to place the research findings in context, the chapter begins with a brief description of the musical culture of each school. These descriptions were constructed using information gained during the researcher's fieldwork, including both observation and discussion with participants. Following this, the first topic discussed concerns student attitudes toward music both in and outside of school. Students' opinions of school music are then compared with views of the teachers involved in the study. An outline of the influence of school musical culture on students' musical participation follows. The next section looks at data relating to student musical preferences and school music. Subsequently there is a discussion of the influence of teacher methods and related aspects, followed by a brief look at teacher musical preferences. Finally, aspects relating to students' continued musical participation are discussed.

## **School musical culture**

### *Scenic Cliffs Grammar School (SCGS)*

During the researcher's visits to the school there were the continuous sounds of people participating in music. The school employs a number of music tutors from the local regional conservatorium to provide private music tuition on a range of different instruments. This tuition is at additional expense, not included in the school fees, and takes place on the school premises, generally during school hours.

There are three classroom music teachers and a director of ensembles. The school offers a variety of co-curricular ensembles across junior, middle and senior levels, including orchestra, concert band, stage band, string ensemble, percussion ensemble, guitar ensemble, vocal, clarinet and flute choir.

We may assume music is highly valued in the school. Musical items are performed at all assemblies and the school also conducts a weekly religious service which often features musical performances by a choir, soloist or a co-curricular ensemble.

The junior secondary school music program focuses on guitar and keyboard skills and the school has resources available for this. All students from Year 5 to Year 9 are involved in a laptop program which includes music applications. The senior music students have access to a laboratory in which there are computers linked up to keyboards. Music is taught in demountable classrooms which are a little small to cater effectively for all music activities and students.

### *Tulari High School*

There are four music teachers at this school. During the researcher's field observations there was often the sound of students participating in music. Students regularly practise instruments during lunchtimes. The majority of students at this school value popular music genres, and many students who participate in music play instruments such as guitar, bass or drums.

There is no ensemble program available; however Tulari High School participates in The Rock Eisteddfod each year, and many of the students are involved in both creative and performance aspects of these productions. Also, students (particularly

senior music students) are encouraged to form their own small groups or bands to perform at school concerts.

The music department is reasonably well resourced, and includes keyboards, guitars, three drum kits, percussion instruments and audio equipment; however, maintenance of musical equipment is an issue. There is limited access to technological resources such as computers and there are two music classrooms, one of which is quite restricted in size and space. The music department is situated with enough distance from the rest of the school that, in general, students can make as much sound as they wish.

### **Student attitudes toward music**

From student discussion during interviews, it appears that students perceive the existence of two musical realms or ‘worlds’: the realm of ‘school music’ and the realm of ‘music outside of school’. These two realms are viewed as quite separate from each other and it is rare that they converge or overlap. This is in keeping with previous research that suggests the division between ‘music at school’ and ‘music at home’ is particularly evident for secondary school students (Lamont, et. al, 2003). Data from the present study indicate the existence of a contradiction between the value placed on music generally and its value as a school subject: students who rate music as important in their lives tend not to value school music, and those who claim music is not important in their daily lives value music as a school subject.

#### *The realm of ‘music outside of school’*

Music in their lives outside of school is viewed by students in terms of emotional experience, something that ‘touches’ you. When asked about their reasons for listening to music, student participants across different year groups and schools gave similar or the same explanations. Students repeatedly linked the experience of listening to music with the experience of emotional power or fulfillment in their lives, and perceived these emotional qualities as greatly significant in their relationship to music.

Yuri: I get a good feeling from like the rhythm of it, the beat of it, the sound of it. It's very nice, very nice.<sup>3</sup>

Sarah: Yeah different songs make you feel different things.

Britney: It makes me happy.

They also discussed the use of music for stimulation and motivation, to help suspend daily problems, to make mundane tasks such as tidying one's bedroom seem easier, to bring about a mood shift and to help them through difficulties, such as problems at home or grief. These findings corroborate research suggesting that students associate music listening with emotional mood (Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001).

Brianna: Sometimes when I'm tidying my bedroom I turn it up really loud and put on a fast song and it makes me go faster and it makes me not just go (groans) what do I do?

Rayne: ...if you're in a bad mood you turn on music and it's like you can't care any less and you just listen to music and it doesn't really matter.<sup>4</sup>

Will: Sometimes I get lost in the music, I just think about the music and any problems at home or anything it just goes out one ear and the music goes in.

Gabby: [Music's] important to me... whenever I'm upset I like to sing and play instruments and music. It takes my mind off it.

Students discussed listening to music in terms of extremes of emotional response: either calming and relaxing, or exciting and energising.

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<sup>3</sup> All interviews were transcribed verbatim and the researcher has endeavoured to preserve the essence of students' 'dialect' or language register. Hence, all use of colloquialisms and slang are included in the quotes.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this chapter when quoting participants, an ellipsis "... " indicates that part of the quote has been omitted. A dash "—" denotes pausing or trailing off by the speaker. Quotes not separated by a space in the text signify that comments occurred in succession.

Kimberley: It makes me relax and also it can make me hypo.

These different responses were associated with differing styles of music. Classical music was felt to be soothing, and related to feelings of relaxation and calm.

Heidi: It's really relaxing.

Brianna: It gets you relaxed.

Neil: It's soothing.

Tamara: It helps you go to sleep.

Scott: It's calming, peaceful.

Although very few students stated that they listen to classical music by choice, many students viewed the genre in terms of respect and complexity.

Brad: I like the way how they've got heaps of instruments going at the same time.

Tamara: You notice something different about classical music each time you listen to it.

Some students showed appreciation and admiration for classical music performed on an instrument with which they were familiar or played themselves.

Wayne: Classical guitar's pretty cool.

Gabby: I like listening to opera, because I think they've got really good voices, a really good range.

Classical music was also often viewed by students as uninteresting.

Joe: It's boring.

Britney: It makes me snore.

Kimberley: It's not very good. I'm not really interested in it.

In contrast to classical music, popular music genres, such as hip hop, techno and rock, were associated with feelings of energy and excitement.

Brianna: ...it makes me go faster.

Neil: ...it motivates you heaps. If you go for a run you've always got your iPod in, you hit a hard hill you put a song on, and it's like, let's go!

Lewis: I like full-on music and I just go wild!

Those students who considered music as not very important in their lives regarded music as being for entertainment, a social activity or a hobby.

Michael: ...when I have a friend over and stuff I enjoy playing the guitar with them.

Brad: ...actually it [music] cures the boredom.

Will: It's not very important, it's more like entertainment for me.

Lewis: I'm not gonna become a musician, but I'm just gonna get good at drums and do it as a hobby.

Some participants also discussed music as a career choice. Although not many students considered the prospect of a career in music, they still felt that their involvement with music is an important part of their lives.

Rayne: I would say it'd be very important 'cos you need music in your life, but I wouldn't really go anywhere with music [ie, train further] I don't think. I wouldn't become a famous drum person or anything.

Neil: I just reckon it's important and fun at the same time. It's something that you like doing and something you could go further with.

