

planted on the ground, as hers are.

Jenny Goldie, Michelago, NSW

Promote Father Bob

WHAT have we done to get such an arrogant, controlling representative? Archbishop Hart treats too many Catholic parishioners with contempt, refusing to meet them or hear them, let alone accommodate their needs. His attitude is heartless to the St Joseph's Collingwood community, not only to the older locals, but also to our devout 200 Vietnamese St John Hoan community - who he recently told to move on.

He refuses all requests to rebuild the insured fire-damaged St Joseph's Church in Collingwood. Instead, he wants to use this sacred land to take the Federal Government's schools grant, and to build a chapel in the hall to accommodate only 80 people. Not enough for a wedding or decent funeral for us.

I think Father Bob Maguire should become archbishop of Melbourne - he is, after all, eight years younger than our Pope - and he does listen to people and his agenda is clear.

Helen Connors, Clifton Hill

Saving the VCA

THE Victorian College of the Arts crisis was caused by a Commonwealth government and needs to be solved by a Commonwealth government.

The former Victorian arts ministers' proposed independent review (*The Age*, 9/9) provides the basis for solving the problem. It ought to be supported by everyone concerned about the arts in Victoria and Australia. Such a review should investigate the funding required for the VCA to retain its position as a world-class institution; its funding compared with similar arts training schools; the best governance form; the VCA's role in Victoria's economic, social and artistic life; and how the curriculum needs to evolve.

The State Government needs to take a strong stand. State Arts Minister Lynne Kosky has said that she can fix it with a phone call. If so, she should make the call. The Commonwealth Government needs to state whether it supports Brendan Nelson's VCA policies or not. If it doesn't, it should reverse his policy.

It would also help if Melbourne University stopped treating the VCA as a PR problem to be spun for the media and stakeholders, and started engaging with the real issues in a meaningful way.

Noel Turnbull, Port Melbourne

View from the other side of the tracks

TELL me, Hector McKenzie (*Letters*, 9/9), would not all of those millions paid out in rail transport franchise fees have been saved under a state-run system? After all, the same management team is still in place.

So the high point of our suburban rail network's punctuality was in 2002-03, after it was privatised. Hasn't it been a precipitous downhill run from there?

Patronage has risen by 80 per cent. Isn't that down to urban sprawl, increasing population, and rising fuel costs? It's certainly not the result of people clamouring to get on board trains that might run or get them to work on time. You quote the money received from the Building Australia Fund but neglected to demonstrate where it was going to be spent.

Too bad for travellers on all but three lines, who will get no benefit.

This Government, under the direction of your office, has made blunder after expensive blunder with projects such as regional fast rail, myki and now the regional rail link. I see better ideas on my internet rail discussion group. Your organisation needs a large dose of "thinking outside the square".

Rodney Williams, Templestowe

Smoke and mirrors