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Ill will across Melbourne uni claims another victim

by [Andrew Crook \(http://www.crikey.com.au/author/andrewcrook2/\)](http://www.crikey.com.au/author/andrewcrook2/)

The stoush between staff and senior management at the University of Melbourne has claimed its second victim after the chief architect of the university's controversial internal restructuring process announced her decision to stand aside.

Crikey can reveal that Elizabeth Baré, the head of university services, will call time on her 20-year career at the institution, as controversy rages over her implementation of "responsible division management", which has seen key decision-making devolved to individual faculties.

The resignation comes just days after the dean of the university's law faculty, James Hathaway, jumped ship in the wake of a bitter brawl with staff aggrieved at an internal RDM restructure, as [reported by *Crikey* \(http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/11/02/was-melbourne-model-stoush-behind-the-law-deans-departure/\)](http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/11/02/was-melbourne-model-stoush-behind-the-law-deans-departure/).

Under RDM, a key component of vice-chancellor Glyn Davis' widely criticised Melbourne Model, faculties are expected to take responsibility for their finances as individual "business units" and employ new layers of corporate staff to oversee the transition.

Senior academics have told *Crikey* of a growing sense of ill will engulfing the university's several campuses, with the battle likened to a previous stoushes with Davis in 2007.

Last month, staff at the Victorian College of the Arts slammed the RDM process, after it was revealed only 3% of existing positions will be continued in their current form into the new year. A damning survey showed 40% of VCA staff would quit their positions rather than deal with further rationalisation directives from new dean Sharman Pretty. At the same meeting, 84% per cent of staff expressed a vote of no-confidence in Pretty.

A spokesperson for the university, Christina Buckridge, denied the brawl over the cross-campus reforms had led to Baré's resignation. She said that Baré would depart on December 31, with the RDM process set to be implemented on January 1. However, *Crikey* understands that the process will continue in her absence, with staff displaced under RDM given until May 31 to find an alternative job.

In an email announcing Baré's resignation, Buckridge described the RDM process as "one of the most significant and innovative programs of administrative reform undertaken at Melbourne — and indeed within Australian higher education."

"RDM is about working more efficiently. Liz has been involved in a broad-ranging organisational restructure, improvement of university's purchasing arrangements and business process improvements."

Buckridge and that Baré's departure had been "brewing" for some time and that vice-principal major projects Lin Martin will temporarily take on the role of head of university services.

However, National Tertiary Education Union branch president Ted Clark told *Crikey* that Baré, as one of the key instigators of this RDM process, was "a key person in carrying forward the cost-cutting exercises that are

associated with RDM” and that pressure on her position had been building for some time.

Meanwhile, Victorian arts minister Lynne Kosky has agreed to receive a 15,000-signature parliamentary petition tomorrow to freeze the controversial curriculum changes at the VCA and ensure the institution receives sufficient government funding.

After a furore erupted in state parliament over the VCA’s future in September, Kosky said the creative nursery deserved to have its funding lifted to the same level as comparative institutions such as the National Institute for Dramatic Arts.

Celebrities including Eddie McGuire, Geoffrey Rush, Corinne Grant and Hugo Weaving have signed the petition, calling on the government to “save” the college.

