



VICHANSARD

Whole Speech

[\[First Match\]](#) [\[New Search\]](#)

Selecting a highlighted page number will display that whole page only.
Selecting a highlighted speaker's name will display only that speaker's contributions to the whole speech. This option is only available if a speaker is not already selected.

Title **MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY AMENDMENT BILL**
House **ASSEMBLY**
Activity **Second Reading**
Members
Date **12 March 2009**
Page **730**

"12 March 2009 ASSEMBLY"

[Page 730](#)

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY AMENDMENT BILL

Second reading

Debate resumed from 26 February; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation).

[Page 731](#)

[Mr DIXON \(Nepean\)](#) -- It is a pleasure to rise to say a few words about the Melbourne University Amendment Bill 2009. At the outset I would like to say that Melbourne University really is a world-class university. We in Melbourne and in Victoria are very lucky to have it as part of our education establishment. It has had a long record of excellence in many fields, and many of the leading citizens of Victoria and of Australia are graduates of the university.

I particularly commend the university on its recent brave decision to pursue the Melbourne model of generalist degrees. This is the second year in which that is happening. Obviously the jury is out; it is a long-term investment in a new way of thinking about education. I think the university is to be commended on its forethought and bravery, and I think it is certainly heading down a correct path. It is good to see a diversity of choice in university paths in our state.

This is quite a minor bill.

In some ways this will be the last bill of this type that goes through this place for reasons which I will outline in a moment. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Melbourne University Act 1958 to facilitate the amalgamation between the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and the faculty of music at the University of Melbourne. From the outset, I would like to say that the opposition will be supporting this bill. The amalgamation of these two faculties will create the faculty of the VCA and music. It is hardly a revelation but that is what it is going to do.

The Victorian College of the Arts faculty has been a faculty of the University of Melbourne only for a couple of years. We had legislation in this place in 2006; it came into being in 2007. When this legislation was established it unintentionally entrenched the name of the faculty as a part of the university in statute. Therefore any subsequent name change of that faculty had to go through Parliament.

It is not the work of this place to facilitate name changes of faculties in all the universities in Victoria, but as I said, this happened inadvertently in the legislation of 2006, so to change

the name we have to change the legislation. This legislation will also enable the university to make subsequent name changes if it has other mergers of faculties, especially in the arts field; that can be done through university processes using their own rules and regulations rather than through legislation in the Parliament.

The new faculty that is going to be created, the faculty of the VCA and music, will include three schools. Those three schools will be the school of art, the school of music and the school of performing arts. The university has a great record of arts, music and performing arts. The Victorian College of the Arts, which is now part of the university, had a wonderful reputation worldwide for excellence.

The college became part of the university in 2006, and its spirit continues within Melbourne University with its rich history of arts and performing arts, not only within each of the schools and faculties but also in the students, student organisations and clubs that have been involved with it over the years. This bill will ensure that no further name changes to do with the university and this new faculty will have to come before Parliament.

I respect the university's decision regarding the amalgamation; it would have its own internal reasons for this, which I am sure have been well thought out. In the end, as is always the case with universities in Victoria, any reorganisation and redirection is intended to further enhance the quality of education the universities provide. I am certain this will be the case.

It is a small field -- and sometimes I would say a non-contentious field -- of pursuit in Victoria, but I think it says something about how important the arts are to the culture and community of Victoria, including Melbourne, when what may seem a storm in a teacup becomes quite a large furore. We had a good reminder of this during last year when the Rudd federal government decided to close the Australian National Academy of Music. The idea was to place the academy under the auspices of Melbourne University. It was interesting that that created a huge furore. The arts community, many former students of the academy, the current students and prospective students who were looking forward to studying at the academy were very upset when the federal government decided to withdraw the funding from the academy and to make other arrangements.

I think the minister totally misread the Victorian community on the importance it puts on our various arts and arts education facilities and the wonderful opportunities provided to students within the arts field, both at postgraduate level and for new university students coming out of schools. In the end that misreading and the furore it created forced the minister into an embarrassing backdown. The academy was given another year to work and the federal government is looking for a model that will enable the academy to continue. As I said, part of the plan was to make the academy part of Melbourne University. I do not know where those plans are at the moment but I think that, given the work of the Australian National Academy of Music, it can work in cooperation with the university and also be entitled to its independence.

