



Trish Doyle MP

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New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

National Art School

13 October 2016

I commend, and Labor commends, the signatories to the petition being discussed in the House this afternoon that calls upon the Baird Government to guarantee the ongoing funding and accommodation of the National Art School.

As the members for Sydney and Summer Hill have noted already, the work of the National Art School is vitally important to the cultural fabric of this city and our State.

I am very fortunate to represent an area—the Blue Mountains—that is renowned for the creative industries, including fine art. I note that a Blue Mountains artist, Robert Malherbe, last night won the New South Wales Parliament's Plein Air Painting Prize for his work *Lithgow Wetlands*. My community and I understand very well the significance and the importance of the National Art School, and we support it. It is a national treasure.

Against a backdrop of the privatisation agenda that is at the heart of everything the Baird Government does, it is totally understandable that the artistic community in Sydney would not take Mike Baird at his word when he says through his pet, the Minister for Education, that there has been "no decision to sell the site".

The statement has a drafting error, because the conclusion of that sentence should have a comma at the end of it, and then the word "yet", followed by a full stop.

Unless you get something in black and white from members of this Government saying, "We will not" or, "We will certainly", you cannot trust them. You just cannot trust them.

They say, "There are no current plans" to privatise our trains. "There are no current plans" to sell off TAFE campuses. "There has been no

decision" to merge councils. "No decision has been made to merge the National Art School." "There is no decision to sell the site."

But all those statements should contain the word "yet".

So no, I do not trust them.

The Baird Government has shown through its actions and its words that it is a pet of the big end of town and that it sees no problem in gifting vital public property to the private sector for its benefit and advantage.

Already the Premier is trying to gift our heritage buildings, those majestic sandstone buildings that house the oldest government departments in the Sydney colony, to the private sector. He is trying to turn them into boutique hotels for the wealthy.

I want to see the Minister for Education come in here, put it in the Hansard and put it in writing.

Minister, make a commitment to the artistic community and our creative industries that you will not merge the National Art School, that you will guarantee the Old Darlinghurst Gaol site will remain in public hands for good and that it will be leased to the National Art School on favourable terms for the long term. Anything less than those guarantees, unequivocal and in black and white, should not be trusted by members of this House or by the signatories to this petition.

I am proud to be from the Blue Mountains. I am a strong advocate for the arts. It encompasses our lives. The arts encompass the universality of human expression, the social capital that enriches our lives.

That fact cannot be highlighted enough today.