EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the extent, benefits and potential of music education in Victorian schools

Melbourne — 6 May 2013

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Mr F. Sal, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals.

Necessary corrections to be notified to executive officer of committee
Welcome, Frank, and thank you for coming to present to the music inquiry today. I know you know the drill, but I have to repeat it for the process. Information is being recorded. You will get the opportunity to review the transcript provided by Hansard and make any alterations if need be. Evidence is covered by parliamentary privilege — the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament. That is for the hearing proper, not anything that is said outside of the hearing. Thanks again. You know what we are all about. We have a number of questions. I will kick it off. If there is anything we have not covered by the end, we will give you the opportunity to do so afterwards.

Firstly, looking at the state of high school music education, how do you think Victoria fares overall in terms of quality and availability of music programs within government secondary schools, and what are the key issues for music education within the secondary school sector?

Mr SAL — Probably a question first. Are we focusing more on music education full stop, or are we looking at the instrumental music program?

The CHAIR — We are looking at both.

Mr SAL — I think they are very different perspectives.

The CHAIR — Absolutely, yes.

Mr SAL — No worries. Talking about classroom music within schools, I believe that over the last decade or more classroom music education has probably suffered somewhat as the curriculum has become more and more crowded and there are fewer specialists available to do it. As with languages, quite often schools put in classroom music education as a one or two-periods-a-week type affair at Years 7 or 8 and maybe at Year 9, but that in itself is not adequate to do too much to raise skills. It is similar to LOTE and the like. I will leave that one to the side.

On the other hand, with instrumental music, I think those schools that have been able to be on the program for instrumental music for some time are doing wonderful things. The challenge in the instrumental music program is how we ensure that those schools that want to come on board have some sort of capacity to help facilitate that initiation of the instrumental music program. There are schools that are well recognised for instrumental music with large programs; others may have significant difficulty in getting on it regardless of the dollars available, and I will talk about personal experience of this in half a moment. And then there are ones in the middle that have been toying with the notion but have great difficulty in terms of how they resource it to start with, how they get teachers, how they get instruments and how they get parents and kids enthused enough to be willing to fork out some of the dollars associated with it.

I have had three different schools as principal, but I will relate my experiences at two. My last one was Doncaster Secondary College, where I had a significant program — probably 200-plus kids in the instrumental music program. We had funding via the instrumental music fund as well as students paying into the instrumental music fund. If you can imagine 200 kids out of about 1100 kids that we had near the end, that is quite a sizeable program, and we had good facilities to go with that. My previous school to that was Carwatha College P-12 in Noble Park. I was there for seven years as principal. I tried very hard there to get an instrumental music program going and use some of our disadvantage funds to put aside to try to drive that, but without being able to get in place good quality personnel in terms of teachers to drive it and enthuse the kids, which would then enthuse the parents, it was really hard to do. I put aside $10 000 or $15 000, I cannot remember what it was, to try to get it started, but that is just a pittance if you want to put in place a decent instrumental music program.

In many ways the instrumental music program in Victoria is going really well. I think there are some good models. In my submission from VASSP, we made mention of the eastern metropolitan region, or what is now the north-eastern Victoria region joined with the Hume region. I think they have good models in terms of trying to continue supporting those schools that have programs and also putting aside some dollars to facilitate the funding of those that are looking at growing their programs. So a reasonable model.
Ms TIERNEY — Just touching on that, Frank, in terms of schools that find it difficult to find specialist teachers, can you give us some indication as to the type of schools or the regions that face the most difficulty in recruiting specialist music teachers? And what strategies can you suggest to improve the supply of specialist music teachers in this state?

Mr SAL — I think that is the same sort of question that you could throw at me if we were here doing a LOTE inquiry, a physics inquiry or a chemistry inquiry. We have middle-class schools that people are reasonably willing to move to, travel to and apply for. Then we have a whole range of schools that are less than middle class, that do not have the facilities and are more difficult to get to and there is the impression that they are more difficult to teach in. Those schools have difficulty teaching recruiting personnel. Country and remote regions in particular — if Peter were here, I am sure he would talk about Mildura and getting people up that way and Red Cliffs and all those river schools and trying to get people there to do the work. To get specialists up here is even more difficult. That is a problem not just in instrumental music and music education.

