

Re: Discussion Paper

Dear Review Committee,

I thank you for the opportunity to discuss the fortunes of the Victorian College Of The Arts. I write to you as someone who works collaboratively in the Arts Community in Australia, who creates works for theatre and is responsible for employing arts practitioners from technical/creative teams through to performers and musicians.

If the VCA ceases to function as a vocational arts training institution the effects on the industry would be devastating. I've written and toured original works of music theatre both nationally and internationally and have had the great pleasure to work with VCA graduates at every level of theatre-making. From lighting designers and operators, to stage managers and directors, actors and musicians, set and costume designers, all these positions have been filled by graduates of the VCA.

I've also had the incredibly opportunity to have original work workshopped and performed by the music theatre course under the direction of Martin Croft- an experience which has greatly benefited me as a writer and composer and created further opportunities for me to have my work seen by the public.

VCA grads permeate the theatre industry at every level with an incredibly high degree of skill, professionalism and talent. To take the VCA out of the equation amounts to creating an unfillable void.

It's the same story every time; vocational training costs money and where is the discernable return? How can a cost be justified if there's no way of quantifying the value of your investment? I suppose that's where people like myself and the thousands of other vocal supporters of the VCA come in. I don't need the VCA to hang around because it creates a warm, fuzzy, familiar feeling when I go past on a tram- people like me need the VCA in existence in order to work with great practitioners- actors, musicians, musical directors, directors, designers, stage managers.

Can we put a number on it? Can we account for every dollar spent on these VCA students and their input into the greater arts community? Well, here's a few numbers... Of the past three theatre works I've written ("Angry Eddie" 2003, "Drink Pepsi, Bitch" 2005 and "Shane Warne The Musical" 2008) my director, Tom Healey was from the VCA. Stage manager? VCA. Musicians? Dustin McLean, Vincenzo Ruberto, Ben Hendry, Nick Karrasavvidis- all VCA graduates. Will Poskitt, a VCA graduate, was the musical director of Shane Warne The Musical. Our lighting operators, Assistant Stage Managers, tour managers, performers were filled by VCA graduates. They're everywhere, and they're terrific.

In skills terms, VCA graduates are as good as anywhere in Australia and the world. The music department puts out some of the most incredible musicians in Australia. I believe this happens because the VCA is a truly vocational course. It takes single-minded focus to become the kind of musician that can perform at the top level- not a drummer who can also knit, do spread sheets and walk a tight rope. Elite musicians (just like dancers and actors and designers and stage managers and directors) need to be singularly focused on their craft.

I hope this letter has highlighted the personal importance I place on the existence of the VCA. I hope you hear my case, as well as the countless others that are fighting for the life of this institution, as a qualification that the investment in these students, these incredible VCA graduates, has and will continue to pay off.

Yours Sincerely,
Eddie Perfect