*The realm of 'school music'*

In contrast to the ways in which students use music emotionally and aesthetically in their lives outside of school, school music is perceived by students as being predominantly theory-driven or theory-oriented. Students from both schools generally assumed that school music was 'classical'. This was interesting because at Tulari High School there is no orchestra and generally the student bands perform mostly popular genres. Also, the school's music resources - drum kits and electric, acoustic and bass guitars – are more oriented towards popular music. At Scenic Cliffs Grammar there is possibly more emphasis placed on classical music given that some of the ensembles support this genre of music, such as the orchestra. However there are also ensembles that are oriented toward other types of music such as jazz, and popular music is taught in the classroom. It appears then that students equate school music with classical music, that is, neither music categories are particularly engaging: both are “boring” and disconnected from the ways they know music in their lives outside of school.

The main reason that music in the context of school was seen as important by students was to provide an “escape” from the grind of other more academic subjects.

Guy: I know it sounds weird but it's like an escape, from all other subjects like.

At Scenic Cliffs Grammar School students in Year 8 described their music class as a “relaxing period”, more fun than other subjects, such as mathematics or English.

Neil: It's a relaxing period and you just like forget about everything around you and you just go with music.

Tamara: It's not exactly a bludge subject, but it's more a kind of relaxing one, where you still learn stuff but...

Rayne: It's not as stressful.

Tamara: Yeah it's like funner than maths or something – you don't have to concentrate quite as hard.

The use of language such as “relaxing” and “fun” to describe their music class, and the view that music does not require as much concentration as subjects perceived to be academic, such as mathematics or English, possibly implies that music as a school subject is not taken as seriously by students. These findings also convey a sense that students consider school musical knowledge differently to other school knowledge: music knowledge is a kind of ‘soft’ knowledge, as opposed to the ‘hard’ knowledge of other school subjects. Students do not necessarily dislike music as a school subject, but rather than perceiving it as positive, interesting and engaging, they see the subject instead as an adequate pastime, less rigorous than other subjects – “funner than maths or something” and “not exactly a bludge subject”.

This view contrasts markedly with the way in which their teacher, Mr Crawford, perceives his subject and department. In his interview, Mr Crawford spoke with passion about the music program he has developed at Scenic Cliffs Grammar School.

Mr Crawford: The beauty of our program is diversity and breadth so we are catering for everything. Our co-curricular program supports what we do in the classroom, guitar ensemble through to stage band.

He spoke of his struggles and endeavours to make the program more appealing to students soon after he began working at the school in 2005.

Mr Crawford: I really pushed and encouraged and tried to make the curriculum interesting for the Year 7 and 8s, particularly the 8s.

Mr Crawford mentions his efforts to make the curriculum interesting for the Year 7 and 8 students. During their interview, the Year 8 students discussed their opinions of classroom music when they were in Year 7:

Neil: ... last year our teacher like just gave us the chords and was like 'go learn 'em'.

Pete: Yeah, I didn't learn anything.

And in regard to their music class this year (Year 8):

Rayne: We've been like repeating the same thing for ages so I think it's time to learn something new.

Tamara: Yeah, it's a bit boring.

It appears that although Mr Crawford has put a great deal of effort into developing what he perceives to be a diverse and engaging music program, in the eyes of the students there is still something missing.

At Tulari High School, contrasting views were again held by the teacher and students in reference to the school's music program. A Year 9 student at the school, Judd, stated that music is "very important" in his life. He also mentioned that he wished to have a career in music. However, during the interview, Judd placed little value on music as a school subject.

Judd: I don't really reckon it's that important but I just like the subject. It's fun.

Matt, also in Year 9, rated music in his life as "pretty important". When discussing the importance of music as a school subject:

Matt: ...it's not that important 'cos you can just do it anywhere.

The statement "you can just do it anywhere" again reinforces that music is not taken as seriously by students as other subjects. As with the Grammar School, students' perception of music as being a relaxing subject was again a common theme.

Gabby: It's a relaxing class. It's fun.

Heidi: It's kind of relaxing.

Yuri: You don't have to concentrate as much as you do in maths.

During her interview, the head music teacher at Tulari High School, Mrs Pullen, described the music program she has implemented as “not lacking in any area”. She felt that the Tulari music program is well supported and well attended, and that it is diverse and interesting for students in terms of content and activities.

Mrs Pullen: Our music activities are very well supported and accepted and well attended. The attendance is very good. ... we do a bit of everything – pop, art music, Classical, Australian.

As with the Grammar school it appears that student and teacher opinions of music as a school subject are at variance. Teachers at both schools believe their programs are diverse, engaging, and cater for all students' needs. They discuss successful school music in terms of “support” and “resources”. Both feel that they have ample support for their music programs. They both volunteered the view that the attitude of the principal is central to the value placed on music throughout the school, the availability of and access to resources, and therefore, the overall quality and success of their music programs.

Mr Crawford: In terms of support we couldn't be at a better school and that comes from the top, the principal. If the principal is supportive it tends to flow right through the school.

Mrs Pullen: We're very lucky: at this school we have all the resources we need. The principal is very supportive and if we need anything he's happy to help.

From the interview and conversation it also appeared that the teacher at the independent school perceives a hierarchy of value of classical music over popular genres. Mr Crawford described students with “professional” parents as being “more in tune... with classical music”, indicating that in general, those of higher socioeconomic status would be more inclined to participate in, and have an understanding of classical music. Mr Crawford felt that music literacy is an essential

component of a successful music education and stated that this was one of the “key pushes” in his program. He also mentioned that it was important to find the right balance of musical genres included in the program, in order to maintain student interest.

Mr Crawford: They get enough pop music on the radio in their daily lives. You’ve got to find the balance... give them stuff that’s educationally sound and valuable but by the same token keep them interested.

At Tulari High School this hierarchy of values was not readily apparent. While Mrs Pullen acknowledged that many of the students valued popular music, she also felt that they were open to other genres.

Mrs Pullen: Lots of students like pop music although they are willing to get involved with a number of different styles.

### **The influence of school musical culture**

From student discussion, it was evident that social acceptance and peer pressure have a significant impact on the music students of this age group listen to and are involved with. Musical participation, such as instrument choice or listening preference, is influenced by the culture of the school promoted by the student body. This was particularly noted in the public school setting. A Year 7 student from Tulari High School discusses this impact on instrument choice:

Robbo: Yeah, if someone’s going around playing the like trombone or something everyone’ll be like “oh, what a dag” but if they’re going out playing the guitar they’re like “oh, that’s alright”. Yeah it’s just like what’s in at the moment, brass instruments aren’t that in.

Perhaps this is particularly noted in this school because there are no musical ensembles, so playing an instrument such as the trombone is considered unusual. At

the Grammar school, however, the availability of private tuition and many different ensembles means playing various instruments is much more widely accepted.

A Year 9 student, also from Tulari High, discusses why he feels that students value popular music:

Judd: Everyone likes it, so if you listen to it no-one cares. So if you listen to the songs no-one will really care 'cos they all like it I guess...

