

To The Committee,

My name is Steve Nicel and I am a strong advocate of Secondary Instrumental Music Education throughout the nation. I teach at three separate schools in regional North East Victoria and have observed many benefits that my job helps provide to students.

I have been involved in this 'faculty' for the past 15 years and it is my experience that students who participate and are actively involved in instrumental music have a much a higher ability to cope in both their academic and personal lives. I have witnessed this first hand. I have also watched as many students who have taken an interest in music turn this into a career.

The governments plan to abolish instrumental music will have detrimental effects on the many schools who are fighting to maintain order and respect with an increasing numbers of behaviourally challenged young people. With instrumental music gone, I foresee a domino effect that will ripple through all aspects of a school operation. As a whole this will make public education appear even less attractive to the many Victorian families who choose to be in the music program for it's positive effect and confidence building qualities from which their children benefit.

Society is changing at a rapid rate and there are many factors that are accelerating this. Among those are the ever popular human desire for consuming and comfort. These two components have a huge effect on the overall populations view toward societal balance of power, wealth and how education is managed. In other words, one key component to how people view our "political leaders" is in how well they manage all of our financial and personal assets. But what does this have to do with Instrumental Music you ask? Well directly and indirectly it has a lot to do with it.

It highlights the challenges that are facing young people on how to best manage their own happiness, purpose and direction when they feel railheaded into particular occupations. This also highlights the difficulties we face as music educators in providing a pathway to 'smooth out the rough edges' in the public education mainstream. I have experienced how our influence alleviates many difficulties for other "traditional" subjects in a class room environment. In general our young people are continuing to feel more lost in public education which is highlighted by the little desire to young people have to "follow their leaders". And why should they when their leaders talk a lot about caring and preparing the young for the future but demonstrate very little "action" in this regard. To the average young person a good amount of politics is perceived as self serving and moot. If the government cuts the budget for Instrumental music, it will appear as another aspect of us not caring. It is already hard enough to keep kids interested in learning music (as the benefits are well documented) and removing it completely will absolutely be a step in the wrong direction for all. It is an age old human need that exists for a damn good reason. Because it's good for us!

People want more without having to do anything to earn it. Technology is providing that possibility with our young people developing in a very non-stimulated disconnected way. We are expecting our children to be educated "by proxy" with a majority of the learning channels offered being very removed from the realities of their future life. I believe that Instrumental music by it's sheer nature of creativity helps bridge these problem areas and brings back some of that balance. It brings back into play the feeling of physically doing something which is both mentally and personally challenging as well as rewarding.

Don't make bureaucracy an end unto itself and put the cart before the horse. Do not abolish the good things in society that help keep a sense of balance and individual purpose. Do not "dumb down" the nation any more by completely removing any creative thinking from the education pool. Because in the end, we all benefit from these creative thinkers.

