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State Member of Parliament for
Southern Metropolitan Region

MEDIA RELEASE

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Government fails to provide lifeline to VCA

The state government has confirmed it would not be offering any funding support to the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). In the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) Budget Estimates hearings yesterday, Minister Batchelor stated it was the Federal government's responsibility to fund the VCA.

"The statement made by Arts Minister Peter Batchelor is extremely disappointing," Greens Arts spokesperson, Sue Pennicuik said today. "In 2006 when the state government introduced legislation to incorporate the VCA into Melbourne University, it promised the integration would ensure the long-term financial viability of the college and enable it to continue to fulfil its role as the leading Victorian provider of visual and performing arts courses.

"That has proved to be a hollow promise," she said. "Since its incorporation into Melbourne University, the VCA has lost its name, its separate identity, its buildings, several courses and its secure funding base," she said.

In an Age article of 12 September 2009, Premier Brumby also rejected calls to provide a financial lifeline to the VCA. In the same article Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said it is not a federal funding matter: she has batted the issue back to the university and the state government.

"The VCA has become a political football and its unique status in training and developing our performing artists is being lost because neither level of government is prepared to provide the modest level of support needed to support it. It's a disgrace," she said.

"The Premier and the Arts minister should stand up for the VCA, as was promised in 2006, by providing core support funding and by seriously lobbying for adequate ongoing funding from the federal arts portfolio, in keeping with federal support that is provided to other performing arts institutes such as NIDA and WAAPA," Ms Pennicuik said.

For further comment: Sue Pennicuik – 0409 055 875

Background:

The University of Melbourne provides the VCAM with an essential \$6 million cash subsidy, but then extracts another \$6 million in annual rent, or over \$6000 per student which equates to the shortfall identified in the VCAM review of 13 May 2010. I have asked the Minister in parliament to look into this issue.
