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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**May 21, 2019. For Immediate Release**

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### **Burrinja Announces Executive Director to Step Down after Twenty Years**

Burrinja Cultural Centre President Holly DeMaria has announced that Executive Director Ross Farnell will step down at June 30 this year.

“After more than two decades at the helm of Burrinja, Ross has announced his decision not to renew his contract, as he leaves us to pursue new personal and professional opportunities” Holly said.

“The Board of Burrinja would like to thank Dr Farnell for his strong leadership of the organisation over the past twenty years, and acknowledge his service to arts, culture and community in the Dandenong Ranges during that time”.

Burrinja’s Venue Manager Ms Toni Kirk, alongside the Board, will stand in to lead the organisation immediately following Ross’s departure, while Burrinja undertakes a recruitment process for a permanent replacement.

“Under Ross’ leadership over the last twenty of the organisation’s twenty-one years, the Dandenong Ranges Community Cultural Centre – known by all as ‘Burrinja’ - has gone from strength to strength, and is now positioned as a highly regarded cultural organisation and hub of creativity in the region that will continue to have real impact in our community”, says Ms. DeMaria.

Working in close and productive partnership with Yarra Ranges Council, Burrinja’s past twenty years has seen a period of continual growth and transformational change, from very humble beginnings. Many notable outcomes have been achieved, not least being the \$9.6m funding and building of a permanent 400 seat theatre completed in 2011, creating a home for performing arts in the Hills.

“On behalf of the Board, staff, volunteers, partners and stakeholders, I’d like to thank Ross for his dedication and commitment, not only to Burrinja but to the broader arts sector and our local communities. Ross has left a lasting legacy in the region, for which he can be most proud. We are very thankful and honoured to be connected with Ross and all that he has achieved in his time leading Burrinja” Holly said.

Ross said that throughout his time at Burrinja he had been fortunate to have the passionate support of a creative community who love the arts: “It has been a real privilege to be able to lead this community-based arts organisation through its first significant 20 years, and to have the wide support that has enabled Burrinja to grow, to make a real difference in the creative life of our region, and to live up to our vision of ‘building community through art’. The advocacy of the region’s community is what created this cultural centre, and their continued support has been integral to the success and development of Burrinja”.

“I want to thank the Board past and present and the team at Burrinja who always provide incredible support and inspiration. Everyone involved at Burrinja are dedicated, passionate and committed to the vision of making a positive impact in our community through creativity.”

Holly said the Board would now begin implementation of a comprehensive succession and recruitment plan with the aim of having a permanent Executive Director appointed toward late 2019, allowing plenty of time for them to get familiar with the role and region before completion of the pending studio, gallery and café venue redevelopment.

“Burrinja has strong foundations, a wonderful team of staff, volunteers and board members, and a solid strategic vision. With the support of Council, our partners and the community, we are ready for our next leap forward.”

The Board’s recruitment process will include stakeholder and partner consultation regarding recruitment for the role. The position will be advertised widely including via Burrinja’s own online channels when it becomes available in the second half of the year.

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## **About Burrinja**

Burrinja is a vibrant community cultural centre in the Dandenong Ranges with a clear, creative and community-based vision for the region: *Building Community through Arts*. Burrinja is a cultural hub that works to provide engaging outcomes contributing to the vibrancy, diversity and cultural ecology of the region; supporting the development of emerging, experiential and distinctive arts practice.

The valuing and appreciation of Indigenous culture is embedded across the organisation’s history, practice and programming. Burrinja took its name in honour of Koorie artist, activist and local resident Lin Onus, a strong supporter for establishing an arts centre in the ranges. ‘Burrinja’ means ‘star’ and was Lin’s Yorta Yorta name. It is reflected in Burrinja’s logo.

The centre itself encompasses visual, performing and live arts activities and spaces, an extensive public collection of Indigenous and oceanic art, 400 seat theatre, black box space, multiple gallery spaces, artists’ studios, community cultural development projects, museum collection management, rehearsal, making and meeting spaces, live music and Café.

While Burrinja’s is a story of local engagement and development, it is also one of emerging national significance. It is one of only very few organisations that has an active voice in the performing arts, public gallery and museum sectors, and is active in all three peak body forums.

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