

Caroline Bowditch to lead new disability arts festival at Arts Centre Melbourne



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, MARCH 15 2022 – Arts Centre Melbourne is delighted to announce that **Arts Access Victoria CEO and Artistic Director Caroline Bowditch** will be the **Creative Lead** for the inaugural [Alter State](#) festival.

Alter State is a major arts and disability festival engaging artists and audiences from Australia and Aotearoa (NZ).

The inaugural festival will be held in late 2022 as a hybrid offering. This will allow for live performances across Arts Centre Melbourne’s theatres and spaces as well as digital content online.

“Alter State will be the most vibrant, hybrid disability arts festival in the southern hemisphere,” Caroline Bowditch said.

“For me the real strength of Alter State is that it is disability-led, which I feel is essential. It really sets us up for what happens next in the creative industries.”

“The festival will present the most incredible work that has always been out there but hasn’t been known about because it hasn’t been on stages like Arts Centre Melbourne.”

Caroline and Arts Access Victoria played a pivotal role in creating Alter State including the [digital launch event](#) which occurred in November last year.

Arts Centre Melbourne is also working with three exceptional artists **Carly Findlay OAM, Joshua Pether** and **Rodney Bell**. The group have been [Foundation Artists](#) for Alter State since [November 2019](#).

About Caroline Bowditch:

Caroline Bowditch is the Chief Executive Officer and Artistic Director of Arts Access Victoria, the peak body for arts and disability in Victoria. Bowditch returned to Australia in 2018 after 16 years working in the UK. She is best known as a performer, teacher, speaker and mosquito buzzing in the ears of the UK arts industry and further afield. Caroline took part of the prestigious CEO Leadership course at Harvard Business School in 2019-2020 and under her leadership AAV has developed key partnerships with major arts and cultural organisations including this one with Arts Centre Melbourne and Alter State.

About the Foundation Artists:

Carly Findlay OAM

Carly Findlay OAM is an award-winning writer, speaker and appearance activist. Her first book, a memoir called *Say Hello*, was released in January 2019.

Carly edited the anthology *Growing Up Disabled in Australia* with Black Inc Books. She writes on disability and appearance diversity issues for news outlets including CNN, Vogue, the ABC, The Age and Sydney Morning Herald and SBS.

In 2020, Carly Findlay received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her work as a disability advocate and activist.

Joshua Pether

Joshua Pether is of Kalkadoon heritage but lives and works on Noongar country in Western Australia. He is an experimental performance artist, dancer and choreographer of movement, temporary ritual and imagined realities.

As an independent artist he has had work shown in Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and New York and has performed in festivals and events such as the Undercover Artist Festival, Yirramboi Festival, Next Wave, APAM, Short Cuts, MoveMe Festival, SuperCell Festival of Contemporary Dance In Situ and The First Nations Dialogues in New York.

He is the creator of two solo works, 'Monster' and 'Jupiter Orbiting'. He is also a former member of LINK Dance Company, Ochres and Touch Compass Dance Company based in Auckland, New Zealand.

Rodney Bell

Rodney Bell is from Aotearoa and descends from Tainui Waka and of the Ngaati Maniapoto Iwi (tribe).

Performing artist, advocator, provocateur, Rodney enhances each given moment to contribute in a meaningful way to performance.

Rodney acquired his Disability 30 years ago and has a strong desire to discover a greater sense of mystery by embracing uncertainty with the willingness to seek out new horizons.

His talent and leadership as a disabled performing artist have seen him acknowledged as inaugural FAME Award with Performing Arts Network of New Zealand, The Creative New Zealand – Toi Iho Pūmanawa award (lived experience of disability and is making a national or international arts contribution 2020), The Grant Tilly Actor of the Year Award at the Wellington Theatre Awards 2018, Arts Access Artistic Achievement Award 2017 and the Attitude Artistic Achievement Award in 2016.

[More information about Alter State can be found here.](#)

[A Microsoft Word version of this release can be downloaded here](#)

Alter State is possible due to our strategic partnership with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and project support from a range of funding bodies and Philanthropic supporters.

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Images can be found [here](#).

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](#).

For further media information and interviews, please contact Advisor, Media and Communications, Michael Barr on 0460 309 689 or michael.barr@artscentremelbourne.com.au.

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