

Value of the arts

GABRIELLA Coslovich's excellent article (*The Age*, 10/7) is a reminder of the ignorance of politicians in relation to the arts. How many times do artists such as Oscar-winning animator Adam Elliot and the likes of Geoffrey Rush have to argue the case for supporting the existence and independence of the Victorian College of the Arts? Sadly, arguing an issue with people who have no idea what you are talking about - arts ministers included - apart from how much it will cost, is futile.

This shameful state is not helped by a university (and the faculty of music within) that never wanted the VCA - "an arrangement made in hell", one senior staff member suggested to me. Universities are wonderful places (well, not all of them) but for many reasons the creative arts do not fit at Melbourne. The review by Ziggy Switkowski (I don't remember coming across that name in the world of the arts) might force the issue into the area of common sense. It might pay respect to artists who know the value of both the arts and arts training to society and culture. But I do not believe in miracles.

Tony Gould, Elwood

Facing the facts: porn hurts women

IT IS so good to see another committed feminist, Gail Dines, taking on the tough job of porn and its effects on women and girls (*Insight*, 10/7). If not for the predominant postmodern movement within universities, where porn is everything but detrimental to women, Dines could collaborate with colleagues and lobby the industry. When will, what is hopefully an intellectual phase within academia, realise that porn hurts us women, no ifs, buts, fluid or differing interpretations required?

Brigette Hobbs, Brunswick

The squalid truth

THE horror experienced by people waiting their so-called "turn" in refugee camps has largely gone unnoticed by the mainstream media. Consequently, the average Australian has little knowledge of the realities of life there and the endless wait endured by thousands of people for their claims of asylum to be processed.

I hope a reading of Matt Wade's insightful article on the plight of Afghans in Islamabad's refugee slum might encourage those who chant the mantra that boat people are "illegals" and "queue jumpers" to reconsider. The fact that both mainstream political parties pander to the paranoid fears of middle Australia by their draconian policies speaks volumes about the sensationalised fear of being swamped by boat people. A little compassion and understanding of the camps' squalid conditions may sway their views and, in turn, force the parties to alter their policies. Congratulations to *The Age* for publishing such an important story.

Sophie Kropman, Templestowe Lower

So many need help

ACCORDING to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are more than 30 million refugees in the world. Also, there are hundreds of millions of people with low life expectancy because of malnutrition and/or no access to medical treatment. I have sympathy for all of these unfortunate people. However, it seems I am inhumane because I am not more concerned about asylum seekers who pay profiteering people smugglers to send them to Australia on unseaworthy small boats, than I am about the other huge number of desperate people.

Gordon Moss, Melton South