[Page 732](#)

As I said at the outset, this is not a large bill and it does not have far-reaching consequences for the governance of this state. It is just a minor tidying up of a previous bill. However, it is an opportunity for members to say something about Melbourne University and its importance in education, not only to this state and this country -- it is a world-class university -- and more importantly about the arts and music faculty of the university. I wish the new faculty every success. It has a long history on which to build. I am sure this bill will open a new chapter in arts at Melbourne University. I and the opposition support the bill and wish it a speedy passage.

[Mr HERBERT \(Eltham\)](#) -- I rise to support this simple bill, which amends section 29A of the Melbourne University Act 1958 to provide for the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts to be renamed the faculty of the VCA and music. Whilst this is a small bill, the University of Melbourne is of course far from small.

It is a major, world-class provider of higher education and a research facility, where research is undertaken in a broad range of areas that are not just genuinely benefiting Melbourne, Victoria and Australia but have the potential to advance world development. It is a university that has provided exemplary education to generation after generation of Victorians, and of course as part of the university the arts faculty has an excellent reputation worldwide for both the provision of education and the expertise and quality of its lecturers and other staff.

On 12 May 2008 the university council approved the amalgamation of the faculty of the VCA and the faculty of music. The new faculty will include the school of art, the school of music and the school of performing arts.

On 8 September last year the vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Professor Glyn Davis, formally wrote on behalf of the university council to the skills minister, Jacinta Allan, to request minor amendments to section 29A of the Melbourne University Act 1958, basically to change the name of the faculty to the faculty of the VCA and music and give effect to the merger of those faculties.

The University of Melbourne has been consulted and has approved the final draft of the bill, which is supported by the faculty of music, the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts, the staff and students of Melbourne University, the government and of course the opposition.

The bill makes a number of very minor amendments.

It renames the faculty; it repeals section 29A(3), which is a transitional provision and is no longer required; it provides for the new faculty to undertake activities including music; and it makes other minor amendments which enable minor changes to be made in the future.

This will be the last of this type of bill. I do not think it should be in the domain of the Parliament to have before it legislation that changes faculty names. In future that will not be the case as changes are made to legislation. However, the current situation is that without amendments to section 29A of the Melbourne University Act 1958 the university would not be able to rename and reconstitute the faculty of the VCA and the university would not have the capacity to give effect to the amalgamation agreement between the faculty of music and the faculty of the VCA. This legislation simply enables those faculties to do what they are doing well in a more appropriate form for them in the future.

Whilst this is relatively minor but important legislation, it comes at a time when major change is occurring in the higher education sector nationwide. It comes at a time when the federal government is looking at the Bradley review and a couple of other reviews in preparing legislation to enact the changes needed to improve higher education provision in this country. It comes at a time when the federal Labor government is about to implement the largest change to the sector that the nation has seen since the Dawkins era. Quite frankly, that change is long overdue.

Despite the great things our universities are doing, the stark fact is that as a nation we are underperforming when it comes to higher education provision. In the last decade we have slipped from seventh to ninth spot on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development ladder in terms of attainment amongst 25-year-olds to 34-year-olds. We still have far too few people from disadvantaged backgrounds getting into university.

The other day the federal Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, called on universities to take in another 55 000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The bill has been introduced at a time when completion rates are estimated by the Bradley review to be something like 72 per cent, which is far too low for a country like Australia. It comes after a decade of the federal Liberal government being obsessed with breaking the influence of the academic union and making WorkChoices the spearhead for what happened in higher education provision, when we saw student-to-staff ratios climb from 13 to 1 in 1990 to 20 to 1 in 2006. As a parent with two young people at university, I know that the number of students in lectures and tutorials are incredibly large, far larger than I ever had when I went through higher education. The

[Page 733](#)

bill comes at a time also when, nationwide, student satisfaction has remained static for the past decade.

