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Review Committee for VCA and Music  
The University of Melbourne

By email: [vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au)

## **Submission in response to Defining the Future Discussion Paper**

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on possible options for the future of creative arts and music education at VCA and the University of Melbourne.

Live Performance Australia (LPA) is the peak body for the live entertainment and performing arts industry in Australia. Our members include performing arts companies, commercial producers, contemporary music promoters, performing arts centres, venues and industry service providers like ticketing and technical service companies.

We offer the following feedback in response to the Discussion Paper:

### **CURRICULUM**

LPA members regularly employ recent graduates of training institutions such as NIDA, WAAPA and VCA and do not wish to see the quality of training being provided by VCA diminished. It is particularly critical that VCA continue producing high quality graduates with strong practical skills given that Melbourne is one of the country's top two markets for live performance, and could certainly lay claim to being the home of musical theatre in Australia. It would be a ludicrous situation for Melbourne to lose a much needed practical training institution, and for employers to be forced to look interstate or overseas for the technicians and artisans they require.

We support the retention of the VCA as an elite arts training institution with a focus on intensive, practical, studio-based training. In order to ensure that the skills needs of the live performance industry can be met, VCA should continue to offer degree-award courses across all art streams including Drama, Dance, Music Theatre, Production and Music. We also believe that the option of associate degrees through the VET system warrants further examination.

We do not believe that the best interests of the students or the industry would be served by applying the Melbourne Model to the VCA, as there is an obvious disjunct between the Melbourne Model's breadth approach and the intensive, practical training necessary to produce work ready graduates.

In order to ensure that VCA continues to meet the evolving needs of employers, we are also of the view that its curriculum should be regularly reviewed. We encourage these reviews to include extensive consultation with all stakeholders, including employers.

## FUNDING & STRUCTURE

We do not believe that the complete separation of VCA from the University of Melbourne would be a favourable outcome. In our view, the best option would be to centralize the New Generation Music degree and graduate program at Parkville, and retain the other disciplines at Southbank. Under this system, Music students would have the option of choosing between a Parkville degree with a breadth component, or a more intensive, practical degree at Southbank.

The best hope for a financially sound, academically independent VCA is direct funding through inclusion in the Australian Roundtable program at levels comparable to NIDA, and we encourage the University of Melbourne to vigorously pursue this option. The strongest argument to galvanise support for this change is that skills shortages are already being suffered Australia wide in the technical disciplines. If VCA does not achieve funding parity, skills shortages will only become more pronounced.

We are not in favour of VCA addressing its funding shortfall by seeking a greater proportion of international students. With the continued tightening of the Skilled Migration stream, there is little to be gained from training international students if they cannot then work permanently in Australia. It is also questionable whether international students would want to stay in Australia to work, given that the industry already suffers from the problem of top quality Australian talent being lost to the attractive opportunities available overseas.

## IN CONCLUSION

We applaud the decision of the University of Melbourne to form a Review Committee and consult broadly to determine the best possible future for VCA. We look forward to an outcome which secures the future of high quality arts industry training in Victoria.

Yours sincerely,



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