A student at Scenic Cliffs Grammar also noted the social acceptance of popular music:

Neil: Other people share the same view so you're not too critical. You're not just one in the crowd.

These students express the opinion that “everyone likes” popular music. Sharing this preference will therefore not invite criticism from peers, whereas a liking for a genre such as classical music (or learning to play an orchestral or band instrument) may.

### **Student musical preferences and school music**

In general, during interviews students referred more to issues with pedagogy and teacher methods rather than dissatisfaction with content. This vindicates previous research stating that, in order to widen musical participation and progression, a change in pedagogy is more crucial than a change in the curriculum (Price, 2006). However, in the current study, when asked whether their school music class caters for their musical interests and preferences, while some students said that it did to an extent, predominantly the opinion was that it did not. Students felt that it would be favourable for their music class to accommodate their musical interests, but that this would be more likely for senior music students.

Matt (Yr 9): Probably next year, but not this year really. This year we've got to play what they choose.

Brianna: They haven't really given us a chance to choose our own things to do - but the things that he gives us are alright.

Tamara: Some of the songs are alright and some of them, you just wish you really didn't have to play – but I mean, it's OK, like, it's not that bad –

Neil: Yeah if we were given a choice, that'd be cool.

Teachers from both schools stated that junior secondary school music programs are not designed to encourage students to expand and explore their musical interests. In reference to music during Years 7 and 8, Mr Crawford stated: “The teacher has the reins and a curriculum set out” allowing little scope for accommodating students’ musical preferences. However, Mr Crawford spoke of “some flexibility within the constraints of the syllabus” when referring to Years 9 and 10. Both teachers felt that junior secondary students require limitations and that structure is important.

Mrs Pullen: You can't just give them (the students) a 'free for all' because they keep changing their minds.

In the music programs at both schools the general trend is for teachers to allow students progressively more input into what music will be studied.

Mr Crawford: In Years 11 and 12 the kids are more free to start choosing what area they want to specialise in.

Some students felt that it was good to be exposed to different types of music in the classroom so that they could develop their own taste in music.

Sarah: I think that we get shown all different things, so that we get to have a go at all different ones.

Summer: Yeah so we know what we will like.

Some were dissatisfied, and felt that school music should be more connected to their musical interests.

Britney: I think the teachers should pick catchier songs so everyone's more involved.

Lewis: We should have more modern songs, like we're learning older ones – we should be able to learn ones that we're listening to now rather than old ones from the 70s and 80s and stuff.

Yuri: I'd rather be playing modern music that I'm listening to now which I can relate to...

### **Influence of teacher methods**

Music taught in the classroom is “dictated by the syllabus” (Mr Crawford). At Scenic Cliffs Grammar Mr Crawford discussed effective teaching as maintaining the balance between what students “need to know” and what they “really like”:

Mr Crawford: ...it's about finding the balance between stuff that the kids need to know and perhaps sweetening it with stuff that the kids really like.

When asked how he promotes student interest in the classroom Mr Crawford stated his belief that the three learning experiences of music – listening, performing and composing – “intrinsically motivate students” and that he endeavours to include all of these three learning experiences in every lesson wherever possible, especially during the mandatory music course. He felt that because the lessons at SCGS are 61 minutes in length, this allows sufficient time to include all of these three experiences.

### *Engagement with music*

From the observations during the study it appears that there is often a disconnection between what teachers know to be important for musical engagement and what is occurring in their programs. When asked what strategies she used to promote student interest in the classroom, Mrs Pullen stated that the best way to encourage interest is to let the students get involved in making and playing music.

Mrs Pullen: You let them make music. In cooking you cook, in woodwork you make things, in music you play – do the practical stuff.

The following passage describes an observation of a Year 7 music class at Tulari High School. The classroom in which this lesson was given was the smaller of the two music classrooms at the school. The room has a storage cupboard in one corner where resources such as keyboards are kept and a piano at the other side of the room near the door. There is little space for students to move around, so the majority of class activities are performed seated at their desks.

Date: 27/06/2008 Time: 12.02-12.40

### **Tulari High School**

#### **Yr 7 Class Observation<sup>5</sup>**

Students are instructed to fetch keyboards and place them on their desks, two students to a keyboard. When students are set up the teacher takes control of the class, instructing students to be quiet: “No yakking!” Students are not allowed to plug their keyboards in to power so they cannot make sound. The teacher informs the class, “This is basic keyboard skills”. She then instructs the students, “Place your thumb on C”.

They are learning the first part of ‘The Addams Family’ theme (C, D, E, F). Teacher instructs the students to press the keys and to sing the name of the notes as they press then click their fingers. The students perform this section of the piece as a class, singing the note names as they press the keys C, D, E, F and clicking their fingers: click, click. Some of the students sound a little despondent as they perform this activity.

They then move on to learning the main theme. The teacher is calling out keyboard fingering to the whole class, 3<sup>rd</sup> finger on F, 5<sup>th</sup> finger on A. Students continue to sing and press the keys as they have no sound. Some students are wishing aloud that their keyboards could be plugged in so they could hear what they are playing. The teacher informs the students that they will spend today’s lesson finding the notes so that on Monday they can have sounds.

Students who misbehave are asked to pack away their keyboards. Two boys who are chatting and not performing the task are instructed to pack up. The teacher circulates around the classroom helping and observing individual students. There is a great deal of talking going on among students and several of them are not engaged in the task.

Some students are having trouble deciding which C and which Bb they are meant to play. They discuss whether it is the one to the left or the right of the previous note.

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<sup>5</sup> The passage is not intended to imply a ‘typical’ lesson at this school, but is merely a description of a lesson that occurred during the researcher’s presence.

This is made very difficult to determine as, without sound, they have no way of knowing. The teacher then goes around instructing individual students to perform so she can check them.

Other than those who are chosen by the teacher, very few students are engaged in this task. The teacher then instructs the students to press the keys and sing along while she plays the theme on the piano. Following this activity, she plays the tune slowly indicating to students how some notes are higher and some are lower in pitch.

Throughout the lesson the students spend little time engaged with music. Instead the lesson content is centred on note or letter names, which, given the situation conveyed little musical meaning to the students because they were not permitted to hear the sounds while rehearsing. Clearly, due to class size and rooming constraints, the teacher is faced with the challenging task of managing the students effectively while engendering musical interest and enjoyment. The use of methods such as teaching students how to play music without sound is clearly in an effort to cater to a large number of students in a confined area.

During interviews, some Year 7 boys from this class discussed their frustration during these lessons:

Scott: ...we've had three weeks just learning 'The Addams Family' and we haven't even played anything yet.

Lewis: Yeah we just sing along to the notes, so we go (sings) C  
D E F [click click] (clicks fingers in time)

The boys mentioned their wish to be able to play more music during their music class and, rather than dedicating so much time to the discussion and learning of note names, they wanted to be allowed "free time to just play on it", to experiment and explore the music for themselves. These comments concur with findings of previous research (Price, 2006), and reinforce how students perceive school music as disconnected from the music in their lives outside of school.

The following passage describes a lesson at Scenic Cliffs Grammar School. This Year 9 class was studying sonata form.

