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MEDIA RELEASE



Change in Chair for Black Swan

Black Swan State Theatre Company today announces that its chairman of five years Mark Barnaba AM, will stand down in coming months. Mr Barnaba, who has expertly steered the organisation through a period of substantial growth and transition, will hand over his post as Chair, to current board member Nicola Forrest, on April 2.

Mr Barnaba says "I firmly believe that planned transition of leaders is vital for any organisation and choosing the right time is critical. Black Swan State Theatre Company is now in an excellent position, having transitioned to Artistic Director Clare Watson and embarking on a thrilling 2018 season for our audience". Barnaba goes on to say that "one of the achievements I am most proud of is achieving gender parity in our Board of directors, as well as being the only Australian major theatre company to currently have a co-female executive team. It is very fitting that Nicola is my successor and with Nicola Forrest, Clare Watson and executive director Natalie Jenkins at the helm, I know the organisation is in extremely capable hands".

Having joined the Board in late 2013, Mrs Forrest says that she is extremely honoured to take on the role of Chair. "I am exceptionally proud that we will be the first state theatre to have three women in leadership and I look forward to continue working closely with Natalie and Clare. Clare's artistic vision is centred on making Black Swan's productions more accessible and I am excited about our intention to serve the community with new works that present our diversity. I take the responsibility of this role very seriously and am full of anticipation for the seasons to come." Mrs Forrest takes on the helm just as the company commences its strategic planning process for the next five years. "We have terrific sponsors and partners and I look forward to our strategy meeting where we will explore innovative ways of creating new and engaging works and growing our audience," Mrs Forrest said. "Under Mark's stewardship we have achieved many great things and I sincerely thank him for handing over the company in such great shape."

During Mr Barnaba's time as Chair, Black Swan has gone from strength to strength, cementing its place in the theatre sector nationally and building audiences and stakeholder support for theatre in Western Australia. Mark has overseen the very successful transition of both executive positions (Artistic Director and Executive Director), the establishment of a number of new programs in Perth and regional Western Australia, the company's first major international collaboration with the National Theatre of China and, the stabilisation of the company's financial health. Of particular importance was the establishment of the company's first 'future fund', ensuring Black Swan's artistic vision will flourish. The establishment of this fund was championed by Nicola Forrest and is supported by the Minderoo Foundation.

Along with the change in Chair, Deputy Chair Kate O'Hara, who has served on the board for nine years, will also stand down and Alan Cransberg will replace Kate as Deputy. Mark Barnaba pays tribute to his fellow board members and says "they are an excellent board – all dedicated and passionate leaders, who bring the highest levels of corporate governance practice to the table, coupled with a love of theatre". "My thanks to my Deputy, Kate O'Hara, who has given many years of commitment and provided an all-important guiding hand to the re-branding and positioning of the company, since becoming a state theatre company nine years ago and making the new State Theatre Centre our home in 2011".

Comments attributed to Culture and the Arts Minister David Templeman:

"I thank Mark for his outstanding contribution to the Black Swan Board and broader leadership within the arts sector, particularly in promoting the interests of women.

"His stewardship of the State Theatre Company, which has been during difficult economic conditions, has included the creation of the innovative future fund to support new Western Australian theatre such as the recent sell out production *The Lighthouse Girl* based on the novel by Albany author Dianne Wolfer.

"I also acknowledge Kate's contribution as a board member for nine years; and welcome Nicola Forrest as the new Chair.

-ENDS-

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