

‘VCA is the only college in Australia to teach every art form at an elite level.’

Background

In 2005, the Howard Government removed the Victorian College of the Arts’ (VCA) special funding rate, reducing the income of the College by approx. \$5 million per annum.

As a result of the cut in funding, the Victorian Government merged VCA and the University of Melbourne (UoM) in 2007, and the University subsequently expanded the Faculty to include UoM Music in 2009 (to become ‘VCAM’). Since then, VCAM has seen its course offerings cut, the application of the less intensive Melbourne Model to the Music School, 8% of staff cut in 2009 alone, and now faces new and expanded University-led cost cutting measures, such as a proposed 154% increase in Film & TV students by 2015 with no additional teachers.

The systematic damage to elite arts education at VCAM will have considerable economic impact nationally. To use the VCA Film & TV school as an example, in the years 2006-2009 approximately 52% of all drama and documentary productions in Victoria were written, produced or directed by a VCA alumnus. Film Victoria valued these productions at a minimum of \$214 million.

VCAM is of national significance, with many graduates receiving high honours and awards, including Academy Award winners, Cannes Film Festival award winners, BAFTA and AFI award winners and more. Prominent VCA alumni include Julia Zemiro (host of *RockWiz*), Anne Wood (*Mamma Mia*), Vince Colosimo (*Underbelly*), Adam Elliot (*Academy Award* winner), Anthony Lucas (*Academy Award* nominee), Hannie Rayson (playwright *Hotel Sorrento*), Kate Denborough (Kage Physical Theatre), Slava Grigoryan and Marcus Wills (*Archibald* winner) to name a few.

Essential elements

- A commitment to specialised, studio-based, intensive training of the highest calibre, and funding to a level that will allow this to occur.
- The strength of VCAM’s unique education formula – teaching all arts forms on a single campus with an emphasis on collaboration across art forms.
- The Melbourne Model should not be applied to VCAM.
- VCA Music and UoM Music should be demerged and allowed to focus on their respective areas of expertise.
- The Management of the College must be exemplary practitioners in the Arts who have the endorsement of staff, students and industry.
- There must be a commitment to financial transparency at the College.

Policy Actions

SAVEVCA advocates three ways forward that the Federal and State Governments could pursue that will allow for excellence in elite arts education to continue. Leadership from the Federal Government to finalise a solution with the State Government and University of Melbourne is essential. The Federal Government is the primary funder of VCAM, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and could easily resolve the funding crisis.

Notably, the cost of all options is modest when compared to other elite training institutions (like the National Institute of Dramatic Art and the Australian Film & TV Radio School) and is dwarfed by the economic return VCA has been proven to provide.

Timing

SAVEVCA believe the damage done to the integrity of VCAM as an institution must be addressed urgently, with a new path to become active by the start of the 2011 academic year.

Should the College’s serious funding, management and curriculum shortfalls not be addressed within this time frame, the negative repercussions will be sorely felt within arts businesses from 2010.

Australia’s creative economy is growing at twice the rate of the rest of the economy, employing 315,200 people and generating \$31.1 billion per year according to a CCI report. Further delay simply cannot be accommodated.



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ALL STUDENTS MUST HAVE
\$111 CASH ON HAND
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**SAVE THE
VCA**

'Australia's creative economy is growing at twice the rate of the rest of the economy, employing 315, 200 people and generating \$31.1 billion per year...'

Three proposed models

1. Creating a new national college: The Australian College of the Arts (ACA)

Structure VCAM is demerged from UoM by the Victorian Government, and a new tertiary institution is declared by the Federal Government capable of awarding its own degrees.

Federal Fund the College as a cultural institution through the Federal Arts Ministry at an estimated \$35m per year (approximately double the current VCA CSP undergraduate rate).

State \$2m setup costs and provide a lasting solution in terms of land and infrastructure.

2. Restoring an independent College of the Arts: demerger from the University

Structure VCAM demerged from UoM by the Victorian Government. VCA is again an independent College with an affiliation with the University of Melbourne i.e. returning to its pre 2007 status.

Federal Continue to fund VCAM through the Federal Education Ministry.

A special subsidy from the Government of \$8m a year to support VCA being the only College of its kind and its critical role in supporting the Victorian and Australian Arts Industries.

State Provide lasting solution in terms of land and infrastructure.

3. An autonomous Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts.

Structure VCAM demerged from UoM Music by the Victorian Government and returned to its pre-2009 status, given special autonomy by the University in terms of curriculum, administration and finances.

Federal Continue to fund VCAM through the Federal Education Ministry.

A special subsidy from the Government of \$8m a year to support VCA being the only College of its kind and its critical role in supporting the Victorian and Australian Arts Industries.

State Provide lasting solution in terms of land and infrastructure.

Note: The costs quoted in all models are dependent on no rentals or administration charges being billed to the College by the UoM.

Undergraduate Funding Levels in Order of Cost

This table provides a rough comparison of where ACA would sit in terms of funding costs.

Institution	Primary Methods of Funding	Approximate Annual Funding	Average no. of students	Average cost per student
VCAM in 2010**	DEEWR/Fee paying students/Donations	\$10m (Parkville) \$24m (Southbank)	530 1137	\$20,400
VCA in 2004*	DEEWR/Fee paying students/Donations	\$27.5m	1000	\$28,000
ACA	DEEWR/Fee paying students/Donations	\$35m	1000	\$35,000
NIDA	DEWHA/Fees/Rentals	\$10m (exclusive of Open Program)	170	\$58,800
AFTRS	DEWHA	\$27m	350	Unknown***
AIS	DFIN	\$262m	700	Unknown****

* before Federal Govt funding cuts and prior to the merger with UoM

** based on the University of Melbourne 2008 Budget and Forward Estimates due to later budgets no longer being publicly available

*** AFTRS runs many state initiatives, therefore it is hard to extract the exact cost per student- but it is probably similar to NIDA.

**** AIS similarly funds activities additional to core teaching however, the cost of teaching each athlete is extremely high.