**Scenic Cliffs Grammar School**

**Yr 9 Class Observation<sup>6</sup>**

The teacher instructs students to copy the definition of sonata form from the projected screen. The teacher hasn't finished typing it up so he types on his laptop connected to the projector as the students copy. "No talk please," he commands.

Some students begin to write, others continue to chat. The teacher tells a group of three girls who are still talking, "enough talk girls" they stop chatting and begin to write. All students are engaged in the task and the room is quiet for a couple of minutes.

There is some music coming through the window from another class, music from the film, *Jaws*. One of the students whispers, "UFO". This starts other students to begin whispering and talking again. Students appear to be distracted by the music coming from outside. Some of them are talking about it trying to work out what it is. One of the boys calls out, "aliens are attacking".

The teacher asks the class to be quiet but the students continue to talk, now about the weather – someone thinks it might be raining.

The teacher tells his class, "The quicker we can get through this the quicker we can get to our composition tasks." One of the girls says "Oh .... Let's write really slow then ..."

The teacher finishes typing the definition, "See how neat you can write". He tells the students they will need this information for their listening test next week and students turn their attention to writing.

During this lesson it appears that students were not consistently engaged in the task they were given – copying out the definition of sonata form. Rather, they were engaging with the music coming from outside the classroom. They were listening and responding to the mood of the music coming through the window.

During their interview the Year 9 students were discussing theory taught in the classroom and in particular learning sonata form. While some students stated that at times the theory they are taught in class is "pretty helpful" others felt it was unnecessary.

Chloe: Yeah I'm not gonna look at my music and go, what form is this in?

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<sup>6</sup> The passage is not intended to imply a 'typical' lesson at this school, but is merely a description of a lesson that occurred during the researcher's presence.

Perhaps this view is in part promoted by the method in which sonata form was taught to the students. A definition which students must write out and commit to memory has little relationship to their understanding of the actual music.

*The role of the teacher*

In her book *Music in the School* Janet Mills discusses the idea of “teaching music musically” (2005, p.17). Mills describes teachers who teach musically as being able to “...draw in students with their differing enthusiasms and backgrounds, and leave each of them at least slightly better for having been to a lesson. They teach through music (not just about music): students spend lessons making music, listening to music and reflecting on music” (Mills, p.20). In interviews some students perceived classroom music lessons as teaching *about* music – placing it in context, learning the history, background and theory of music, while not, as Mills describes, learning “through music”. Private tuition was considered a place where this type of learning takes place.

Guy: I reckon that the actual music class like, helps you relate it to the world. But your [private] music lesson just helps you like, know music.

The majority of students wished for their teacher to be more involved in their learning process, to ‘teach’ more and be more available to them. They disliked being given information and told to learn it themselves. Elective music students at Tulari High School felt that during their music class they were often left to their own devices and expected to learn without help or assistance.

Renee: I really like playing the piano and stuff, but I was hoping that she’d like teach us, kind of, how to play instruments... and not just send us away.

Lily: Yeah... I’m not enjoying it as much as I thought I would.

Will: She expects us to already know what to do, like how to play and everything.

Renee: She'll just say like, choose a certain song and then you've gotta learn how to play yourself, and then perform it in front of the class.

Will: Yeah even if you don't know chords and stuff.

Lily: And some people are really good at that and other people are like, really bad.

In both schools, practical music lessons were considered by students as a time where their teacher is not readily available to them. They felt that they were expected to “learn how to play yourself” and often they felt they were given insufficient guidance and therefore were unable to do this.

Summer: ...in your [private] lessons you actually have a tutor teaching you whereas if you have practical you just go off.

Students want a teacher who is there and who (according to their perception) cares: about music, about them, and about engaging them in ongoing musical activity. Students expressed disappointment that their teacher was frequently absent from class due to head teacher workload.

Sean: Yeah but Mrs P. is always away or doing something so we always have subs [substitute teachers] and we're not allowed to do prac with them.

### *The “theory” and “prac” lesson divide*

It was interesting to note the language and terminology used by students and teachers during their discussion of school music classes. It is apparent that these classes are segregated and labeled in terms of what type of learning and activity takes place during a lesson. During interviews and observations the term ‘practical’ or ‘prac’ lesson was used by students and teachers in both schools to describe a lesson in which students play instruments and make music, often working in small groups. In contrast, a ‘theory’ lesson describes those lessons where the theoretical information of music is taught separately from performing music. During these lessons students often work individually on notation writing tasks and other book work.

Several students felt that too much emphasis is placed on ‘theory’ in the classroom, and many students considered much of what is taught to be unnecessary knowledge.

Pete: I’m really sick of that table with all the values and the note names.

Wayne: Yeah not the technical practical type, the theory, like we’re not doing anything, we’re just sitting there learning.

Brad: I might drop out ’cos of the theory, ’cos it’s too much theory, I’m sick of it.

Pete: Yes, I’m sick of hearing about what dynamics are.

Renee: I don’t like theory, it’s boring.

When asked what aspect of classroom music they enjoyed the most, the majority of students in both school settings stated they enjoyed ‘prac’, that is, activities involving making or playing music. A basis in practical classroom activities has been recognised by previous research as a prevailing characteristic of successful music programs (Pascoe et al., 2005). The social aspect of music in the classroom was also seen by students as a benefit. Students enjoy the involvement of everyone, playing music with their friends and working things out together.

Matt: Getting to jam with your mates.

Chloe: It’s good when like, all your friends come together and we all like, play songs.

Brianna: ...you can go off with your bands and you can practise together at your own speed and you get to make better things...

These findings are corroborated in previous research conducted in both Australia and the UK. A study conducted by Oyston found that secondary school students particularly valued group work in the music classroom (2004). Also, as part of the Musical Futures action research project (referred to in the literature review section) a

survey was conducted to ascertain what students believed to be the most important aspects for successful music learning. ‘Inclusivity’, or the involvement of everyone, was listed by students as one of the top ten elements (Price, 2006).

Some students at Scenic Cliffs Grammar offered suggestions about how the lessons could be structured more effectively, in order to make the theory of music more meaningful to them. They proposed that they could study a piece of music during theory and then learn how to play the piece for practical.

Sarah: But I reckon we should actually learn songs and then have prac.

Brad: Yeah, learn the songs in theory and then play them in prac.

Students at Tulari High also suggested that they could have more input on the topics that they study, rather than having the teacher determining the entire program.

Gabby: We could have like, a discussion, and come to an agreement, like a whole class agreement.

Sean: Yeah, it’s an elective.

Gabby: But then again, I suppose that doesn’t really suit the guidelines of the educational thing or something.

Sean: Yeah, but we could come to something.

### **Teachers’ musical preferences**

The role of teacher’s musical preference in the classroom has received little mention in previous research. During her interview Mrs Pullen discussed how she has broadened her attitudes to music and that she does not value or emphasise any particular genres in the classroom.

Mrs Pullen: I think my own taste has changed and developed over the years. I am happy to do anything. Anything the students throw at me is fine.

