

Geraldine Brooks and Simon Fowler



February 11, 2013

***INQUIRY INTO THE EXTENT, BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL OF  
MUSIC EDUCATION IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS***

Chair of committee is David Southward MP  
Parliament of Victoria  
Spring St  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002.

Dear Sir,

We are writing to ask you to support real funding for music education in our state schools. As the parent of 3 primary school aged children we are appalled at the lack of support for instrumental music in public schools in Victoria.

Our children are now in Grades 6, 4 and 2 and at no time have they had access to an instrumental music teacher funded through school.

Our family understands the incredibly important place of music in our children's education and has therefore decided to pay for them to have music classes on top of the growing school levies such as excursion costs and other requisites. This year we have decided we simply cannot afford to do so.

With only one of us working fulltime and the other very part time this is an enormous financial burden on our family. We have to pay around \$500 per child each year for them to be involved in a simple band program at school and around \$300 each term for each child to be able to access instrumental music classes outside of school.

That is around \$5000 every year to pay for music education that should be provided by the school. On a salary of \$136,000 as an MP we are sure it does not sound a lot, but to most of us on rather less than that, it is enormous.

As you will be aware, Victoria is the lowest-spending state in Australia on education per student.

It was the lowest spending in Australia under the Kennett government, the lowest spending under the Bracks government, the lowest spending under the Brumby government -- which said that education was Labor's no. 1 priority -- and today it is still the lowest spending state under the Baillieu government.

Because of this disgraceful lack of spending on public education we are now in the situation where even quite large schools just cannot afford to pay for all of the specialist teachers they should have. They can either have a sports programme, or an arts teacher, or a librarian or LOTE or music but not all of them.

Schools that are in the lucky position of being in geographic areas where the parents have higher incomes end up conducting regular fundraising so that they can 'add on' to their basic funding and provide more specialists but most schools are not in this position and the children in most need again miss out altogether.

We all know the evidence shows time and again the importance of music education for children, that's why wealthy families send their children to schools where they can access such wonderful programmes. Allowing this decay to continue is willful economic vandalism of state education, not good economic management. Instead of paying out millions on events like the Grand Prix, we want education to be our priority and a quality music education in state schools should be the right of every child.

Sincerely,

Geraldine Brooks and Simon Fowler