

Arts Centre Melbourne announces Acting CEO Leanne Lawrence as global search for new chief is underway



Photo credit: Mark Gambino

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, 23 FEBRUARY 2022 — Victorian Arts Centre Melbourne Trust President, Ian Carson, AM has announced the appointment of Chief People Officer Leanne Lawrence as Acting Chief Executive Officer as Arts Centre Melbourne embarks on a global search for its next CEO.

The Victorian Arts Centre Melbourne Trust recently announced outgoing CEO Claire Spencer would depart Arts Centre Melbourne after more than seven years, to take on a role as the first ever CEO at London's prestigious Barbican Centre.

"Leanne's appointment to the role reflects our ongoing people-led approach to everything we do. People and culture are central to who we are, and this will underpin Leanne's leadership as it has done Claire's," Carson said.

Leanne Lawrence will take on the role from 14 April when Claire departs Arts Centre Melbourne.

Before she joined Arts Centre Melbourne Leanne held senior roles in federal and state government agencies including the Fair Work Commission and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria. Leanne joined Arts Centre Melbourne after working at Benetas, one of Victoria's leading not-for-profit providers of aged care and retirement living.

“Recruiting the CEO for an organisation like Arts Centre Melbourne is a significant task and one we need to take time and careful thought with. That means having some solid interim plans in place to make the transition a smooth one and continue our progression on major projects,” Carson said.

During her tenure outgoing CEO Claire Spencer embedded the organisational values of Equity, Leadership, Community, Care More and Creativity; delivered the Australian Music Hall of Fame in the ground-breaking Australian Music Vault; spearheaded the creation of the sector-wide mental health initiative, the Arts Wellbeing Collective now comprising 400 partner organisations; completed the \$40m replacement of the State Theatre Flying System during COVID closure; navigated the pandemic response and recovery over a two-year period, including returning live performance to Victoria with Live at the Bowl; and secured government support for the multi-million dollar [Reimagining Arts Centre Melbourne](#)

Claire said Arts Centre Melbourne is a very special place and it has been both an honour and a privilege to lead it for over seven years.

Deirdre Blythe, Arts Centre Melbourne’s Chief Operating Officer, will take on Claire’s critical responsibilities with the MAPCo team, the government entity delivering the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation. This is instrumental to Arts Centre Melbourne’s work with-government on [Reimagining Arts Centre Melbourne](#), and Deirdre will bring her skills and experience to this area. Deirdre will also continue to oversee the significant responsibility of our financial recovery from the pandemic and the integration of the growing digital, data and technology infrastructure needs in our transformation agenda.

Leanne, together with the Executive and leadership team developed under Claire’s leadership, form a rock-solid bridge to support Arts Centre Melbourne’s path to a new CEO. The leadership and expertise of this group is a key reason that the organisation is so well placed to deliver on its future transformation aspirations.

Images can be found [here](#).

For further media information and interviews, please contact Senior Advisor, Media, and Communications Suzanne Robson on 0407 443 271 or suzanne.robson@artscentremelbourne.com.au

We’re excited to be welcoming visitors back to all of our venues for live experiences in line with the most recent Victorian Government guidelines on COVID-19. We will continue to offer engaging online experiences via our digital hub – [Together With You](#).

For more information including: our current health and safety policies; bookings for free and ticketed events; and other digital content and experiences, please visit artscentremelbourne.com.au.

For more information about Arts Centre Melbourne, please visit www.artscentremelbourne.com.au or phone 1300 182 183. Become a fan of Arts Centre Melbourne on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).