One of the other challenges, however — and I cannot really speak with authority on this in terms of knowing numbers or the like — is the number of teachers coming out with general music qualifications. I would imagine that is somewhat depleted compared to a couple of decades ago, but that is more me surmising. I think the other thing around that — and again I would need to get a little bit more info on how this actually works — is that I have concerns that schools are having difficulties employing musicians who are not teachers and getting the appropriate approvals through VIT. Again, I do not have a handle on it, but I get that impression when I am talking to schools and from some of the stuff that has been sent in. So with that notion of how much freedom schools have to employ people who they believe have the capacity to do the job that they need, whether it is that particular instrument or the like, I think there is some work that needs to be done around it to facilitate more people being available to come and work in those schools that have the capacity to employ them for instrumental music.

Ms TIERNEY — Can I just ask — and this is not a pre-prepared question — what is your view or your organisation’s view about bonded undergraduates, once they become qualified teachers, whether they be specialists in music or whatever, being required to do the first two years at a difficult metropolitan school or a school in regional Victoria that constantly has problems with recruitment?

Mr SAL — Again, I cannot speak for all my members, but I suppose, given that I was on a studentship where I was basically bonded to work in a government school for a couple of years at least, it is an excellent way to go. There is that notion that they are being bonded for that purpose. They are getting some sort of compensation for it along the way. I think it would be well worth looking at in terms of ensuring that people go to hard-to-staff or more remote areas and supporting them in those areas. I have always felt that was good, but then I got a studentship at the time; I thought it was a good way to go at that time.

The CHAIR — You mentioned just before people who are teaching in schools who may not necessarily have the qualifications but who do have music experience and the issue with them being recognised through VIT.

Mr SAL — I probably meant it the other way — people from the outside in the community who have good music qualifications and getting them recognised so they can come and work.

The CHAIR — Yes. We are on the same page. What would your organisation’s view be of allowing them to continue within the system and finding a simpler, easier way for them? We have heard that potentially some schools would be in jeopardy if they went through the current model of having to tick all those boxes.

Mr SAL — They have paraprofessionals and the like who can operate through VIT. Given that we have heard a lot of talk at the moment around greater autonomy and authority for schools and the like, I think most schools are in a fairly good position to be able to say, ‘Look, we’ve interviewed this bod, we know what their skills are, we have seen them work with kids and the like, they have gone through their police checks and whatever checks they need to go through, and we believe they can do the job’. Whether
they need to get some paraprofessional-type VIT registration is fine, but I think it needs to be made much easier than it is now for schools to be able to use those people. It is a specialist area, and you can teach the instrument without having the teacher qualifications. More often than not the instrumental music type approach will be one where one instrumental music teacher to one to four kids would generally be the go.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Frank.

Ms MILLER — Most secondary schools fund their instrumental music programs using a combination of music funding or non-specific funding and parent contribution. Do you believe that there is currently the right balance between these funding sources, and if not, what do you believe to be the optimum balance?

Mr SAL — It is not right. Government needs to give us more money.

Ms MILLER — Everyone is going, ‘Show me the money!’.

Mr SAL — It depends. If you had asked me this three years ago when I was at Doncaster, I would have said that the balance was probably okay because they had a reasonably big program and we had the instruments in place — —

Ms MILLER — Is that with 200 students? I think you mentioned that earlier.

Mr SAL — Yes, 200 in the program. I had 1100 or 1200 kids at the time. We were reasonably comfortable with the way the program operated because we had an established program, largely with established instruments available. We had some teachers through this funding and then teachers who we also employed via the funds that we got through parents to drive that.

Before that, when I was at Carwatha College in Noble Park, I would have argued, ‘No, it’s not appropriate’, because it was so hard to try to get onto a list that would help you drive the development of the program. So I think there needs to be more work in that. I understand that there are buckets of money and they cannot necessarily stretch. If the bucket is what it is now, then I think the way that that bucket is dispersed needs to take into account the continuity of programs that are in place at the moment but also that there be some facility there to provide the initiative for schools to try to start up their programs.

The difficulty in that is that if you are again in middle-class suburbs, then some schools have greater capacity to raise some additional funds to drive that or to get parents to pay — I don’t know — I think ours was 200 bucks a year to get almost weekly tuition; it was next to nothing. There was no trouble getting that money. But for me to have been able to get that from parents at Noble Park would have been much more difficult. I do not have a solution to that one, but I think that is the area that really needs to be worked on.

Ms MILLER — A work in progress?

Mr SAL — Yes.

Mr ELASMAR — Thanks, Frank. Your submission recommends a number of changes to the distribution of instrumental music funding to schools. Could you expand on the issues you have with the current funding model and what model you would like to see replace it?