Whilst this bill changes the name of a faculty, the federal Labor government is changing the nature of higher education nationally. A little over a week ago the federal Minister for Education announced the most far-reaching improvements that we will see in our lifetime. She announced an ambitious commonwealth target of 40 per cent of all 25-to-34-year-olds having a qualification at bachelor level or above by 2025 -- not just being enrolled but actually having a qualification. Today that figure stands at 32 per cent. She also announced that from 2012 all Australian universities will be funded on the basis of student demand --

that is a massive improvement -- and that the current cap on over-enrolments will be raised from 5 per cent to 10 per cent from 2010.

That will mean that instantly another 5 per cent of students will be able to go to university, which I know the member for Bulleen knows very well, as he advocated for that when some years ago, as members of the Education and Training Committee, we were looking at this very issue. The cap will be removed wholly in 2012.

The federal government has also announced the establishment of a new national regulatory and quality agency for higher education, which will streamline current regulatory arrangements to reduce duplication, provide national consistency, and protect and ensure quality in education for both domestic and international students. This is long overdue. Of course Melbourne University has quality provision, but you cannot say that about every provider nationally, and it is about time we cleaned up our act and guaranteed quality provision right across Australia.

As well as these far-reaching changes, the federal science minister, Senator Carr -- an exceptional minister who is doing a fantastic job and having a great influence on the scientific and research community -- has just pledged to give universities extra money for research, which will be welcomed, and extra independence to manage their research activities. He wants to unshackle them from the hand of government so they can be creative in getting some applied and pure research happening in those faculties. His intention is to shift the funding to the full cost of research. It will come in tandem with long-overdue structural reforms to the research system.

In summary, this legislation comes at a time when our entire higher education sector will see massive improvement. It comes at a time when education and research at Melbourne University will see massive improvement. It comes at a time when the new faculty of the VCA and music also will see massive improvement. I commend the bill to the house.

[Mr CRISP \(Mildura\)](#) -- I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Melbourne University Amendment Bill 2009. The Nationals in coalition are supporting this bill. The purpose of the bill is to facilitate an amalgamation between the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and the faculty of music at Melbourne University. The bill also allows for the renaming post-amalgamation and for future renaming to occur without parliamentary approval.

I will give some history of the Victorian College of the Arts. The school was formed in 1977 and served the arts community well at that time. The major refurbishment of the school occurred in 1993, and in 1997 the Elisabeth Murdoch building came under the school's banner. In 1997 the secondary school was also co-located. The secondary school has played an important role in the support of younger artistic talents by the Victorian College of the Arts.

In 2008 the memorandum of understanding to facilitate the merger was signed, and with the passage of this bill that merger will be formalised.

A more detailed history is available on the Victorian College of the Arts website. It shows a commitment to the arts through good and bad times. It was that spirit that saw the VCA and the VCA secondary school develop what I would like to talk about -- that is, the arts, arts education and what is happening in those areas in Mildura. La Trobe University has a successful arts program. I recently attended a graduation ceremony in Mildura, which was a proud day for many talented artists.

To support La Trobe University's arts presence in Mildura, the Mildura Arts Festival is currently under way. Several weeks of great events help manage the stress of current community life in Mildura. Everybody needs time out in stressful and tough times, and we have those with the drought.

Everybody, whether they are a dryland farmer, an irrigator, a horticulturalist or an urban dweller, is absolutely sick of this drought and needs a way to relieve the stress it causes. That relief can come from the arts, it can come from sport and it can come from passive recreation -- these are all important.

Mildura has one special person to support its arts community. Robyn Archer, a cabaret singer and arts festival director among other things, supports the Mildura Arts Festival and the arts community in Mildura. Robyn delivered the 10th Manning Clarke lecture at the National Library of Australia in Canberra

[Page 734](#)

on 3 March. Her lecture was titled 'The price of survival'. I was grateful to Robyn because her lecture was laced with references to Mildura. Robyn recognises that Mildura is doing it tough. I acknowledge her work and commitment to help Mildura in these tough times.

