

MEDIA RELEASE
Monday 3 June 2019



Bruce Esplin AM Awarded Life Membership of Regional Arts Victoria

Regional Arts Victoria Board and Members welcome Kath M Mainland CBE and farewell Bruce Esplin AM at Annual General Meeting and Member Celebration held in Stratford on Saturday 25 May.

Outgoing Regional Arts Victoria Chair Bruce Esplin AM was recognised with Life Membership at an Annual General Meeting on Saturday 25 May in Stratford, having served the Regional Arts Victoria Board for nine years.

Bruce played a critical role in supporting creative recovery efforts in regional Victoria as Emergency Services Commissioner. In a passionate and emotional farewell speech to Members and staff, Bruce talked about the importance of renewal, and shared a number of stories of the critical role of art in his own life.

"It has been such a privilege to be part of Regional Arts Victoria. I have learnt so much and very much enjoyed working with my board colleagues past and present - thank you to you all," said Bruce. *"To Joe Toohey, and before him Esther Anatolitis and originally Lindy Allen - it was such a pleasure to work with you and your teams - passionate, committed and hard-working staff striving to support art making in regional Victoria."*

"To all our members current and future, I wish you well with your practice and your art making, and I would like to say thank you for allowing me to be a part of Regional Arts Victoria".

At the meeting immediately following the AGM, the Board elected experienced arts and festival executive Kath M Mainland CBE to succeed Bruce as Chair.

Kath joined Melbourne International Arts Festival as Executive Director in 2016 from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, where she had spent seven years as Chief Executive.

Kath has worked in and around Festivals for over 25 years, and acted as a trustee on a number of arts boards including chairing Festivals Edinburgh, the high-level organisation created to take the lead on the city's festivals' joint strategic development.

Over her tenure at the Fringe, the world's largest arts festival grew in size by 52% with audiences increasing by 27% and breaking the two million ticket sales barrier for the first time in 2014.

A card-carrying arts administrator, originally from Orkney, Kath was awarded a CBE for services to culture in Scotland in 2014. She is passionate about the arts, their place in society, and particularly passionate about the unique alchemy that happens at festivals and how this experience is applicable across the world.

"I'm absolutely delighted to be taking over the chair at Regional Arts Victoria, and continuing the extraordinary work done by Bruce in the last nine years. I'm very much looking forward to working with Joe and the team, developing and sustaining creative communities and artistic practice all over Victoria and getting to know the exemplary artists that make up this Creative State."

--

Regional Arts Victoria is the peak body for regional artists and arts organisations in Victoria and the leading organisation for regional creative practice in Victoria. Through partnerships, programming and projects, we develop creative practice all over Victoria.

--

END

Directors available for interview upon request.

MEDIA CONTACT Catherine French | 0402 63 84 69 | cfrench@rav.net.au