Mr SAL — Again, given that we have a fixed bucket and it is not going to move from what it is now, obviously I would argue that music, and instrumental music, has an enormous effect on schools and on kids. It brings huge benefits to those individual kids and also to the school because it tends to attract kids who want to be involved and who want to do things. If schools can have instrumental music programs, it is just wonderful for nearly everybody concerned once you get it going and is also a great PR activity for parents and the community. In lots of ways all schools should be looking at trying to implement it.

However, in saying that, obviously I would like there to be access to a greater pool of money. I will leave that aside because I could argue that for a long time. Given that we have the same pool of money that we have now, and it is going to move by 5%, 10% or nothing, I would say that the way it is being distributed
at the moment is probably the best way from the point of view of having groups of schools help manage that. I worry that there are discussions sometimes within the department that the instrumental music money should be broadbanded. I do not know whether you guys hear that. But the way we get our dollars in government schools is that most of it is put in as a per-student amount that you get, and it is one band of money. Then there are a few other little items. At the moment instrumental music is one of the other items.

One of the comments that has been made over the years is that we want to broadband as much as we can. I would argue strongly against instrumental music being broadbanded, which would mean that for every child in the state — say, in secondary schools or across normal schools — there would be a certain amount of money put in for instrumental music and it would not go anywhere near allowing those schools that do not have an instrument or program to start that program; it would not go into that program. I tend to think that the sort of set-up that we have now is a fairly good way to go about distributing the money. However, I think there needs to be more directive from the department to say that the networks of schools and the regions need to make sure that there is capacity there so that on a yearly basis a couple of extra schools can be brought on board into the instrumental music program.

I think a little bit further down the track we would probably need to have the discussion I intimated before about your middle-class, upper-class type areas as compared to others and the capacity for parents to pay and what is a reasonable amount for parents to pay, because I think there needs to be a discussion. Government schools are quite often up against it, because we have got free and secular education as the banner for government school education, but the reality of things like instrumental music is that it can never occur like that; it has to be paid for. I think my $200 a year at Doncaster was a pittance in terms of what those kids got in instrumental music. If you are going for instrumental music with private tuition, you would probably pay that every month or every couple of weeks almost. That would be a discussion.

I think there is the notion of maintaining the funding as it is now, ensuring that networks of schools or regions have the capacity to bring on board other schools, and then a discussion down the track about almost giving some indication to schools that, ‘Hey, it is pretty reasonable to charge X amount of dollars’ rather than each one of them having to worry constantly about what sort of backlash there is going to be if they charge dollars, because that is always a difficult one for government schools.

The CHAIR — Just on that, Frank, would you suggest almost like a tiered approach to try to get schools that are not providing music at the moment into the program to ensure that everyone gets access?

Mr SAL — Yes. I think that would have to be part of the discussion. The one that could go alongside that is the notion of, ‘How easy would it be for you to travel from where you are in your school to that school, which has a great program, and make use of that and then come back to your school?’. There has been so much discussion over that sort of approach for decades now — in different subjects, not just in instrumental music — and it does not tend to work out that well in the end even though we need to try to develop it more. I think that would need to go alongside it, because I think it would take us a very long time to have nearly every secondary school offering an instrumental music program because the investment there is pretty huge. But yes, there needs to be some sort of bucket that provides the incentive for those schools that are starting to work on it, that are starting to fundraise towards it and that have school councils that are backing it to come onto the program.

Ms MILLER — A number of principals have raised concerns about the current model of assigning instrumental music teachers to a base school and the funding implications this can have for base schools. Can you elaborate on the issues with this current model?

Mr SAL — If I was at the base school and I was helping to run the instrumental music in the Doncaster network, East Doncaster and Balwyn or whatever else might get some of those teachers who would then work 0.2 — one day a week — at, say, East Doncaster, and somebody else might be one and a half days over here. However, if the program falls apart in those schools and they do not need the teachers any more or they are not eligible for the teachers any more, they basically come back onto my staff. I am given money on a per head basis and I do not necessarily have the money to fund those kids because they are
funded by the money that those other schools have got, and that has to come through to me to cover their costs.

The issue becomes one where the teachers have no longer got a position in those other areas and for whatever reason they come back to the base school, and at the moment the base school has to wear the cost of those teachers until they can get them moved into some other area or get them to quit, I suppose. It becomes very costly when you have a top of the range teacher, and many of the instrumental music teachers will be the top of the range. You are looking at $80 000 and $85 000 with on-costs or something like that.

