



## VICHANSARD

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**23 February 2010 COUNCIL**

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### University of Melbourne: faculty of the VCA and music

[Ms PENNICUIK \(Southern Metropolitan\)](#) -- My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for the Arts and relates to the composition of the Victorian College of Arts and Music (VCAM) review committee. The review committee was established by the University of Melbourne to review submissions to its discussion paper Defining the Future for the VCA and Music at the University of Melbourne which was launched on 10 November 2009. More than 200 submissions have been received from students, staff, graduates, former arts ministers and the wider community. The committee's final report and its recommendations will be submitted to the vice-chancellor and the dean of VCAM who will present the recommendations affecting the former Victorian College of the Arts to the VCA integration committee prior to submission to the University of Melbourne Council.

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Any curriculum changes will undergo further consultation within the faculty followed by approval through the university's normal governance processes including academic board and council. It is meant to be an independent committee and process.

However, the review committee is made up of the independent chair, a representative of the vice-chancellor, a representative of the VCAM advisory board, one representative from each campus, four heads of VCAM schools, one of whom is the

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deputy dean, a professional staff representative, one undergraduate and one postgraduate student representative, an outside academic representative and one community representative. No-one could describe this composition as being truly independent of the VCAM or University of Melbourne. The composition of the committee seems to contain too many people from within the VCAM, some with stated positions on the very issues in question, and too few truly independent members with expertise and interest in the performing arts but who are not directly involved with the VCAM. It is particularly disappointing to see no VCA alumni or arts industry representation on the committee. Only two out of the seven staff and student representatives on the committee are elected by their peers, despite numerous requests to the dean, vice-chancellor and the independent chair of the review committee for direct election of the staff and student members and public assurances from the dean that she would consider it.

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The fate of the former VCA and the former University of Melbourne faculty of music is too important to be entrusted solely to the largely private deliberations of a committee that does not have a majority of independent members and does not represent a broad constituency of the performing arts community and on which the staff and student representatives are not all elected by their peers. My request to the minister is that he calls on the University of Melbourne to revisit the composition of the review committee to ensure that the majority of its members are independent of the VCAM and the University of Melbourne, that all staff and students are elected by the current staff and student body from a selection of volunteer candidates, that alumni and the performing arts industry are represented, and that the processes of the review committee are open and transparent.

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