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## White knights arrive to rescue the VCA

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THE Victorian College of the Arts was besieged by white knights yesterday as the state government and federal Labor promised new funding.

Premier John Brumby announced a one-off grant of \$3 million to the VCA - \$2 million to be used as seed funding for a foundation trust, and \$1 million for new equipment and "faculty renewal".

"The VCA makes a significant contribution to the education of our state's artists and these announcements provide certainty around the future of the VCA," Mr Brumby said.

In addition, the federal Labor Party pledged to provide an additional \$5.1 million yearly to the VCA if re-elected on August 21.

Federal Labor would also match the one-off \$2 million state government seed funding for the foundation trust, which would likely be used to fund scholarships and additional staff.

"This will give the college some financial security and autonomy going forward," said Cath Bowtell, the ALP candidate for the seat of Melbourne, who announced the pledge on behalf of Prime Minister Julia Gillard and education minister Simon Crean.

The federal commitment restores the VCA's funding to the levels it enjoyed prior to the 2005 cuts under the Howard government, and Labor has promised the additional funding will be indexed yearly after its introduction in 2012.

VCA dean Su Baker, who has been in the job just two weeks, said the news was "very welcome".

Save the VCA spokesman Scott Dawkins greeted the announcement as "fantastic news", but urged a note of caution. "Will the money be quarantined for the VCA's use?" he asked. "There's no point if it just goes back into the pot to pay for the university's rentals. We want it to go to the students."

Labor's Cath Bowtell was firm on that point. "This money is for program delivery, not for rent and so on, and the intention is that the university would continue to provide its share," she said.

Federal Labor's boost is contingent upon the University of Melbourne continuing to "cross-subsidise" the VCA by \$6 million a year, as per the existing arrangement, which is in place until 2011.

University of Melbourne vice-chancellor Glyn Davis said the federal Labor pledge "would place upon us the challenge to ensure the VCA responded in a visionary way, to face the challenges of a highly competitive, globalised environment in which such schools now operate".

He welcomed the seed funding and expressed the hope that it "will help us decisively in persuading the VCA's many supporters to invest in its future".

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/stage/white-knights-arrive-to-rescue-the-vca-20100808-11qep.html>*