Many young, talented artists who could attend the VCA -- I hope they will attend Melbourne University or other institutions -- are being given encouragement by the arts festival, Robyn Archer and the work of Helen Healy, who organises the arts festival through her business. The events are run in collaboration with the Mildura Arts Centre, a place that has made itself available particularly to encourage younger artists. Only last Sunday, in collaboration with Opera at the Loch, members of the Melbourne Youth Orchestra got together with young artists in Mildura for a morning of music, which culminated in a very brief public performance. It was uplifting for those who attended and was encouraging for the young artists who are working to develop skills with their instruments.

I wish the VCA a vibrant future as part of the University of Melbourne. I hope some young, talented artists from Mildura pass through the new facility. May the bill have a speedy passage.

[Ms NEVILLE \(Minister for Mental Health\)](#) -- I am pleased to rise to speak briefly on the Melbourne University Amendment Bill that is now before the house. As other members have said, it is a relatively simple and technical bill which fixes an anomaly that was created previously. Melbourne University is one of our great universities here in Victoria. It is not alone; we have some fantastic universities. Deakin University in Geelong, for example, provides an excellent tertiary education to many thousands of Victorians each year.

Over the years there has been a shift for universities in how they operate and meet the needs of so many young people in local communities.

The recent announcement by the federal Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, is a really important one. Over probably the last decade we have seen an incredible increase in the number of young people attending university, which is a fantastic outcome, but we really need to focus on some of those groups of young people who continue to miss out on access to university.

It is in the interests of the universities, the community and the government to ensure that we have a diversity of people being able to access universities, which can make such a difference to people's lives and employment outcomes. The bill before the house is an important and technical one. It makes a small amendment to the Melbourne University Act 1958. I commend the bill to the house.

[Mr THOMPSON \(Sandringham\)](#) -- It is interesting that today we will be debating the Melbourne University Amendment Bill 2009 and the Melbourne Cricket Ground Bill. Both arenas involve the pursuit of arts in the highest form.

One is the artistry of movement that has been recorded in the minds of many who over the last 150 years have observed games of football and cricket as well as the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games at the MCG. For those who have a keen interest in the arts, Melbourne University and the Victorian College of the Arts have made a strong contribution to the training and development of numbers of Australian performers.

Last weekend marked the 70th birthday celebration of Stella Axarlis, who is perhaps one of Australia's greatest opera singers of all time. Stella was educated at the University of Melbourne, having migrated to Australia with her parents. It was due to the indirect support of a music teacher while she was studying mathematics at the University of Melbourne that she was able to develop her interest in music. She won the then Melbourne Sun Aria just after picking up a job at a Melbourne school, having spent three years teaching at Fitzroy High School.

When she turned up for work on the following Monday the principal of the school she had been assigned to questioned whether teaching was the vocation for her. She later went to Europe, where she won an international aria. That launched a 25-year career in which she performed in the greatest opera houses in the world. She performed 30 roles in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, London, Vienna and Paris. From 1984 to 1990 she returned annually to Australia and performed with the Australian Opera.

Stella had a memorable performance at Carols by Candlelight in the early 1980s, where she sang the hymn The Holy City. It was replayed at her birthday party on the weekend. As she was moving towards the end of one of the rousing choruses, one of her relatives urged her to keep going and reach the heights she did when she originally performed the hymn. It was a magnificent moment in time.

The reason for this wide-ranging background on Stella is that she went on to perform a number of roles with health networks and the Australian government. After her opera career she worked in industry. She spoke at the centenary of Federation, representing the voice of migrant Australia and those who had made a great contribution to Australia. She fulfilled a number of

[Page 735](#)

other roles, including sitting on the boards of and in directorships with United Energy and Yarra Trams. She chaired the Victorian committee of the National Quality Council and was a member of the Australian National Training Authority board.

She chaired the major projects council which saw the establishment of a hydrotherapy centre for children with severe disabilities, and was a member of the acute quality health committee. She was also involved with the Peninsula Health Network. Stella was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1998.

The bill before the house facilitates the merger of the faculty of music at the University of Melbourne with the Victorian College of the Arts. The Victorian College of the Arts has been the destination for many Sandringham College students who have benefited from the program there. Sandringham College, like many schools in Victoria, has specialist roles.