The students at Tulari High School felt that their teacher values classical and “older” music, and that she is out of touch.

Lily: Nobody likes classical, except for our teacher.

When discussing the music from 'The Addams Family', which the Year 7 students were studying at the time, students felt that it was removed from their interests.

Robbo: ...we should try and get more modern music that we'd rather play.

Heidi: 'Cos we're learning that 'Addams Family' song.

Britney: We'd rather sing music we could relate to rather than (sings the first bit of 'The Addams Family' theme)

Robbo: 'Cos like it's not even on the air anymore and I don't watch it.

Heidi: Even on Foxtel it's not on.

At Scenic Cliffs Mr Crawford discussed his feeling that a teacher's musical preferences are significant and that they have the potential to affect one's teaching.

Mr Crawford: I think they play an absolutely huge part. That's the challenge for all teachers to extend yourself in areas where you're not fluent. I think an experienced teacher will develop a program and work towards catering for a vast array of different learning experiences for the kids.

He was also of the opinion that pedagogy is generally of more importance than content.

Mr Crawford: ...you can virtually present anything as long as it's presented in the right way and enthusiastically by the teacher I think they (the students) will learn something from it.

### **Students' continued musical participation**

Student opinions of music as a school subject were that it is important to learn the basics of music – such as the mandatory music curriculum, in part to be able to make

an informed decision about whether to take music as an elective in Years 9 and 10. However, students noted that beyond Years 7 and 8, school music was of little importance unless they were considering taking music for the Higher School Certificate or as a career.

Brianna: I think it's important to know the basics, like what we've done, but as we get into Year 10 it's not as important.

Gabby: It's really important to me, 'cos I think I want to go and do something with music after the HSC.

Will: Yeah it depends on what you want in the future, music-wise.

Britney: I reckon it's very good 'cos we get an opportunity to see if we like it or not and see if we wanna carry on with it like, for our future.

From the Year 9 students' perspective at Scenic Cliffs Grammar there is an unexpected and unexplained jump in assumed knowledge between mandatory and elective music in school.

Summer: I reckon it's really confronting because like, all of a sudden it just gets like really hard...

Guy: Yeah like last term it's like name the notes, and then like this year it's like, 6/8 form, add in the accidentals

This 'jump' is supported and actively promoted by their teacher:

Mr Crawford: Yeah, I'm fully supportive of pushing the kids. And for the first semester of Year 9 it comes as an absolute shock to the kids who thought it'd be a free ride. The more watered down fun stuff of Year 8 is over, you start to get into the serious musicianship in Year 9. There is a big jump. I'm notorious for pushing the kids.

At Tulari High School elective students mentioned their disappointment over not learning to play particular instruments. There appeared to be a miscommunication between what students felt the music program could or should offer and what actually takes place.

Will: I thought that in music they'd be teaching you certain instruments.

Gabby: They don't.

Lily: They don't.

Will: Yeah they don't, you're just meant to know it when you go in there.

By the statement, "You're just meant to know it when you go in there," (Will) implies that again students feel there is a level of assumed knowledge not taught during Years 7 and 8, and of which they are unaware when choosing the elective subject. Overall, students felt the elective music course does not live up to expectations.

Renee: It's important but – it's not as good as I thought it would be.

When asked their opinion of why students of their age would drop out of music as a school subject, students gave various answers. The most common of these were that there is too much emphasis on theory, that students dislike their teacher or the topics they are studying, or that they are discouraged by the sudden change in difficulty between mandatory and elective music course.

## **Conclusion**

Although this research was limited in its scope, the data presented and discussed in this chapter raises many questions regarding the efficacy of music education in the focus schools. The thoughts, opinions and perspectives of participants indicate a number of factors that may influence secondary students' continued musical participation. These findings hold implications for music educators and generate a number of areas for future research. These are outlined in the final chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This study set out to explore the relationships between school musical culture, adolescent musical preference and music teaching strategies in two New South Wales secondary schools. The opinions and perceptions of students and teachers involved in the study were explored in order to discover and address the extent to which these factors and their interrelationships influence students' decisions to continue musical participation, both in and outside of school. This chapter will summarise the research process and findings of the study.

The research design comprised qualitative case studies of two high schools in a coastal region outside of the Sydney metropolitan area. One of the schools studied represented the independent education system and the other was a representative of the public system. The schools have a similar middle income socioeconomic demographic. Observations of mandatory and elective music classes were conducted by the researcher and interviews were performed with music students and the head music teacher at each school. Students were interviewed in small groups, and teachers were interviewed individually.

### **Summary of findings**

The study found that for a number of reasons students perceive 'school music' and 'music outside of school' as distinct fields of activity and knowledge. This finding is supported by previous research (Lamont, et. al, 2003). A contradiction between the value students place on music generally and its value as a school subject, was also indicated. Students view 'music outside of school' in terms of emotional experience, and use music in a variety of ways to assist them through the routines and trials of everyday life. Students also associated certain styles of music with particular feelings of emotion. 'School music' was viewed by some students as important to provide an "escape" from the sheer daily sameness of other subjects perceived to be more academic, and school musical knowledge was perceived as different from other school knowledge. 'School music' was also seen as "boring" and disconnected from music as students know it in their lives outside of school.

In both schools the views, opinions and perceptions of music as a school subject held by students, were at variance with those of their teacher. Teachers discussed the overall quality and success of school music in terms of “support” and “resources” and believed their programs to be diverse, engaging and well-rounded.

From student discussion it was evident that social acceptance and peer pressure significantly affect students’ musical choices and involvement. Musical participation was influenced by the aspects of school culture promoted by students. Musical preferences were also influenced by peer pressure and social acceptance, with a liking for popular music often being viewed by students as more socially acceptable among their peers than a liking for a genre such as “classical”.

Predominantly, students were of the opinion that classroom music did not cater for their musical interests and preferences and that it would be more favourable if it did. However, generally students were more concerned about pedagogy and teacher methods than content in the classroom. Teachers from both schools involved in the study stated that junior secondary music programs do not cater for students’ exploration of their own musical interests. Instead, allowances are made for this exploration as students progress.

From the data, it emerged that students’ enjoyment and continued musical participation is often greatly influenced by teacher methods. Previous research in Australia has shown that teachers are the most consistent contributing factor to the success of school music (Pascoe, et al., 2005) and the influence of classroom music teachers is significant in students’ decisions to continue musical involvement (Oyston, 2004). The current study found that students want a teacher who is available and interested in guiding and engaging them in ongoing musical activity. From the researcher’s observations it appeared that what teachers consider to be important for musical engagement often contrasts with aspects of their everyday classroom practice.

Several students expressed the opinion that too much emphasis is placed on ‘theory’ and the theory taught is perceived by students as removed from their understanding of music. All students enjoyed activities involving making or playing music in the

classroom. The participation of everyone was also seen by students as a benefit of classroom music. Teachers' musical preferences were considered to have the potential to shape one's teaching. However, both teachers involved in the study were prepared to broaden their attitudes to music and felt they did not value or emphasise particular genres in the classroom.

