



Controversy: Sculptor Di Mauro

Drift catches the general argument

Leisa Scott

HE has given Brisbane what is known to wags as the Hopoate sculpture — a set of giant hands, one with a particularly prominent finger — and now Sebastian Di Mauro has rocked the art world with a \$400,000 Queensland government commission.

Drift will be two 3.6m-high sculptures made of aluminium.

But the state's single biggest art commission is dividing opinion long before taking position in the forecourt of the \$55 million government building at 33 Charlotte St, in the Brisbane CBD. Opposition Leader Lawrence Springborg says although he likes art as much as the next bloke, the Government's spending priorities are badly skewed.

Art critic and University of Queensland art lecturer Rex Butler says the Government's public art policy is outdated and should instead spread the money around more artists, offering works that provide greater interaction with the public.

Under the policy, any government building worth more than \$250,000 must dedicate 2 per cent of the total cost to public art.

Arts Minister Matt Foley defends the policy, saying bold and imaginative projects are required as much as smaller works of art. Since the policy's inception in 1999, 123 projects have been completed, injecting \$16.7 million into the Queensland arts industry.

As for the artist, he's unfazed by the criticisms, saying he simply answered a call for expressions of interest 12 months ago — and won. Plus, he says, most of the money will go into the Queensland-based construction of his work, not his pocket.

Six months of casting and polishing is under way — and *Drift* is expected to be on display at the end of the year.