Glen Waverley Secondary College is understood to have a very strong academic program and produces specialists in a number of areas as a feeder school into tertiary institutions, as does Sandringham College. The Victorian teacher of the year in 1995 was a person by the name of Charles Slucki. With Dr David Taylor and Heather Fehring, among other staff at the school, he developed a program of excellence in the arts. This enabled many students to upskill during their secondary education. They then went on to the Victorian College of the Arts to further their educational journey. For a number of them this led on to professional performing and acting careers.

The bill defines its principal purpose as being to facilitate the amalgamation between the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and the faculty of music at the University of Melbourne. Stella Axarlis once noted in one of her speeches:

We must be bold and objective in examining the overlaps and the gaps and inefficiencies which occur from education to health to infrastructure development. We are still getting feedback from industry and enterprises in particular and also from providers that many aspects of our system remain opaque and inconsistent across the country. We owe it to them to examine the way we do business across jurisdictions and find ways to do it more efficiently and transparently.

It was prescient of her to use those words in that they apply broadly to the bill before us, which has the objective of providing for the better utilisation of the skills and resources within the Victorian higher education community. The opposition is pleased to support the bill.

In closing I again pay tribute to the journey of Stella Axarlis.

I quote from page 102 of a publication by Andrew Markus entitled Building a New Community, which chronicles the life of Stella Axarlis. It describes her as a teacher, opera singer, company director and community activist. But for people such as Madame Burkewitch, who helped her in her early days of training as a musician in Melbourne, this remarkable operatic career would never have unfolded.

I pay tribute to members of the teaching staff at the Victorian College of the Arts and the University of Melbourne for their individual contributions to the musical journeys of their students. In the case of Stella, her talent was developed alongside her university studies. As I noted earlier, Stella had principally studied mathematics at university, but it was her private interest in music, which was developed by Madame Burkewitch, that enabled her to succeed in her international career.

I pay tribute to those members of teaching staff who have made a wonderful contribution to the life journeys of students under their tutelage and enabled their musical talents to be

developed, from a student from Glen Waverley Secondary College who took his musical career to only grade 2 on the piano but still derives some constructive interest from that moment in time through to people such as Stella Axarlis, who enthralled music lovers throughout the world.

[Ms D'AMBROSIO \(Mill Park\)](#) -- I am pleased to rise to provide my comments in support of the Melbourne University Amendment Bill. As has been noted by previous speakers, the bill provides for an updating of the legislation to reflect the changes made in modern times at the University of Melbourne vis-a-vis the amalgamation of the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and the faculty of music at the University of Melbourne.

It is very good that last year the university council moved to create a new faculty by combining three schools -- the school of the arts, the school of music and the school of performing arts -- into one body. The bill reflects these changes and is part of the program that this government has set to ensure that Victoria's statute book reflects the modern environment in which we live, keeping abreast of changes in legislative responsiveness to changes within the various agencies and organisations in our community. This is one of the small instalments of the move by the government towards achieving a modernised set of statutes in Victoria.

I will make some observations about the University of Melbourne. I mention my own enrolment there many

[Page 736](#)

years ago in commenting on the importance of opening up higher education to a greater range of people from a wider range of demographics. The arts is certainly one area that could benefit from a greater input from a broader variety of people from different backgrounds. I commend the federal government for its attempt to change the culture of thinking about the place of universities and tertiary study within the community. I note that the federal Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has in recent days indicated there is a need for university vacancies to be filled from a greater diversity of people from the community, especially noting that we need to bring in young people from poorer backgrounds and encourage them to access higher education. The arts is an area that could have an extra injection of diversity.

Having said that, I note the fine work in the arts area the University of Melbourne has committed itself to over many decades before the Victorian College of the Arts became part of the university.

We should not go past the fact that one of Australia's foremost composers of decades ago, Percy Grainger, had a unique affiliation with the University of Melbourne, and the university has had a museum dedicated to him for some time now. It is important in this debate to keep in mind that the arts were not recently introduced to the University of Melbourne. The university has had a longstanding association with music and composing from a Victorian perspective. I acknowledge that and pay tribute to the university for it.

In Victoria we are very keen to ensure that we provide as much opportunity as possible to primary and secondary students to think as broadly as they can about their future career paths. We therefore encourage access to pathways of tertiary study and further learning to maximise their opportunities for better employment prospects.