Regarding continued musical participation at school, students felt that, it is important to learn the "basics" of music taught during the mandatory music course. Beyond this, music was regarded to be of little importance unless being considered as a subject for the Higher School Certificate or as a career. Through interviews it was found that there is a jump in assumed knowledge between mandatory and elective music. While this jump is supported and promoted by the teachers, from the students' perspective it is unexpected and unexplained and significantly affects their continued musical participation in a variety of ways. Students who take elective music are disappointed by the course and often experience feelings of inadequacy. Students in Year 8 who hear about the sudden change in difficulty will be less inclined to choose music as an elective and school music becomes progressively more of an enigma to students, thus increasing the division and disconnection from music as they know it outside of school.

### **Educational implications**

This study raises a number of issues regarding the success and future of music education. To facilitate and encourage students' continued musical participation at school, classroom music needs to become more relevant and connected to students' understanding of music in their lives outside of school. The findings of this study suggest that identifying ways of successfully incorporating music as a realm of feeling and emotional experience into school programs should be a priority, which could go some way towards addressing this sense of disconnection.

It appears the divide of 'theory' and 'prac' lessons in school music needs to be addressed (by "introducing theory when practice demands it" (Price 2006, p.6) in order to provide more meaningful musical experiences for students. The findings also indicate that students wish to be involved in more comprehensive practical

instruction in making music. This study also found that, while incorporating some musical preferences and interests of students in the classroom may be beneficial, pedagogy and teacher methods are often of greater importance than content. Teacher methods and approaches to music have a significant impact on students' enjoyment, engagement and the musical experiences of students in the classroom.

From the particular cases involved in this research, it also emerged that teachers are often taken up in matters of administration and possibly overlook their primary roles as a classroom teacher of music and musician. This can be detrimental for students, as they desire a teacher who is available and implicitly involved in teaching and facilitating ongoing musical activity. Perhaps this issue is primarily a challenge for head teachers, as their workload encompasses a range of tasks often involving many duties which take them away from the classroom.

As societal and technological developments influence students at unprecedented speeds (Price, 2006) it is possible that the role of the teacher is in need of change. Today's students have a wealth of information at their fingertips; perhaps teachers need to assume the role of a 'guide' or 'mentor' and encourage students in a journey of self-discovery rather than take on the role of 'instructor'.

The change in expectations between mandatory and elective music is also an area which needs to be assessed. It is possible that this unforeseen rise in expectations promotes the notion of music as being only for those with 'talent' and has a negative impact on students' continued musical participation in school.

### **Suggestions for future research**

It is important that school education does not remain static in the midst of societal and technological growth and development and general cultural change. Further research could be carried out in a variety of different ways. It would be beneficial to conduct research on a larger scale in New South Wales examining factors similar to those providing the focus of this study. It would be useful to examine a broader range of contexts, perhaps incorporating quantitative methods, to determine the extent to which the findings of the study are more widely generalisable. It would also be

valuable to study comparatively schools of contrasting socioeconomic status to those of the present study.

As this study looked at the perspectives of students still involved in school music, future research could examine the perspectives of students who have dropped out of school music at secondary school level, and their reasons for doing so. It may also be of benefit to concentrate specifically on the transition from primary to high school, as this has been identified as a problematic stage for continuation of music involvement. Future research could also examine the specific influence of different teachers and teaching styles on students' decisions to continue their musical participation in the school setting. Further, the impact of other factors including ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background, and home environments could be explored in future studies.

### **Conclusion**

This study contributes to the broader literature and research in this field, supporting the notion that, to encourage students' continued musical participation, junior secondary music education needs to become more connected to young people's understanding of music. To facilitate a "more unified concept of music education" (Price, 2006, p.6) the system requires change in many areas, including pedagogy, curriculum, funding, resources, and a transformation of how school music relates to music in the lives of students outside of school. These issues are important for the future of school music. Aligning music education more acutely with the needs of students will promote a subject which is more relevant, engaging, and meaningful to students, a subject where students can move beyond "just sitting there learning".

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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A: STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Music in your life/your musical involvement**

- Do you come from a musical family? [Can you tell me a bit about it?]
- Do you play an instrument? If so, what instrument? How long have you been playing?
- What style of music do you think is best on your instrument? (Is your instrument limited only to that style?)
- How important is music in your life?
- How often do you listen to music? How (by what means – live, radio, iPod etc) do you usually listen to music? Where do you get the music you listen to (eg downloads, radio etc)?
- Do you use any music software? (If so, what software? What do you use it for?)
- Why do you listen to music?
- What do you enjoy doing with music? eg. listening, playing, composing (eg with technology)

### **Opinions/taste about music**

- Do you have a favourite song or piece of music?
- What is your favourite style of music? Why do you like [insert style]?
- Do you have a favourite singer, band, musician or composer? If so, who?
- What do you like most about them (eg the feel of the music, the song lyrics, the musicians' image)
- What, for you, is good about popular music (rock, pop, hip hop, R&B)?
- What, for you, is good about classical music?

### **You, your peers and music**

- Do you discuss your music interests with your friends at school?
- What aspects of music do you discuss with your friends most often?

### **Music in school**

- What do you think are the differences between primary school and high school music?
- Do you think your background in music is important to your musical involvement in high school? Why, or why not?
- What do you enjoy most about classroom music? What would you like to do more of in the classroom?
- How important is music as a school subject?
- What types of music do you think are most valued in your school?
- In what ways do you see this value?
- Does your music class cater for your musical interests/preferences? In what ways?
- Do you think you will continue with your music studies at this school next year? Why or why not?
- Why do you think students, of your age, would drop out of music studies?

### **Elective Students Only:**

- What were your reasons for choosing elective music this year?
- Are you considering taking music for the Higher School Certificate? Why or why not?

## **APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- 1.** Can you give a brief description of your background in education?
- 2.** Is your school well equipped with resources to effectively teach music?
- 3.** What types of music do you think are most valued in this school? How is this demonstrated?
- 4.** How are musical activities accepted in your school? Are these activities well attended?
- 5.** Do you think this school encourages students to explore and expand their own musical interests? If so, in what ways?
- 6.** To what degree do you think your own musical preferences and musical background influence your teaching strategies? What music styles do you emphasise in the classroom?
- 7.** Do you aim to incorporate student musical preferences in your classroom? If so, in what ways? How do students respond?
- 8.** How do you promote student interest in the classroom?
- 9.** Why do you think there is a sharp decline in student musical involvement during the early years of high school?

# APPENDIX C: PRINCIPAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC



Madeleine Bell  
Sydney NSW 2002 Australia  
www.madeleinebell.com.au  
AEN 18 211 510 Age

## PRINCIPAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

### Research Project

***Project Title: Influences on student musical involvement in NSW secondary schools***

Dear Principal,

The purpose of this letter is to invite your school to participate in a research project being conducted by Madeleine Bell, under the supervision of James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, which will provide the basis for an Honours degree in Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Sydney.

This study seeks to discover what factors influence the decision of junior secondary school students to continue involvement and participation in musical activities and studies. In particular, the influence of student musical preferences will be investigated.

