



Transcript

Friday 13 May 2011

Speech by Victorian Premier and Minister for the Arts Ted Baillieu to VCA students and staff

BAILLIEU:

Thanks very much, Barry, and kindly acknowledge Glyn Davis, the Vice Chancellor, Ian Marshman and Barry and Sue and living legend Adam Elliot and all the other living legend alumni from VCA or out there in the world of wonder. And can I also acknowledge the staff, the students who are here and can I say, just to walk around at VCA is to suck up youth, suck up vitality and energy. And I've got to say, it just brings back so many memories for me, it makes me want to be young again. I'd like to say it makes me feel young again, but then I'm kind of avoiding the subject of being old.

But anybody who's had anything to do with the creative arts ... and I'm an architect in another life, but I've had my engagements, in one form or another with the creative arts. I performed at Melbourne University in the Architecture School and Architects review with talented people and we stayed up late and we did all the things in garrets and wrote scripts and did all of that sort of stuff. And I had the pleasure of being involved with some fundraising 15-16 years ago for the Film and Television School here and I was on the board of the Australian Children's Television Foundation for a few years and I've got to say I loved it. And all those animators who filled the minds and coffers of the ACTF and everything about it: I've loved every bit of that. And I've got to say, having an involvement with the performing arts through the Comedy Festival for ten years, I have absolutely no doubt that arts are a part of what makes Victoria and Melbourne special.

And we don't always get it right, but as long as we always get it. That's the important thing. And having creative tension, being a little bit edgy, being perpetually contestable with ideas: that's what it's all about. And that's why we believe the VCA is so special. And we have been right behind – and indeed we'd argue, right up front – the campaign to support the VCA. And if we forget about all the ups and downs of recent years, we've reached a point where the VCA is going to flourish and the State Government's going to support it in an unprecedented way. And we made that commitment before the election and we're sticking with the commitment and we're going to



make it happen. And we want to see the VCA really steaming ahead.

And we had the opportunity last Saturday of meeting with a whole lot of the arts community leadership at Government, just talking about this precinct. And one of the contributions there about looking at the future of this precinct was so spot on, and that's about making sure it's perpetually accessible to students, to young artists, and those who haven't yet necessarily made it, but are exploring the future, because that's what the VCA's about. And we want to make sure as a government that we do do that, we've put half a million dollars into the Budget this year to help with some precinct planning here and we want to see this precinct grow. And I said to the group last Saturday – they actually weren't expecting me to turn up, but I turned up because I thought it was important – I said to the group, 'I don't want this precinct to become just a parking lot of arts institutions, I want this to be a crucible of artistic energy, where people are coming and going and there's activity and there is change on a constant basis and ideas are being butted up against each other and people are butting up against each other.' And that's what creative arts is all about.

And that's why, in my view, Melbourne is such a special city. What we've got we have to treasure. There's a recognition around the world and it's not just institutionalised art, it's creativity. And I use the metaphor -- and forgive me for those who I did [*inaudible*]. We've got a sports precinct down the road there, it's probably one of the best sports precincts in the world. We're all pretty proud of that as Victorians and Melbournians and we all say to ourselves, 'We're the sports capital of Australia' and sometimes we even say to ourselves, 'We're the sports capital of the world'. And you can stand look out the high rise buildings in the city centre, look down at that sports precinct and say, 'That's fantastic'.

But we've got a way to go with that on two counts: we have turned ourselves into sports spectators, but we need to look at making sure that we've got the sports people and there are a few tests to that and we're not yet passing those tests. We are good at getting people in here and we good at turning up for the show, but we need the sports people as well. And the other part of that sports precinct is that when there's not an event, there's nothing happening. And I don't want that to happen to this precinct. I want this precinct to be lively, viable, activated 24 hours a day. And we hope that that will develop and evolve and no one's going to come by and drop an answer, it's got to be organic



and evolve with the creative forces of all the people who run the show.

Now, I've gone completely off the script here. And so, what I'm here to announce is some changes that we're making to the arts, right up front. And I've just said to some of the kids out there, 'The first thing we're announcing this week is a ban'. It's important to ban things in the arts, so we are going to ban coffee and black shirts. *[Laughter]* So that's the first part of it, but the other announcement is to confirm that \$6 million a year, to confirm the half a million dollars for the precinct studies, but also to let you know what we are hoping to do with that \$6 million a year.

And we're working with the VCA, we're working with the University on some terms of agreement. And what we're doing is looking at a range of options, master teaching arrangements, new scholarships for outstanding students – particularly those from disadvantaged or difficult backgrounds, 60 per cent of those preserved for Victorian students – one year professional pathway scholarships, music theatre and cabaret programs, a new national graduate opera program, and a bunch of other innovative ideas. And we don't want to impose a solution, we want to work with the University and VCA and all the relevant interest groups. And we also will have some of that funding going to infrastructure to support improvements to facilities down here and we hope to include support for some small arts organisations.

Small arts organisations are tomorrow's big arts organisations. And today's big arts organisations are the ones that got it right, but need to keep changing. So all of that's part of the mix. And making this the dynamic energetic crucible of energy is what it's all about and the VCA is obviously at the heart of it. And there are some great long term institutions that are obviously linked into this exercise and I'm delighted to be here, and I'm delighted to have my colleague Clem Newton-Brown, as well. And Clem has been passionate about this and been on my back about this for a fair while. And I know this isn't the only precinct like this. You can go down Chapel St, even late at night and you walk down the street and you can sense the Swinburne students, you can sense the NICA students, and there's an energy there as well. And if you can get up to ... live around Carlton, when I was at University back in the 1930s, and Tiamo's was there then as well, and La Mama and those theatres were operating. There's energy in all sorts of places, including in some of our regional centres.



So this isn't the only part of the answer. And indeed, there's never an answer, this is just an opportunity. It's an opportunity for you guys and whether you're washing with the oil of a smelly rag or living on the smell of an oily one, this is part of the excitement of being creative.

The other thing I want to announce is, when you see the acronym above us VCA, you're tempted to work out other ways saying VCA. What could it stand for? So, rhetorically there's a contest there to what else can we make VCA stand for, just to have a bit of fun. But I've got to say, Victoria's created artists and you're it, you're part of the future and I look forward to exploring it with you in the future. Thank you for coming out, we had a bit of fun next door with the sculpture students who've been up all night in the basement, waiting. Perched with weapons. I walked down the stairs and they fired them at me, and that will be a very memorable experience. But, thank you very much for being here and enjoy this remarkable opportunity you have. And I know you don't live here forever, you get to pass through what is something which will change your lives. And I know my experience, humble though mine has been, certainly changed mine.

Thanks very much.

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