

THE HILLS

Music group to sort out future with councillors

Options slim after rates hike at rehearsal venue

Angela Ranke

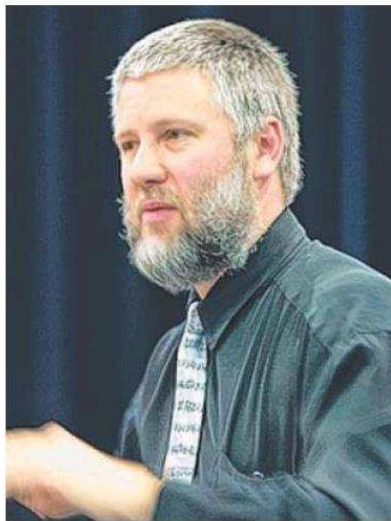
HILLS councillors hope a meeting between Hills Music Academy and the council will resolve uncertainty over the organisation's future.

The Hills Shire Council last month introduced a new weekend function rate for eight venues across the shire, including Thompson Hall where HMA rehearses on Friday night.

The council has suggested the academy change its rehearsal night to Thursday or move to nearby Stamford Hall to avoid the increased hiring fees.

But HMA director Garry Clark said neither option was suitable.

"We still have a number of issues that we need to be dealing with," he told coun-



HMA director Garry Clark.

cillors at their meeting last week.

"To change our rehearsal night would cost us between 60 to 70 per cent of our members immediately.

"The other option is to change our venue to Stamford Hall. We believe the room will not be suitable in

terms of acoustics. We have access and storage issues there as well."

Mayor Michelle Byrne said a meeting would be arranged to resolve the issues.

Deputy Mayor Yvonne Keane said she hoped council would work with the academy to find a solution.

"The value Hills Music Academy brings to the community can't be quantified," she said.

"The quality of the performances you provide is extraordinary."

Councillor Ray Harty said the academy had been an integral part of the Hills for 35 years, acting as a gateway for young people to pursue music careers.

"I do hope the meeting with the general manager places the proper value on this organisation," he said.