I know we have committed ourselves to this in terms of not only improving our skills base, improving opportunity and improving finances to our tertiary education sector through TAFE institutes and the like but also in allowing access to higher education, such as universities, through a better focus on very basic principles of learning in secondary schools.

I note it is very important that we continue that role and that we work in strong collaboration with the federal government to ensure that our universities, and the performing arts facilities within those universities, receive the support they need and reflect more adequately the cultural and economic diversity of the broader population.

Many people have said that the performing arts act as a mirror to our society and our culture. If we can make the performing arts stronger, then the reflection of our culture will be better and clearer.

Having said those few words, I support the passage of this bill.

[Mrs VICTORIA \(Bayswater\)](#) -- I rise to speak on the Melbourne University Amendment Bill and give it my wholehearted support. The bill provides for the amalgamation of the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts ([VCA](#)) and the faculty of music at Melbourne University to go ahead. This is an important step forward and the amalgamation has lots of positives, to which I will come in a moment.

The Victorian College of the Arts has an absolutely proud history and great reputation in the performing arts, not only in Victoria but right around Australia and further afield. The college was created in 1867, believe it or not, as part of the National Gallery School. I think it was in the 1980s that it became part of Victoria College through the Prahran faculty of art.

However, in 2006 the college became part of the university structure as part of Melbourne University and has been a separate faculty up until now. The proposed merger brings the two faculties together to make them one -- that is, the faculty of the Victorian College of Art and Music. The legislation brings them together under one heading.

A very exciting agenda is happening alongside this merger. Some of the developments that are going on at the [VCA](#)/Melbourne University include the new high school. The [VCA](#) has always had a high school, but in June a new high school block, just past the Malthouse Theatre, will be opened. This will free up 1 block, which is a fairly old series of buildings, which will be able to be used by other people on the [VCA](#) campus.

One of the other things that I think is very exciting, and which Melbourne University is helping along, is the retention of the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM). As has been pointed out earlier, last year the federal arts minister, Peter Garrett, announced that the academy would have its funding withdrawn and would close. There was a furore about this decision, and many people in the arts community were up in arms.

As with so many disciplines, no matter from which walk of life you come, there needs to be a centre of excellence in Australia. We have the Australian Institute of Sport, the National Institute of Dramatic Arts and other fabulous institutions, but if ANAM had closed, there would have been no centre of excellence for training musicians. ANAM will now stay open. The academy was supposed to have a name change and has been given a reprieve. It will remain at the South Melbourne town hall, which is a very good location for it at present. That was one backflip I clearly supported.

[Page 737](#)

Now it is up to us to watch with interest what happens there going forward. I believe a new board is about to be appointed; its tenure is a minimum of three years. From an arts lover's point of view, it is a very exciting prospect that ANAM will continue to function. What is so good about ANAM is that it allows those who have done a lot of study in this area and are working performers to do postgraduate work with professionals from around the world. Some 55 students come under the ANAM banner every year. The general manager, Nick Bailey, is very competent and certainly does an amazing job of advocating for the academy.

As I said, we in Australia not only have centres of excellence like the Australian Institute of Sport but Melbourne is also home to the Australian Ballet, which is an amazing performing company. We need to do everything we can to ensure that the [VCA](#) does not lose its identity when it becomes part of the faculty of music at Melbourne University, because we need to ensure that Melbourne remains the centre of the arts in Australia.

Very few people would disagree with me when I say that Melbourne is the home of the performing arts as well as the visual arts in Australia. To have great institutions like the [VCA](#) is incredibly important for the future.

Melbourne is also home to many great philanthropists who assist in facilitating the arts at the sorts of levels we have here in Victoria. When you look at those with theatrical expertise and those who have been very passionate about the arts, you cannot go past such people as Lady Potter and the people at the Victorian Opera. Dame Elisabeth Murdoch is an absolute living treasure to those in the arts.

I would also include people like John Michael Howson, who shaped early children's television and continues to be an absolutely prolific writer of successful musicals and movies.

John Haddad is renowned for his tireless work in the field of the performing arts, and who could forget Jeanne Pratt and her dedication to making music theatre accessible to all. There

are so many others who also work in that field.

