

## Musical Instruments for Bushfire Survivors: RESOUND RESPONDS



On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2009 devastating bushfires swept across Victoria, destroying 2200 homes, tragically leaving 173 dead and 7500 homeless. The fires were not completely extinguished until six weeks later. Two weeks after what is now known as Black Saturday, ABC Classic Breakfast program presenter Emma Ayres contacted the MCA. Listeners were phoning Emma with generous offers to donate musical instruments for bushfire survivors. Could the MCA help?



Ken Mival of Flowerdale with his new clarinet. Photo by Rachel Hocking.

The Resound program, an instrument program idea sitting in hibernation, seemed the possible solution. Assisted by a partnership with the Dandenong Ranges Music Council (DRMC), the Resound Bushfire Appeal began. Since then, the Resound Bushfire Appeal has delivered around 150 instruments with an estimated worth of \$26000 to applicants from Traralgon to Bendigo.

In lowly beginnings, the appeal's first sixty deliveries were conducted over Easter with the help of Madeleine Schwer. A trailer

was hooked onto the back of my car, and we drove with three kids and a DVD-player down from Sydney to Melbourne via pickups at Canberra and Temora. For this round of deliveries, instruments had come from everywhere: a cello had been delivered by Cleary's Refrigerated Transport, carefully placed in a truckie's cabin from a parish up north; a violin was driven hours from Kennett River to Melbourne; Music on the Move and Steve's Guitars donated brand new accessories and children's percussion;

Music For Everyone at Ainslee, ACT became a dropoff point for donated instruments; Temora's Open Door Bookshop provided six boxes of new sheet music; Australian Keyboard Academy donated new keyboards, freely couriered by Chess Moving. One of the donations came from a survivor of the Canberra bushfires who understood the situation completely, having been there himself. Other instruments were picked up from the headquarters at the DRMC, generously dropped off by donors, and administered by Bev and Tracy. Frustratingly for this round, the car broke down twice and deliveries ran a day late!

We met inspirational people now living in circumstances not chosen: some had moved several times since the fires into rental accommodation, significant distances away from their home communities; others were living amongst the blackened environment, now punctuated with bursts of green. One recipient was Middle Kinglake Primary School. We met the principal and music teacher Catherine James who, with volunteers, were preparing the school during the holidays for opening. It now stands as demountables on a sporting field next to the crumpled school that was. Already, the school had participated in a music concert with other local schools to help bring their communities together after the fires. Other Resound recipients included instrumental teachers, keen teenagers, concert band enthusiasts, and professional musos, all of whom had lost all of their possessions.

The appeal then gratefully received a small bushfire relief grant from the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development to attract volunteers to the project. Currently, fifteen volunteers work to administer applications and pledges, pick

up instruments, and drive out to affected communities to deliver instruments. These volunteers were trained at the DRMC by Lisa Schwer, one of the amazing counsellors who has also been working at the relief centres since the fires broke out in February. The wonderful volunteers were organised by Bev McAlister through the DRMC, which has also provided storage and "on-the-ground" presence, coupled with "fire-experience" that was essential to the project's success.

While the appeal was driven by response, the need was obvious once the first contact was made with survivors. Lost musical instruments were missed for many reasons: they were a source of income; they provided daily enjoyment; missing the instrument was a reminder of all other things now missed. For many who have insurance, purchasing an instrument is not their first priority and yet having the instrument can provide moments of relief in a stressful situation.

The current round of deliveries are being made by the fantastic Resound volunteers, and has included many new guitars purchased through the generous donations of funds made to the appeal, and with the help of CMI, and Deborah Smith of the Rebuilding Communities

through Music appeal. In Sydney, a generous department in an insurance company, with some extra help from Facebook friends, fundraised money to purchase a new digital piano for a young piano student who is recovering from 50% burns. Craig from Keyboard Corner delivered the piano to the hospital on the recipient's birthday, even playing "Happy Birthday" as a warm up. Piano deliveries have also been generously and professionally undertaken by Piano Movers to tertiary and professional musicians.

One unanticipated result of Resound has been the new connections made between donors and recipients. Some have contacted their donor to say "thanks" and have had another place to pass on their experiences. The appeal has received many positive comments from both recipients and donors.

From experienced musos: "To Resound, I would like to thank everyone involved in the organisation of this wonderful project... You are all making a big contribution to our healing process."

"Thankyou so much for my new guitar. It is bringing the music back into my life..."

From a flute teacher and family: "... thank you very much for the musical equipment..."

I know that they are all totally thrilled with what they have received from the generous donations provided to yourselves. To say that [she] was stunned to receive her flute is an understatement. And [my daughter] has hardly put her flute down! Even this morning I had to convince her to pack it up so she could eat breakfast."

From a caseworker of bushfire survivors: "It's just really nice to know that people are thinking about us."

