

# Politicians off key in arts funding debate

BY BIANCA HALL

THE future of Melbourne's prestigious Victorian College of the Arts and Music has become a political football as the state government and opposition bicker over who is responsible for plugging the institution's multi-million dollar funding gap.

Victoria's upper house recently recommended the government secure the institution's future with \$6 million

in funding each year. But the government all but ruled this out last week, arguing that higher education was the federal government's responsibility.

Last August, internet whistleblower site WikiLeaks released a leaked copy of the college's 2010 business plan, which revealed plans to dramatically restructure the college into University of Melbourne's so-called 'Melbourne Model'. This would shift VCAM's teaching

approach from an "apprenticeship" model to an "education model", with student-to-staff rates falling from 7.4-1 to 12-1.

Last month former Telstra chief Ziggy Switkowski released an independent review of the college's fortunes, confirming its financial woes are worse than previously forecast. He found the university had an operating deficit of about \$6 million a year, but the shortfall was closer to

\$20 million a year "on a fully costed basis".

Opposition leader Ted Baillieu says a Coalition government would fund VCAM to the tune of \$6 million a year. But Arts minister Peter Batchelor told *TMT* the federal government was responsible for funding universities "and that should continue".

"It's important to remember that the University of Melbourne is yet to respond to the review," he said.

"The Opposition's pledge is guilt money because they know it was the (former federal) Howard Government that cut funding to the VCA and Melbourne University."

A spokeswoman for federal education minister Julia Gillard said it would participate in discussions regarding future funding arrangements between the university and the VCAM before the existing arrangement expires next year.

# No more free parking as confusion takes over at market

BY ROSEMARY BOLGER

ALL-DAY free parking at Preston Market ended last week when Darebin Council approved a permit for a new "pay and display" system to be installed.

But motorists were advised not to be "sucked in" by fines issued by operating company Care Park.

Preston MLA Robin Scott believes the changeover will cause confusion.

"Many local residents have been driving to Preston Market since the 1960s, and given my office's experience with changes at the Safeway/Woolworths car park, I anticipate that a lot of confused people will fall foul of Care Park's enforcement system."

Mr Scott's office has regularly suc-

ceeded in having constituents' "fines" from parking at the Preston supermarket withdrawn. Under new rules at Preston Market, motorists can stay for up to four hours with the first two hours remaining free. But if they intend to stay longer they must buy a ticket, costing \$1 per extra hour, upon arrival.

Care Park does not have the power

to issue parking fines but people caught without a valid ticket will be slapped with an \$88 "claim for liquidated damages" or \$66 if paid within two weeks.

The charge increases by \$77 if not paid within 42 days.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is investigating the legality of these charges. Mr

Scott believes the claims could be ruled an unfair contract term, and therefore not enforceable.

Cost of parking on non-market days is 50c per hour up, to a maximum of \$2.50.

The adjacent Aldi car park, where one-hour restrictions apply, and railway station car park will continue to be monitored by the council.

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