Ms MILLER — Following on from that then, what changes would you make as to how instrumental music teachers are employed and allocated between schools?

Mr SAL — The department could take on the responsibility for those people in terms of their employment rather than allocating it to the base school, so that if there are changes it would not be at the expense of the individual school and they would be in a better position to put on pressure to have those people move to areas where there is demand for instrumental music. I think that could be an approach. Of course there are always industrial issues associated with all of this. The other one, which is usually an industrial issue, is that a lot of the instrumental music teachers are in casual-type employment, which does not help in terms of their long-term future. When we were talking about people being employed who might be paraprofessionals and the like, that is not necessarily an issue because they are not associated with the base school; they are employed on a sessional basis. So the notion of looking at more session-based type teaching is important too. But at the same time it is important to have some ongoing instrumental music staff, which at the moment are allocated to the base school, being available to try and bring together the whole instrumental music within that region or network. So I think the notion is that they are linked to either the regional office or to the department, and they take some responsibility for them rather than an individual school like, for instance, Blackburn High School, which I think is probably a base school still, or it used to be; they are not a big school. If they suddenly have to take on board an extra staff member because of changes in demand for instrumental music, that would be a huge hit to their budget. They would not be able to afford that; they would go into deficit in a bigger way, or into deficit. So I think the department has got a bigger role to play within that.

Ms MILLER — So essentially they would just be contracting their services out to the recipient school, whoever wanted to offer that program, if the department were to employ them?

Mr SAL — Yes, if the department were to employ them they could still operate similar to the way it is now, in terms of that network of schools getting together and saying, ‘Okay, we’ve got two and a half’ — or five, or whatever — ‘instrumental music teachers, and you can have 0.2 because of the number of kids you have got in your program, you can have three days a week’, da, da, da. If there are issues with that in terms of a decrease in demand and the like, that cost does not necessarily come straight back to the base school; it comes back to the department, right? Because the individual pressure on that school is just enormous in those sorts of instances.

Ms TIERNEY — Would you argue that that would be the case for other specialist teachers as well? That you are in a regional pool? — —

Mr SAL — Such as?

The CHAIR — LOTE.

Ms TIERNEY — Yes, LOTE.

Mr SAL — I cannot think of other specialist areas that are taught in the same way as instrumental music.
There might be, and you might suddenly say, ‘Oh, what about it, Frank?’ Things like LOTE are taught by teachers within the school, right? It is not in the same sort of set-up, where you have got a base school and you have got the LOTE teachers going out here, there and wherever to do that teaching. I think it is a unique area. It is not the same as your physics teacher or your chemistry teacher or your LOTE teacher, because schools have got those on board.

The other approach could be that instead of a base school — and I suppose you are prompting me with that question — having them on the books, the individual school says, ‘Okay, I’ve been allocated the 0.2’ — or the 0.4 — ‘because I’ve got my 200 kids and that is what I’m eligible for, given the formulas for the region’ and they then come onto my staff, remembering that if the number of kids drop off, I will name them in excess and I will wear that cost for 12 months. It is an individual school wearing a smaller time fraction.

The CHAIR — If it has been allocated across, and for whatever reason your school cannot get the 0.2, whatever it is, loading, why cannot it be allocated back to the school in terms of incentivising them to —

Mr SAL — Yes. It depends on how their formulas work, because at the moment — and I am only picturing the eastern region one, because I have not worked in the others for some time — in the eastern region the group of instrumental music principals, or the little group that has been set up by the regional office, will arrange the allocations near the end of each year. If my numbers in my instrumental program drop from 200 to 150, say, at Doncaster — and that is what I am forecasting for the following year — I am going to lose 0.1 of time, in terms of an instrumental music teacher, half day a week. Then that instrumental music group will then say, ‘At Gayle’s school, her numbers have grown, so that 0.1 goes over there’.

So given that they are all employed via a base school, or by the regional offices, as I was arguing before, that is an easy one to then reallocate. Whereas when they are with me, given all our industrials and the like, it is not an easy one for me to suddenly say, ‘I’m giving up 0.1, and now you are going to be on their staff’. It is just the complexities around it. If that can be streamlined via the industrial agreements, then that is fine. Does that make sense?

Ms TIERNEY — Yes. In your submission you make mention of the quality and the availability of instrumental teachers. Do you want to elaborate a little bit more on that?

