



## VICHANSARD

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**"4 June 2009 ASSEMBLY"**

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### Victorian College of the Arts and Music: courses

[Mrs VICTORIA \(Bayswater\)](#) -- I rise to ask the Minister for the Arts to immediately make representation to the University of Melbourne on behalf of the performing arts community. In 2006, during the second reading of the Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Bill, the Minister for Finance stated the following:

... the integration will guarantee that the college's role as Australia's pre-eminent provider of visual and performing arts training and education can continue.

He went on to stress that the objects of the newly formed faculty will be 'similar to the current objects of the college', including 'providing for education in the creative, performing and other arts'.

Now, in June 2009, we have a very different story. In the past month the degree in music theatre and other courses have been axed. The degree was only in its infancy. Finally, Melbourne could offer a degree course to rival that of institutions like WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts) and NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art). In Melbourne there is also a cloud over ongoing funding for NICA (National Institute of Circus Arts) and ANAM (Australian National Academy of Music), not to mention yesterday's announcement that all performing arts degrees at Melbourne University will have to have 50 per cent of the curriculum outside the chosen discipline.

Melbourne has long been touted as the arts capital of Australia, but in the very near future that could change. It is estimated that up to 80 per cent of production crew at the MTC (Melbourne Theatre Company) are ex-VCA (Victorian College of the Arts) students. The majority of those who train in a city go on to work in

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that city. The ADAA (Australian Drama Agents Association), a peak industry body, has said:

The music theatre industry is one of the biggest and most consistent long-term employers of performing artists ... The ability of a performer to be a 'triple threat' --

that is, a singer, actor and dancer --

is highly valued by ADAA members and is increasingly sought after by casting directors. The fact that music theatre was the first degree to be 'suspended' at the [VCA](#) displays a profound ignorance of the industry in which we operate.

It is likely that agents will become more Sydney-centric because it is cheaper to hire local

production crew and stage talent.

Many actors live in the city of their original training. But they will not be training in Melbourne. We no longer have a centre of excellence here.

The intent of the 2006 bill is very clear: nothing was to change in course content; it was to result in just the creation of a more streamlined administration. Apparently one very senior university employee has been informing staff recently that it is no longer a training institution but a research institution. This, if true, is a disgrace and is directly contrary to the intention of the bill. In my speech on the Melbourne University Amendment Bill I stressed the need for the college to retain its multidisciplined, practical focus.

To quote the ADAA again:

An actor without a camera or stage is not an actor.

A filmmaker without a singer/actor/dancer to film cannot make a movie musical.

We cannot lose this specialist multidisciplined training. I ask the minister to immediately speak with the University of Melbourne on behalf of the arts community and all Victorians so that the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music retains its historical and aesthetic vision and continues to provide, as promised in the 2006 bill, an elite practical focus on educating and producing performing artists rather than arts academics.

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