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This submission is intended to outline a number of important benefits students of secondary colleges gain from instrumental programmes currently offered.

I am employed three days a week as an instrumental/classroom teacher at Cobram Secondary College. There is also a full-time instrumental/classroom music teacher employed at our school of 530 students. Our programme consists of a Year 7 Band, Intermediate Concert Band, Senior Concert Band, Jazz Band, Production Band (they rehearse only when we put on productions) and the School Choir.

The music programme on offer at our school is widely regarded as one of the main selling points for why parents should choose to send their children here. Our regional funding is a very successful system that provides funds based on the strength and size of the music programme. It makes it possible to offer such opportunities to a large number of students who wish to enhance their educational experience through music performance. We participate in numerous community events and engagements. We combine with other schools to workshop and also compete in the Combined Melbourne Schools Band Festival at Monash Clayton. Our students feel part of a team and take much of the responsibility in the running of the Bands.

Each year we drive a very energetic and tireless year 7 recruitment campaign. Each year we recruit roughly a third, sometimes more of the year 7 cohort. These students purchase their own instruments of reputable brands and commit to a year of music tuition and weekly rehearsals. While not all students continue beyond year 7, the majority continue right to the end of year 12.

It is no coincidence that the higher academic achievers in the school, including year 12, are also committed members of the school band programme. Each year emphasises that, on the whole, these musically involved students out-perform academically on average than the rest of the student base. We are very proud of the programme we offer at Cobram Secondary College, made possible by the funding arrangements, whole school support and a dedicated music staff.

If the funding in the future is not priority channelled to schools that make an all-out investment of human resources to uphold a robust instrumental music programme, then these schools would have no option but to walk away from their commitment to music. It would be an unfair situation if instrumental music programmes were to be offered only in private schools and not across the board. I was very lucky to be a boarder at Scotch College Hawthorn where the music opportunities are phenomenal and I am grateful for this. We must at least try to sustain what opportunities we already have in Victorian Government schools – a reversal of this would be an unfortunate step backwards for this state.

We very much hope that this enquiry finds many compelling reasons to continue with Victoria's very proud tradition of enabling instrumental music programmes to flourish and bringing such a rich dimension to so many people's lives.

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