On the subject of music theatre, as a performing arts college which trains performers rather than sending people down the path of academia, the [VCA](#) has had a proud history. I will mention some of the college's alumni in a moment, but it is important to recognise the importance of the performing arts, and especially music theatre, to the economy of Victoria and Australia.

Many of the people who have left the [VCA](#) have gone on to work on phenomenal shows. In Melbourne some of those people are or will be working on such shows as *Wicked*, *Billy Elliot* or *Jersey Boys*.

Those productions attract a lot of dollars to Melbourne, so I think we need to foster the arts and those who want to work in them here, rather than letting their expertise go overseas and make money for other people. It is always delightful to hear that the crew working on a show are predominantly Australian.

There are lots of positives with the amalgamation of the two faculties. Financially it is very good and there will be a great sharing of knowledge. However, we need to ensure that the course remains as authentic as possible. Under the Melbourne University model there are six major undergraduate degrees, but there are also what are called university breadth subjects.

Participating in such subjects can take students away from their core discipline for up to 20 per cent or 25 per cent of their learning time or their contact hours.

I hope the focus remains on performance art within the [VCA](#) stream -- there will be three main streams within the new faculty -- and that we do not try to force upon students streams that would be better suited to those who want to go on to be academics or educators. We must ensure that the subjects remain relevant to their stream of interest and make sure that by the time they finish their university courses, they are fully qualified and trained, and are ready to get out into society and do what it was that they set out to achieve when they went to university.

The [VCA](#) has an incredibly proud history of lecturers who practise in their fields, which makes it so very special. I refer to such people as Alex and Andri n Pertout. I believe Andri n is in Japan at the moment, listening to one of his phenomenal scores being performed. He is an absolute genius. He has travelled throughout the world to listen to his music be performed as sometimes his music is debuted elsewhere.

Other people I would like to mention at the [VCA](#) include Martin Croft, who is also prolific in the world of music theatre. Most people would know Paul Grabowsky for his television as well as performing career. He is a great jazz musician.

There are many graduates of the [VCA](#) who go on to be not only performers but who pursue teaching careers. I refer to such people as Shannon Birchall and Michael Barker from the Australian Recording Industry Association, or ARIA, award-winning band, the John Butler Trio. Graduates include people like former Archibald Prize winner Marcus Wills; Vince Colosimo, who a lot of people would know is a TV and film actor; and Gillian Armstrong, who has directed many movies.

[Page 738](#)

Some members might be going tonight to the Australian premiere of *Mary and Max*, an animated film by Adam Elliot, who is one of our own from Melbourne. He has won an Oscar and had the prestige of opening the Sundance Film Festival with *Mary and Max*. Other graduates include James Eggleston, whom I have just seen perform the role of Don Ottavio in the Victorian Opera's production of *Don Giovanni* and who is about to perform at Opera in the Market. The graduates include Bill Henson, the photographer, who is not without controversy, and also choreographers and soloists right around the world. All I can say is: congratulations to the university for facilitating this merger and I wish its faculty many years of good teaching.

[Mr ROBINSON \(Minister for Gaming\)](#) -- I would like to thank the members for Nepean, Mildura, Sandringham, Eltham, Mill Park and Bayswater and the Minister for Mental Health for their contributions to the debate on the Melbourne University Amendment Bill.

The bill is not the most substantial piece of legislation to come before the place but it is significant. Members who made contributions did so in a very genuine effort to extol the

virtues of both the Victorian College of the Arts and the University of Melbourne, particularly through its faculty of music, and they did a very good job. The member for Bayswater in the most recent contribution to the debate ran through a list of very distinguished alumni of the VCA, and in doing so drew proper attention to the fact that the city of Melbourne and the state of Victoria are very much the creative centre of Australia. Others may well make that claim, but we all know that ultimately people with a creative bent find their way to this great city and this great state.

In contemplating a number of matters that were raised in this debate, it is true that the University of Melbourne has played a fundamental role in the development of the city of Melbourne and the state of Victoria.