Mr SAL — I talked about it right at the start in terms of music teachers. I believe the number coming out with training in music has decreased enormously, therefore that impacts on programs in schools, regardless of what the music programs are like in schools and whether their quality is not as good as they might have been years ago when we did not have as crowded a curriculum. Access to music teachers within a school is important to try and generate the whole instrumental music program, enthusiasm for it and the like. If you are not getting those people coming through, it makes it harder within a school to generate that sort of interest and to generate the program. Alongside that is the notion of encouraging people. You spoke of it earlier; what term did you use?

Ms TIERNEY — Bonded.

Mr SAL — You could drive that and say, ‘For the next three years those trained in music and the like will have the ability to be bonded for two years and they will be guaranteed a job et cetera’. Alongside that you could have the notion of having more ready access to people within the community without too much hassle to be part of your instrumental music program. That is the discussion we are having around VIT, the paraprofessionals and the like.

The CHAIR — What about your views in terms of music within the broader education offerings? We have heard a fair bit around the crowded curriculum stuff that has been an excuse for not having music programs.
Mr SAL — I have a little bit of trouble with classroom music in schools, because I do not believe many schools have put enough time into it. It is similar to, as I said earlier on, for instance, a LOTE program. You really do need to be spending four or five periods a week, so you might not do it one year, but you should do heaps the following year to get kids into it, and the same with music. But in saying that, I think principals and schools would crawl over broken glass almost to get a decent instrumental music program and music program going in their school, because they recognise the benefits for a whole heap of individual kids. They recognise it for the school in terms of the whole school’s feeling of self-confidence and self-worth, the performances they do and all those sorts of things. I think the way parents regard the school improves when you have got your own kids doing performances and being recognised and being seen, and also in terms of outcomes and academic performance within schools.

Partly with instrumental music you tend to get fairly dedicated kids into that who are willing to work not just in instrumental music but also in other areas of the school. They tend to contribute to the school. There are so many positives running with the notion of having kids involved in music, particularly instrumental music, that I think any school will work very hard to try to get a program like that up and going.

Mr ELASMAR — The VCE music enrolments are low. What strategies could be put in place to attract more students? What is your view on the whole issue?

Mr SAL — That is not an easy one. I wish I had an answer for this. It is a little bit like our LOTE discussions, isn’t it? Across the state and probably across the nation music is so specialised once you get to that sort of level where students need to be significantly dedicated to the notion of developing their skills within those particular instruments. I think some of it comes back to that ability in the lower secondary years to make sure that you have got people in the school who are keen in music and would drive the notion of music within the school and performance within the school. I think that generates a lot of interest with kids. Any school that you look at that has got a reasonable instrumental music program and kids going through to VCE will have a fairly live music program lower down, at Years 7 and 8, in terms of kids coming into the school. I think a fair bit of that has got to do with the types of people who have been employed and can be employed into the music area of the school. Beyond that, I do not have a good enough handle on it to talk about what depth they have to go into for VCE music, so I really could not comment in any meaningful way on that.

Ms MILLER — Frank, what are your views on the role of music within the proposed Australian curriculum?

Mr SAL — I do not have a good enough handle on that, so I will not answer that.

Ms MILLER — Do you feel that music has some role to enhance learning?

Mr SAL — Definitely. Going back to what we were talking about a moment ago, it is a component of learning in itself. But as I said before, I think those students who get themselves energised within the whole music area tend to be fairly energised in a whole range of areas and the skills they develop and the skills they need to use to be able to work well within the instrumental music area are transferable across a whole range of areas of work and thinking as well.

Ms MILLER — We heard earlier today, and it was quite interesting, that one of the students would actually play music because they loved it, but in fact it then inspired and motivated them to do their homework. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr SAL — It is the invigorator in that instance, isn’t it? Obviously it is thing that that student loves and gives them that impetus to actually say, ‘I will do this now and let’s get going’. I think it provides the impetus.

Ms MILLER — It has a wider potential, do you think?
Mr SAL — I think it is the same with all of us. If we are involved in an area that we really enjoy, participating in that area tends to make other areas of our lives and other areas of work that much easier to get involved in. If you have something that you are performing well in and that you really enjoy and are being recognised for — —

Most kids who are involved in instrumental music programs, particularly once they get to the VCE end of things, are always being asked, ‘Can you be there for the parent-teacher night?’, ‘Can you guys stand in the library as all the parents come through?’, or ‘This is our awards night; can you perform?’. There are not too many other areas of school life where kids are recognised like that on a regular basis.

