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Marah Braye appointed CEO of Perth Festival



Perth Festival today announced the appointment of Marah Braye as CEO of Perth Festival, commencing in January 2026, following an extensive Australian and international search. With a distinguished career spanning more than two decades in the Australian and global arts and culture sector, she brings a wealth of executive leadership and experience to her new role.

Braye's arrival aligns with the recent announcement of an electrifying Perth Festival program – the second from Artistic Director Anna Reece – from 6 February to 1 March 2026, presenting audiences with the works and artists of this time and place, repurposing Perth icons as works of art and inviting a journey into completely unexpected locations.

Sydney-raised Braye joins the Festival after ten years as CEO of Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, a leading multidisciplinary centre for contemporary arts and culture, and a recreational hub for more than 6 million annual visitors. During her tenure, the ten-acre waterfront campus was transformed with a focus on cultural engagement, accessibility, sustainability and visitor experience. Her leadership renewed Harbourfront Centre's international presence and launched multiple new programs, including a multi-arts festival for children, the first Canadian Deaf and disability arts festival, and Torque: international contemporary dance series. She also partnered with the National Ballet of Canada, Canadian Opera Company and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to bring their artists and musicians back to the Centre's stages.

Prior to relocating to Canada in 2014 to lead Harbourfront Centre, Braye was CEO of the Biennale of Sydney for the 16th to 19th Biennales (2006–14), during which time she doubled attendance to the exhibition and led the

groundbreaking transformation of historic Cockatoo Island – a 21-acre former industrial precinct in Sydney Harbour – into a major exhibition venue.

Her extensive background also includes roles as General Manager at Sherman Galleries, one of Australia’s leading commercial galleries, Managing Editor at Fine Arts Press where she produced publications on contemporary art, and Publishing Manager and Development Editor at HarperCollins Publishers.

She currently serves on the board of Fall for Dance North Festival, Toronto’s international dance festival.

On being appointed CEO of Perth Festival, Marah Braye said: “As it approaches its 73rd year, I am honoured to help shape the future of Perth Festival – a festival that has welcomed artists and companies who defined and defied their times: from Nina Simone and Miles Davis to Björk and William Kentridge; from PJ Harvey and Twyla Tharp to Nederlands Dans Theatre and Komische Oper Berlin.

“I am excited to join Artistic Director Anna Reece, Chair Ben Wyatt, and the Board and talented team as we build on this extraordinary legacy. I am thrilled to arrive in time for what promises to be a momentous and exhilarating Perth Festival 2026. The program offers the Festival’s adventurous and generous audiences the chance to experience WA creations alongside work and performances from around the globe, in inspiring environments across Perth city and surrounds.”

Perth Festival Chair, Ben Wyatt said: “The Board of Perth Festival is incredibly excited that Marah will join our team as CEO. Marah brings extraordinary global leadership experience to the Festival and I have no doubt that the Perth and Australian artistic scene will benefit hugely from Marah’s leadership experience.”

Perth Festival Artistic Director, Anna Reece said: “I am very happy to welcome Marah to Perth Festival as our new CEO. Bringing fresh energy, perspective and a genuine love for the arts, Marah’s appointment cements an exciting new chapter for the Festival that we began in 2025. I look forward to the work we will do together in 2026 and beyond as we continue to shape a bold, generous and future-focused cultural landscape for Western Australia.”

After delivering a hugely successful program in 2025, which saw a 62% increase in attendances across a large program of free and ticketed events, the executive team is looking forward to working with the full Festival team to expand on these strong results in 2026 and beyond.

Braye replaces Executive Director and CEO Nathan Bennett who recently announced his departure from the Festival after a decade, taking on a new challenge as CEO of the World Masters Games Perth 2029.

The search for the Festival’s new CEO was led by REA arts + culture, specialists in executive search for cultural leaders across Australia and NZ.

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