From a donor: "I wanted to say thanks to... the MCA for the work you've done which has allowed people like me to help in this very small way"

It is anticipated that this appeal will continue for sometime yet as survivors get back on their feet. Applications and pledges are still being received through [www.mca.org.au/resoundbushfireappeal](http://www.mca.org.au/resoundbushfireappeal) - the appeal desperately needs drumkits, but pledges of other good, working instruments are also welcome. The Resound Bushfire Appeal kindly thanks all donors of instruments, funds, and assistance for their amazing generosity.

**Rachel Hocking** is the Co-ordinator of the Resound Bushfire Appeal.



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**CHARLES STURT**  
UNIVERSITY

# retro forum

Towards 2000 and it was time to say goodbye to those things of the old millennium, and welcome in the new. We said hello to the re-formation of the South Sydney Rabbitohs, and we farewelled *Hey Hey Its Saturday* (poor Wilbur and Red, unemployed musicians again). We all voted 'no' to becoming a republic, but 'yes' to changing the constitution preamble to include reference to the first Australians. Interest rates began to rise. We sang (well some of us sang) that we'd party like it's 1999, and worried about the Y2K bug destroying the planet, only to be disappointed on New Year's Day.

At the National Entertainment Industry Conference of 1999, MP3s and the ability to purchase music online were just two of many exciting new concepts spruiked, as reported in *MF Vol 6 No 1*. The sometimes-tumultuous love affair between radio broadcasters and the record industry was tested with the introduction of the self-regulation of Australian content. And the much-hyped dreadful problem of imported cds proved that it wasn't that dreadful after all... turned out more local artists were signed and local stores at the time had improved their profit margin.

The Nugent Report on the Arts, 313 dot points long but narrowly-focused, drew much attention in *MF Vol 6 No 1*. The report found that disturbingly, arts companies' "financial difficulties are life threatening, contributing also to a decline in 'artistic vibrancy', especially in the willingness to take risks with repertoire." Commissioned Australian works was on the decline, especially in opera where at the time it was non-existent. It was unfortunate that even though the report revealed a lot about the state of the arts, it suggested little that was ideal.

While we examined our own arts policies, we longingly gazed at other countries' equivalents just to make ourselves feel even better. In *MF Vol 6 No 2*, we found out that funding for arts was flowing once again in Canada, that the Netherlands are happy to subsidise up to 72% of its orchestras, and that French polities have been interested in culture since, oh, way back before Australia was visited by the Dutch. The self-proclaimed 'Protector of the Arts' that France is had spent 1% of its national budget on culture ten years ago, compared to our 0.2%. It could only go up from here, couldn't it?

**Rachel Hocking**

from page 3

He took a teaching degree (Uni of Adelaide) and did a short trip around Europe looking at Kodaly, Orff and Dalcroze. Tonight he leaves to go overseas to take up a position as a primary music teacher in Hong Kong (International Baccalaureate).

It is Australia's loss! He has always found it difficult to be attached to a school and mostly has worked as an instrumental teacher – paid by parents.

If Australian education is to provide musical experiences for the next generation – and I don't mean that everybody should become a musician – young people with talent and enthusiasm should be encouraged to stay and teach, with opportunities to make a decent living and not hear that they are *just* a music teacher. Learning music at school is good for the self-esteem of many students, but how about the self-esteem of the teachers? Even some recognition of the benefits and contribution that their work offers would be helpful.

I hope you find this story interesting. It is just another short narrative related to the plight of primary school music in Australia. We cannot always use a lack of qualified teachers as an excuse – but they need to be paid properly.

**Gaynor Davis**  
Adelaide SA

## Music and the bushfires

The Music Council's activities in finding musical instruments for victims of the Victorian bushfires has been just fabulous. For some people, the loss of their music must have been the last straw. Rachel Hocking and the Council showed the heart that music can bring, got it down to the ground where sometimes it matters most. Dandenong Ranges Music too, and Emma Ayres of ABC radio. Thank you so much. You did some great things for friends of mine.

**Marie Callistano**  
Dandengong VIC

## GROVELBOX

### CORRECTION: Australian String Quartet

Reviewer David Bollard writes: "In Music Forum magazine Vol. 15 No. 1, you made my review of the Roger Smalley chamber music (Melba Recordings) Editor's Choice... [T]he photo of the Australian String Quartet [accompanying the review] is of the NEW players (formerly the Tankstream Quartet), not the FORMER players (Yoshimoto, Cuddeford, Williams and Browne). At the time I wondered about that, but as the recording itself doesn't seem to mention specific recording dates, I didn't follow it up." David did then follow it up and so we need to affirm that the recording was made by the earlier membership of the ASQ.

### CORRECTION: Betty Beath, and Wirripang

Firstly, thank you for the two reviews in the August issue. However, I just thought that I should point out to you a few anomalies in the review by Inge Southcott of the CD Music of Betty Beath in the August issue. In two incidents the piano accompanist was credited to Colin Spiers, where in fact it was Betty Beath herself. And it was stated that all the sheet music was available from the Australian Music Centre, wherein fact, Wirripang is the publisher of all this music and it is available from us. [www.australiancomposers.com.au](http://www.australiancomposers.com.au)