Students from compulsory and elective music classes in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, as well as music teachers involved in relevant music classes and activities will be asked to participate in the study. Student participants will be requested to take part in small group interviews with the researcher. One group interview will be conducted with music students studying the Mandatory junior secondary music course and another interview with elective students. These interviews will take approximately 30 minutes each, and will be carried out within the school grounds, during school hours, outside of class time if preferred.

Teacher participants will also be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher, taking approximately 30 minutes. This interview will be carried out at a mutually convenient time, on school grounds, or at a mutually convenient location. With consent, all interviews with both students and teachers will be aurally recorded, and later transcribed by the researcher, for purposes of analysis.

As part of the study, the researcher would also like to carry out non-participant observations of relevant music classes and musical activities in your school. These observations would only occur after informed consent has been received from both you as principal and all parties involved. It is anticipated that one class from Year 7 or 8 and one class from Year 9 or 10 will be observed, in addition to another regular musical activity such as a band rehearsal.

Interviews and observations will be conducted at mutually convenient times during Term 2, 2008.

Phone: (61) 2 9351 1235  
The University of Sydney  
Sydney NSW 2002 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au

Telephone: + 61 2 9351 1235  
Facsimile: + 61 2 9351 1287  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)



The results and information gained from this study will be used to assist music teachers in catering for the needs of secondary school music students in NSW. The study also aims to contribute to the expansion of theories of innovations to enhance music education.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your school is not obliged to participate and can withdraw at any time without prejudice or penalty.

During the process of the study, all information will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only researchers directly involved in the study will have access to this information. All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study will be published as an Honours Thesis, but individual participants will not be identifiable in this report. A summary of the results will be available to participants upon request.

When you have read this information, Madeleine Bell or her supervisor, James Renwick will be happy to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please don't hesitate to contact:

Madeleine Bell  
Ph: 0405 222 720  
Email: [mbel4397@usyd.edu.au](mailto:mbel4397@usyd.edu.au)

James Renwick  
Ph: 93511235  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)

**Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [gbriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:gbriody@usyd.edu.au) (Email).**

# APPENDIX D: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM



Macquarie Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au  
AS/NZ 10 21: 310 484

## PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

I (print name)..... as Principal  
of (name of school).....  
give consent to this school's participation in the research project  
entitled:

Phone: 111 760 044  
The University of Sydney  
Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au

Telephone: + 61 2 9351 1235  
Facsimile: + 61 2 9351 1287  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)

### INFLUENCES ON STUDENT MUSICAL INVOLVEMENT IN NSW SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In giving this consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and the school's involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that this school can withdraw from the study at any time, without experiencing any adverse affects, now or in the future.
4. I understand that this school's involvement is strictly confidential and no information about the school will be used in any way that reveals its identity, or the identity of participants from this school.

Signed:.....

Name: .....

Date: .....

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [qbriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:qbriody@usyd.edu.au) (Email).

# APPENDIX E: TEACHER INFORMATION STATEMENT

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC



Madeleine Bell  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
www.madeleinebell.edu.au  
4EN 16 21 513 484

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR TEACHERS

**Project Title: Influences on student musical involvement in NSW secondary schools**

Phone: Tel: 61 2 9351 1235  
The University of Sydney  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au

Telephone: + 61 2 9351 1235  
Facsimile + 61 2 9351 1287  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)

### (1) What is the study about?

This study seeks to discover how factors such as musical preferences, influence the decision of junior students to continue involvement and participation in musical activities and studies.

### (2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Madeleine Bell and will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Music Education at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Mr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

### (3) What does the study involve?

Students from music classes in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, as well as music teachers involved in these classes and relevant activities are invited to participate in the study. The researcher will conduct observations of selected music classes and rehearsal activities. It is anticipated that there will be one observation of each class. There will be no disruption of ordinary classroom activities.

Student participants will be requested to take part in small group interviews with the researcher. One group interview will be conducted with music students studying the Mandatory junior secondary music course and another interview with elective students. These interviews will be conducted on the school grounds, during school hours, outside of class time if preferred. Teacher participants will also be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher. This interview will be carried out at a mutually convenient time, on school grounds, or at a mutually convenient location. With consent, all interviews with both students and teachers will be aurally recorded, and later transcribed by the researcher, for purposes of analysis.

### (4) How much time will the study take?

Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Observations will be of the duration of a single timetabled class or rehearsal.



**(5) Can I withdraw from the study?**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without prejudice or penalty.

**(6) Will anyone else know the results?**

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication in a thesis or conference paper, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**(7) Will the study benefit me?**

This study may not benefit you directly, but results and information gained from this research will be used to assist music teachers in catering for the needs of secondary school music students in NSW. The study also aims to contribute to the expansion of theories of innovations to enhance music education.

**(8) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you may.

**(9) What if I require further information?**

When you have read this information, Madeleine Bell will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Madeleine Bell (Tel: 0405 222 720) or Mr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education (Tel: 9351 1235).

**(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?**

**Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [gbriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:gbriody@usyd.edu.au) (Email).**

*This information sheet is for you to keep*

# APPENDIX F: TEACHER CONSENT FORM



Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2002 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au  
ADN 1021 513494

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I (print name)..... give consent  
to my participation in the research project:

### INFLUENCES ON STUDENT MUSICAL INVOLVEMENT IN NSW SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Phone: 710 500 044  
The University of Sydney  
Sydney NSW 2002 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au

Telephone: + 61 2 9351 1235  
Facsimile: + 61 2 9351 1287  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) now or in the future.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

Signed:.....

Name: .....

Date: .....

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [gbriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:gbriody@usyd.edu.au) (Email).

# APPENDIX G: PARENT INFORMATION STATEMENT

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC



Madeleine Grant  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usmc.usyd.edu.au  
ABN 16 211 513 484

Post: D1130, G11  
The University of Sydney  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au

Telephone: + 61 2 9351 1235  
Facsimile: + 61 2 9351 1287  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR PRIMARY CAREGIVER

### Project Title: Influences on student musical involvement in NSW secondary schools

#### (1) What is the study about?

This study seeks to discover how factors such as musical preferences, influence the decision of junior students to continue involvement and participation in musical activities and studies.

#### (2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Madeleine Bell and will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Music Education at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Mr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

#### (3) What does the study involve?

Students from music classes in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, as well as music teachers involved in these classes and relevant activities are invited to participate in the study. The researcher will conduct observations of selected music classes and rehearsal activities. It is anticipated that there will be one observation of each class. There will be no disruption of ordinary classroom activities.

Student participants will be requested to take part in small group interviews with the researcher. One group interview will be conducted with music students studying the Mandatory junior secondary music course and another interview with elective students. These interviews will be conducted on the school grounds, during school hours, outside of class time if preferred. Teacher participants will also be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher. This interview will be carried out at a mutually convenient time, on school grounds, or at a mutually convenient location. With consent, all interviews with both students and teachers will be aurally recorded, and later transcribed by the researcher, for purposes of analysis.

#### (4) How much time will the study take?

Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Observations will be of the duration of a single timetabled class or rehearsal.



