

Greens call for Action Plan To Save VCA This Year

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The Australian and Victorian Greens called today for the State and Federal governments to work together with students, staff and supporters of the VCA to urgently develop a jointly-funded action plan to save the VCA this year.

“For the past year Victorians and Australians have watched in despair as the former VCA has lost status, staff and courses under a failing merger with the University of Melbourne (UoM),” Sue Pennicuik, Victorian Greens Arts spokesperson said today.

“Students, staff, alumni, former arts ministers, supporters and our arts businesses have all been crying out for action from the federal and state governments, but not a thing has been done to address the situation”, she said. “We were told to wait for the release of the Switkowski review of the merger, but regrettably, the review did not point to a clear way forward and time is running out.

“Today we are saying enough is enough. Urgent action is needed before the VCA as we know and love it is lost”, Greens candidate for the federal seat of Melbourne, Adam Bandt, said. “So we are calling for a joint state and federal solution.

“If I am elected as the federal member for Melbourne, I will be Parliament’s strongest advocate for the VCA and will immediately work towards a jointly-funded action plan to make sure the VCA is the global leader it has been and should be.

“There are several options on the table which need to be worked through with students, staff and experts in arts education. One is for the VCA be recognised as a national cultural institution, to be funded through the federal Arts Ministry as is the case for the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), the Australian Ballet School and the National Institute of Circus Art,” he said.

“Whatever the final outcome, it is vital to acknowledge that the VCA is the only tertiary college in Australia, and one of only a few in the world, that teaches all major art forms at an elite level, with an emphasis on cross-art form collaboration.

Sue Pennicuik agrees with the need to pave the way for the federal / state solution.

“In 2006, when the state parliament passed legislation to merge the VCA with the University of Melbourne, the government promised that the VCA would be financially secure, its unique range of courses would be retained and the emphasis on training work-ready artists would continue. This is not happening and the state government must take responsibility and do something about it,” she said.

“The Victorian Greens support de-merging the VCA from the University of Melbourne, allowing VCA to become an independent, cultural institution funded principally through the federal Arts Ministry”, she said. “Such a de-merger should see the VCA’s assets returned to it – free of all rentals and administration costs that have been charged by the UoM and also see UoM Faculty of Music return to Parkville.”

“In addition to federal arts funding, we suggest core state government funding to the VCA of around \$8m a year, in recognition of the enormous economic benefit the VCA provides to Victoria”, Ms Pennicuik said. “A stand alone VCA should also be supported and encouraged to strengthen industry links, increase course offerings and build on its working relationships with its Arts Precinct neighbours.”

“Saving the VCA is sensible and is not costly. Like many Australians, we cannot understand why VCA’s situation has not been addressed when the benefits are so profound,” says Mr Bandt.

“The Australian Greens make our position clear – VCA must be saved this year. We call for multi-party support for a lasting solution,” says Pennicuik.