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'Popular works' for opera

Raymond Gill
November 26, 2009

THE board of Opera Australia met last week to go through its options for the future after a three month "top to bottom" review of the company.

OA chairman Ziggy Switkowski yesterday said the recommendations of LEK Consulting were "inclined to encourage us to be comfortable in the revival of popular works". He said changes to how the national company operated would become evident in the new year and would be made by OA chief executive Adrian Collette and artistic director Lyndon Terracini.

"They [LEK] didn't offer insights into programming and casting but they were able to bring us data from different opera companies from around the world," Dr Switkowski said.'

The \$500,000 LEK review, was commissioned by the Australia Council and Victorian and NSW arts funding bodies. The report will not be released to the public.

In addition to steering changes at Opera Australia, Dr Switkowski this week was announced as chair of an "independent review committee" set up by the University of Melbourne to consider submissions about the controversial merging of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music into the university's "Melbourne Model".

Former Victorian arts minister Mary Delahunty, who has been critical of aspects of the merger, has also been appointed to the review board as a "community representative".

"I can absolutely guarantee that I have not been put in this position to tell the university what it wants to hear," Dr Switkowski said, adding that the university's recently released "Defining the Future" discussion paper offered a "remarkably wide range of options".

Dr Switkowski indicated that the review was unlikely to see it recommend wholesale changes in how VCAM is funded.

"We have to come up with a review that we think can be supported and implemented," he said.

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