**(5) Can I withdraw from the study?**

Your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate will not prejudice you or your child's future relations with the University of Sydney. If you decide to permit your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your child's participation at any time without prejudice or penalty.

**(6) Will anyone else know the results?**

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication in a thesis or conference paper, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**(7) Will the study benefit me?**

This study may not benefit you directly, but results and information gained from this research will be used to assist music teachers in catering for the needs of secondary school music students in NSW. The study also aims to contribute to the expansion of theories of innovations to enhance music education.

**(8) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you may.

**(9) What if I require further information?**

When you have read this information, Madeleine Bell will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Madeleine Bell (Tel: 0405 222 720) or Mr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education (Tel: 9351 1235).

**(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?**

**Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [gabriola@usyd.edu.au](mailto:gabriola@usyd.edu.au) (Email).**

*This information sheet is for you to keep*

# APPENDIX H: PARENT CONSENT FORM



Musicae Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usyd.edu.au  
ABN 16 211 543 488

Phone: +61 2 9351 1235  
The University of Sydney  
Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia  
admin@usyd.edu.au

Telephone: + 61 2 9351 1235  
Facsimile: + 61 2 9351 1287  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)

## PRIMARY CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM

I..... agree to permit  
....., who is aged ..... years,  
to participate in the research project entitled:

### INFLUENCES ON STUDENT MUSICAL INVOLVEMENT IN NSW SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction
2. I have read the Parent Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researchers
3. I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child assents to their participation in the project
4. I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary; a decision not to participate will in no way affect their academic standing or relationship with the school at any time
5. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential and that no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity

Signature of Parent/Guardian.....

Please PRINT name.....

Date.....

Signature of child.....

Please PRINT name.....

Date.....

**Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [qbriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:qbriody@usyd.edu.au) (Email).**

# APPENDIX I: STUDENT INFORMATION STATEMENT

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC



Musician's Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usydney.edu.au  
ABN 16 211 503 488

Phone: +61 2 9351 1235  
The University of Sydney  
Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia  
www.usydney.edu.au

Telephone: + 61 2 9351 1235  
Facsimile: + 61 2 9351 1287  
Email: [jrenwick@usyd.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@usyd.edu.au)

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

### Research Project Title: Influences on student musical involvement in NSW secondary schools

#### (1) What is the study about?

This study looks at what makes students choose to continue with their musical activities and studies.

#### (2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being done by Madeleine Bell for the degree of Bachelor of Music Education at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Mr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

#### (3) What does the study involve?

Students from music classes in years 7, 8, 9 and 10, and music teachers are invited to take part in the study. The researcher will watch music lessons in some class years. Music students in the study will take part in group interviews. These interviews will take place at school. Music teachers will also be asked to take part in an interview, separate from students, with the researcher. All interviews with both students and teachers will be sound-recorded, and later be written out by the researcher, to be analysed.

#### (4) How much time will the study take?

Each interview will take about 30 minutes.

#### (5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without prejudice or penalty.

#### (6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will be allowed to look at information on participants. A report of the study may be published, but people who take part in the study will not be recognised in the report.



**(7) Will the study benefit me?**

This study may not benefit you directly, but this research hopes to improve teaching strategies and add to teacher knowledge in order to make music learning better and more enjoyable for students.

**(8) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you may.

**(9) What if I require further information?**

When you have read this information, Madeleine Bell will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Madeleine Bell (Tel: 0405 222 720) or Mr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education (Tel: 9351 1235).

**(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?**

**Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [gabriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:gabriody@usyd.edu.au) (Email).**

*This information sheet is for you to keep*

# APPENDIX J: UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE, LETTER OF APPROVAL



The University of Sydney

NSW 2006 Australia

## Human Research Ethics Committee

[www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human](http://www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human)

### Senior Ethics Officer:

Gail Briody

Telephone: (02) 9351 4811

Facsimile: (02) 9351 6706

Email: [gbriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:gbriody@usyd.edu.au)

Rooms L4.14 & L5.04 Main Quadrangle A14

### Human Secretariat

Telephone: (02) 9036 9309

(02) 9036 9308

Facsimile: (02) 9036 9310

12 December 2007

Mr J Renwick  
Sydney Conservatorium of Music  
Greenway Building – C41  
The University of Sydney

Dear Mr Renwick

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at its meeting on 11 December 2007 approved your protocol entitled **"Influences on student musical involvement in NSW secondary schools: a multi-case study."**

Details of the approval are as follows:

<b>Ref No.:</b>	<b>12-2007/10591</b>
<b>Approval Period:</b>	<b>31 December 2007 to 31 December 2008</b>
<b>Authorised Personnel:</b>	<b>Mr J Renwick Miss M Bell</b>

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007* under Section 5.1.29

The approval of this project is **conditional** upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*. We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed.

### **Special Condition/s of Approval**

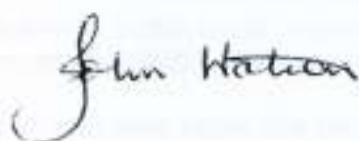
- Amendments to the Participant Information Statement for Teachers:
  - Please include letterhead information i.e. telephone number, facsimile number, postal address and email address.
  - Move the heading "Will anyone else know the results?" to page 2.
- Amendment to the Participant Information Statement for Primary Caregiver:
  - Please include letterhead information i.e. telephone number, facsimile number, postal address and email address.
- Amendments to the Participant Information Statement for School Students:
  - Please include letterhead information i.e. telephone number, facsimile number, postal address and email address.
  - Remove the 'track' changes i.e. letterhead logo and under the heading "What does the study involve?", Line 3,

- Amendment to the Dear Principal Letter:
  - Please include letterhead information i.e. telephone number, facsimile number, postal address and email address.

**Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities to ensure that:**

- (1) All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- (2) All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- (3) The HREC must be notified as soon as possible of any changes to the protocol. All changes must be approved by the HREC before continuation of the research project. These include:-
  - If any of the investigators change or leave the University.
  - Any changes to the Participant Information Statement and/or Consent Form.
- (4) All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The Participant Information Statement and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee and the following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement. *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or [gbriody@usyd.edu.au](mailto:gbriody@usyd.edu.au) (Email).*
- (5) Copies of all signed Consent Forms must be retained and made available to the HREC on request.
- (6) It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.
- (7) The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.
- (8) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor J D Watson  
**Chairman**  
**Human Research Ethics Committee**

cc: Miss Madeleine Bell, 11 Jenny Lane, Fountaindale NSW 2258

Encl. Participant Information Statement for School Students Page 1

## APPENDIX K: NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, LETTER OF APPROVAL



Miss Madeleine Bell  
11 Jenny Lane  
FOUNTAINDALE NSW 2258

Dear Ms Bell

SERAP Number **2007238**

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Influences on student musical involvement in NSW secondary schools: a multi-case study*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation.

This approval will remain valid until 19 December 2008

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to General Manager, Planning and Innovation, Department of Education and Training, GPO Box 33, Sydney, NSW 2001.

Yours sincerely

John Mather  
**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**  
17 December 2007