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Cash call to 'save' school
By ELLEN WHINNETT

THE Victorian College of the Arts should become a federally-funded institution to rival NIDA, according to Victorian Arts Minister Lynne Kosky.

On a collision course with her federal Labor colleagues, Ms Kosky said she wanted the college to receive the same funding as Sydney's National Institute of Dramatic Arts, whose graduates include Hugo Weaving, Cate Blanchett and Mel Gibson.

The comments come after more than 12,500 people signed a petition protesting against the changes being forced on the **VCA** by the University of Melbourne after the Victorian Government decided to merge the two.

Actor Geoffrey Rush said that until the University of Melbourne began harvesting its courses, the **VCA** was the only institute of its kind in the world that combined six major arts disciplines under one roof.

"We call on the Prime Minister to consider elevating this unique, interdisciplinary college into the select national consortium of companies that receive direct federal funding and to give it its rightful place alongside NIDA," Mr Rush said.

Save **VCA** protest group spokesman Scott Dawkins said the funding idea would provide a solution.

"If the State Government were to ask the Federal Government to apply the NIDA model to the **VCA**, there would be no need for it to remain a faculty of the University of Melbourne," he said.

Caption: Funding call: Arts Minister Lynne Kosky.

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