

**Education and Training Committee
Inquiry into the Extent, Benefits and Potential of Music Education in Victorian Schools
Parliament of Victoria
Spring St
East Melbourne Vic. 3002**

February 5th, 2012

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a parent of 2 secondary students who participate in the Music program at Orbost Secondary College in Far East Gippsland and I welcome this opportunity to bring to your attention the benefits of the music program in our school.

Orbost Secondary College is small having currently less than 300 students enrolled but participation in the Instrumental Music program is around 25% of all students. The Music program is mainly in the form of School Concert Band and a choir and there is also a Classroom Instrumental Music Program, which it appears to me is limited by the level of funding and availability of staff.

My children enjoy participating in the band and choir despite 7.30am starts and 5.00 pm finishes 2 or 3 times a week. The program gives them confidence in performing in public as part of an Orchestra, as well as solo, and I believe this helps in other aspects of their education and life. Music requires discipline and self-motivation which are skills they will use throughout life. The program sees them mixing across year levels and forming friendships and networks with students they may not otherwise have the opportunity to get to know. They participate in workshops and concerts at other schools, towns and of course in the local community. The band as a whole are always complimented on their positive behaviour as well as their performance skills when performing in the community and other towns.

Orbost is isolated by distance and has a low socio-economic demographic. The College band is a creative outlet for a lot of students who have little choice of out of school activities. For some it is an alternative to the local sports clubs but many students participate in sports as well as the music programs. At the College Award Presentation ceremony, music students are well represented receiving both academic and sporting awards.

I have always been deeply impressed by the dedication of the music teachers at the college who put in an enormous amount of unpaid time out of regular hours to support the students in band rehearsals and performances. I don't see any other school programs that receive such constant voluntary input from staff as the music program. I am surprised that music teachers are so accepting of their lot, and that schools and the DEECD have this unspoken expectation of them. I don't see any other school programs that have 40 plus dedicated students turning up for 7.30am practice

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(senior band) every week. When I ask my children why they participate in the band they say it's fun, there's never a dull moment and there are lots of great people involved.

So in conclusion I think it's obvious that we need more music teachers, more instruments and more classroom time allocated so that all students can realise the benefits of a music program. An environment should be fostered where music is a normal part of school life in the way that programs such as Physical Education are. The benefits must be of equal if not higher significance.

Yours sincerely,

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Amanda Henry

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Cc Tim Bull MP