



Leader of the Opposition

12 September 2009

## **AN OPEN LETTER FROM TED BAILLIEU TO STUDENTS AND STAFF OF THE VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS**

Earlier this year I met with a delegation of students and staff from the Victorian College of the Arts who raised serious concerns over the future and direction of the college.

I was struck by the genuine passion of those who met with me, but also by their frustration with the government's inertia and indifference to their concerns.

I have listened with great interest to the responses from the Victorian Minister for the Arts and the Deputy Prime Minister to the concerns raised by VCA students and staff.

It remains my view that those responses, whilst designed to create the illusion of concern, have actually been crafted to ensure that there will be no change to the status quo.

I do not believe the status quo is acceptable.

The Victorian College of the Arts is one of the great arts institutions of our state. It is clear to me that the absorption of the college into the Melbourne model should not go forward in the manner currently proposed.

In 2006, the Minister for the Arts made a commitment in Parliament that the integration of the VCA and Melbourne University would 'guarantee that the college's role as Australia's pre-eminent provider of visual and performing arts training and education can continue'.

The fact is that this guarantee has not been met.

As it currently stands, we risk losing one of the most significant arts institutions in the nation, and some of the best arts students and staff in Australia.

I do not accept that the Victorian College of the Arts can continue to flourish without the full restoration of its practical teaching and training.


I am also of the view that the college will be unable to fulfil its practical training and teaching functions without additional funding and the autonomy and independence that an institution of its kind must be afforded.

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Accordingly, a Baillieu government would ensure that the shortfall of up to \$6 million currently preventing the VCA from fulfilling its purpose will be restored.

Further, if Melbourne University is unable to adequately meet the requirements of the VCA and the intent of the *Melbourne University (Victorian College of the Arts) Act 2006*, a Baillieu government will move to return the VCA to its previous independent and autonomous status, ensuring that it is able to provide teaching and instruction in accordance with the practical requirements of a school of the arts, and that it has full control and direction of its curriculum, operation and the structure of its schools and courses.

The Victorian College of the Arts is one of Victoria's great treasures. If we are to remain the arts capital of Australia, we cannot lose the special quality of the VCA.



**Ted Baillieu**  
**Leader of the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition**  
**Shadow Minister for the Arts**