The university was established around 1860. I will not profess to know the exact date, but it was not long after Melbourne had been settled. It arose from a desire to cement the then very young and bustling city as a centre of civilisation and achievement. Reflecting on that period, it would not have been an easy task, given that bushrangers roamed the outlying areas and there was gold fever among people. Melbourne was in many respects a fairly lawless place in some areas, so the establishment of the University of Melbourne was seen as a great step forward in promoting this city as a civilised capital.

I did not attend the University of Melbourne, but my history course at Monash University taught me that for a while the library at the University of Melbourne was one of only three or four great libraries across the city. Again, libraries were seen as a great symbol of the civilising influence of education and educational institutions.

We have the Supreme Court Library, the library with its great reading room in the centre of the city, and the Melbourne University library that was held up for a very long time as a symbol of Melbourne's progress.

The University of Melbourne played a fundamental role in the city for about a century, when it was the only university. It has been in only the past 50 years or so that we have seen an expansion of other universities: Monash University, as I indicated; La Trobe University, I think in the 1960s; Deakin University; Victoria University; Ballarat University; and others. Now we have a very liberalised university sector in which universities from other states establish themselves here as well.

Melbourne University maintains a strong association with this Parliament, not only by virtue of the large number of members who have been educated there but also through the internship program.

We have probably all at different stages had in our offices interns from Melbourne University. The university is a great complement to the development of artistic talent in this state, and there have long been associations and connections that have run from the university through its faculty of music through to the Victorian College of the Arts and infiltrated all parts of life in this state very positively. As a very sensible progression, the bill provides for the amalgamation of the faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and the faculty of music of Melbourne University. It takes the great legacy of the University of Melbourne and that of the Victorian College of the Arts and brings them together, at the same time preserving the name of the Victorian College of the Arts in the name of the new faculty of the university and it sets a very firm direction for the future. It does so very positively.

We have in the city a great musical and artistic infrastructure base. In recent weeks we had the opening of the new Melbourne Recital Centre.

Most members would have had the opportunity to visit that outstanding building. I was lucky enough to attend its opening. I sat next to former Premier, Jeff Kennett, and we had a good chat about that building. Mr Kennett is a very well-rounded person now in post-political life and is able to converse on matters like this in far more detail than I was able to converse with him in the couple of years we spent together in this place -- and that is a good thing.

[Page 739](#)

We also have a great state opera company, and recently I was able to attend a performance of the Victorian Opera. I did so in the company of the member for Warrandyte. I will not go so far as to suggest that he and I together resembled the Marx Brothers film, *A Night at the Opera*, but it is true to say that we have a lot to learn about opera! It was a very good night. We were entertained by performances of *Bluebeard's Castle*, and I might be assisted

by my colleagues, but I think the other performance was Carmina Burana. It is the piece from which the beer advertisement music was drawn.

Mr Herbert -- You're not getting a lot of support.

Mr ROBINSON -- I am not getting a lot of support, so the record will show that the member for Warrandyte and I are not alone in not knowing a lot about opera and that we need to brush up on it.

Melbourne has also supported the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for many years, and conductor Richard Gill does an outstanding job with the orchestra and in his involvement with the opera as well.

We see the excellence that flows through the Victorian College of the Arts spilling over into our schools. I am fortunate enough to have in my electorate Blackburn High School, which has for many years supported an excellent vocational music program. There is a great relationship between the high school and the college of the arts. We need to think about music not just in terms of broadening the experience and the minds and imaginations of young Victorians but as a vocation in its own right.

The changes proposed in the bill are very sensible. The new faculty will include three schools: a school of art, a school of music and a school of performing arts. It allows us to perpetuate a great tradition in this city.

We recognise the great and enduring role that has been played by the University of Melbourne. We recognise the incredible value that has been added to the state both in a day-to-day manner and to our reputation through the work of the Victorian College of the Arts. Going forward, this substantial contribution will only grow. It is for that reason that I very much appreciate the support of all members for the bill and wish it a speedy passage.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

[\[New Search\]](#)

[Parliament Home](#) | [Hansard](#) | [Legislative Council](#) | [Legislative Assembly](#) | [Index](#) | [Glossary](#) | [Search](#)

[Copyright & Disclaimer](#) | [Privacy](#)