If you are sporty and you are at a school that is into sport, fine; but more often than not you are off somewhere doing it and you may get a ribbon and be recognised at assembly; whereas these kids are constantly performing in front of somebody and are being recognised by the school. It is just a huge fillip in terms of their own energies, egos and self-confidence, I think.

The CHAIR — We are interested in exploring the whole notion of a campus-style mentality, and I know you have alluded to potential problems with that where a student could go off to another campus to study music, and we looked at the base issue before about that funding. Could we have specialists in particular schools that have great music programs and the ability for a child to spend whatever period of time at a neighbouring school to do the music component but then have their main school? What are your thoughts about looking at those sorts of things? Is it something that is worth trialling? What would your views be?

Mr SAL — I would love to see most schools being able to offer some form of instrumental music within their school, even if it is at a reasonably low level to start off with, but I think there is significant capacity or at least the ability to have a decent conversation around some of the sorts of stuff you were just talking about in terms of schools that are specialist schools operating, say, week-long camps in instrumental music for the schools surrounding them. Dare I go down this track?

Kids can, up to Year 10, miss a fair few of their classes to go and do their three-day or four-day instrumental music camp which will invigorate them in all sorts of ways and they will come back and catch up with what they have missed and be more energised to do all sorts of things. That notion of a mixture is really important. There is some capacity to do that and I would love it if it could work, but I have not seen too many great examples of it. I have been a principal since the early 1990s and we used to have our tech packs and sharing out in the country — —

The CHAIR — Why? What are the barriers preventing that?

Mr SAL — The complexities of timetables, the costings, the organisation that goes with it, the funding that is or is not with it, and the pressures within schools about ‘But if he or she goes off for that afternoon they are going to miss my English class’. It is getting all those sorts of things going and getting that culture, that acceptance across the schools that this is something that is really important and that by the kids being involved in this they are going to benefit in everything else. I think that almost has to be part and parcel of any exercise that goes down the track of having that campus-type approach where there is sharing. But I reckon it would be well worth exploring, even if something is done to try and have a couple of trials in that sort of area whether it is out in the country or in one of the areas of Melbourne.

The CHAIR — The same would apply to other things like LOTE. For instance, if you are a school that is interested in setting up, say, a French program and the kids are learning Japanese at their school and a kid wants to learn French up the road then they would not be able to do it.

Mr SAL — And there has to be exploration of that sort of thing because the reality is we do not have enough LOTE teachers, for instance, if you are using that one as the example. So I think there has to be exploration and there needs to be a fair bit of work in changing the cultures of how we approach that, but there is a hell of a lot of organisational staff and timetabling stuff. It is probably easier at a primary school.
level where you do not have that timetabling component that goes with it, but I think it is something that will need to be looked at and examined more thoroughly.

But it is also difficult because we have been and are in a time where financially things are being cut in the government school system. So when you look at having programs like this, they cost money. Schools in Victoria, and in particular in government schools, are regarded as very efficient in terms of the way they operate, which means they get reasonably good results and they are pretty effective in the way they do it. So if there are trials like this, there needs to be some resourcing with it, too, because I think that makes it hard. Particularly moving people here, there and wherever, that costs money as well.

**The CHAIR** — Finally, what are your views on parent contributions to music instrument programs?

**Mr SAL** — I do not believe it can work without parent contributions. As I said before, government school education — what was it? Free and secular and there is some other little term there, but I forget what it is. I believe that is what it should be, but I do not believe we have the capacity to provide everything that we would want to and need to without having parent contributions in a range of areas. Instrumental music is certainly one of those. I was listening to my music teacher a couple of years ago, and they were talking about one instrument and saying, ‘Frank, I need $1500 worth of instruments’, and you nearly die. There is no way known the school coffers have got that sort of money nor would the instrumental music program that is funded by the government. So parent contributions into some like that are just essential. It cannot work otherwise.

**The CHAIR** — That has concluded our questions. Is there anything that we have not covered that you want to finish with?

**Mr SAL** — Probably just reinforcing what I said earlier about the importance of music and instrumental music. To my mind, it would just be terrible if schools dropped out of that because they did not feel that they could access some sort of start-up funding and there were not people from the department and government behind that whole notion, because I think it is just so important for individual kids in the schools and the communities, full stop. So I think it is a really important program.

**The CHAIR** — Excellent. Thank you very much.

**Mr SAL** — My pleasure.

**Witness withdrew.**