MEDIA RELEASE

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Celebrating the outstanding achievements of Australian artists

The Australia Council for the Arts has today announced eight remarkable artists who have been recognised this year for their significant contributions to the cultural and artistic fabric of the nation.

The prestigious Australia Council Awards recognise the life-long and continued contributions by artists in music, literature, community arts and cultural development, emerging and experimental arts, visual arts, theatre and dance.

The 2017 Australia Council Award recipients are:

- **Kate Grenville** (NSW) – Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature
- **Lyn Williams OAM** (NSW) – Don Banks Music Award
- **Stephen Page** (NSW) – Australia Council Dance Award
- **Madeleine Flynn** (VIC) – Australia Council Emerging & Experimental Arts Award
- **Susan Cohn** (VIC) – Australia Council Visual Arts Award
- **Rosemary Myers** (SA) – Australia Council Theatre Award
- **Steve Mayer-Miller** (QLD) – Ros Bower Award
- **Ali Kadhim** (NSW) – Kirk Robson Award

Federal Minister for the Arts Senator The Hon. Mitch Fifield congratulated the 2017 award recipients and said these impressive artists are at the forefront of their chosen practice and are well-deserving of these prestigious awards.

“Honing their craft over many years, these diverse artists are committed to their practice, playing an important and innovative role, pushing boundaries to challenge audiences here and abroad," Minister Fifield said.

Australia Council Chair Rupert Myer AO said these leading artists have been honoured for representing the finest artistic traditions and cultural expressions in their area of practice.

“These awards are an important way of acknowledging the role of artists in the life of our communities, and many of the past recipients have said how meaningful it was to be nominated by their peers,” Mr Myer said.

“ Widely respected both here and abroad in their art forms, the 2017 Australia Council Award recipients join a distinguished group of artists who are wonderful ambassadors for Australian art,” Mr Myer said.

The annual Australia Council Awards acknowledge the contribution of the individual Australian artists. Q&As with the 2017 recipients can be found on the Australia Council’s website along with past award recipients which include some of our most eminent artists.
Background on the 2017 Australia Council Award recipients:

Kate Grenville – Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature – is one of Australia’s most celebrated writers. Her most recent book, *The Case Against Fragrance* (2017), is an accessible and personal investigation into the science of scent and the power of the fragrance industry. She is the author of the international best-seller *The Secret River*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, adapted for stage and TV, and translated into some twenty languages. Her other books include *One Life: My Mother’s Story; The Idea of Perfection* (winner of the Orange Prize); *Sarah Thornhill* and *The Lieutenant*.

Lyn Williams OAM – Don Banks Music Award – is Australia’s leading director of choirs for young people. Her lifework as founder and Artistic Director of Gondwana Choirs began 27 years ago with the creation of the Sydney Children’s Choir, aiming to be a world-class ensemble, capable of performing complex music at professional standard. The organisation now encompasses the Gondwana National Choirs and the Gondwana Indigenous Children’s Choir, touring nationally and internationally and collaborating with many of the finest professional ensembles and performing artists in the country. Lyn is known for her ground breaking and innovative work and has worked closely with many of Australia’s leading composers and has commissioned or premiered more than 200 new works.

Stephen Page – Australia Council Dance Award – is a descendant of the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambeh Nation from SE Queensland. In 1991 Stephen was appointed Artistic Director of Bangarra Dance Theatre and has developed a signature body of 23 works. Stephen continues to reinvent Indigenous story-telling both within Bangarra and through collaborations with other performing arts companies most notably directing the Indigenous sections for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies. In 2017 he celebrates his 26th year with the company, creating *Bennelong* – a work based on the life of Woollarawarre Bennelong, a senior man of the Eora Nation, from the Port Jackson area in Sydney.

Madeleine Flynn – Australia Council Emerging & Experimental Arts Award – is an artist who creates unexpected situations for listening. She has a long term collaborative practice with Tim Humphrey. Her work is driven by a curiosity and questioning about listening in human culture and seeks to evolve and engage with new processes and audiences, through public and participative interventions. Her practice intertwines local, national and international relationships. Recently her work has been presented by ArtsHouse Melbourne; Substation Melbourne; Seoul Arts Festival, South Korea; New Vision Arts Festival, Hong Kong: AsiaTopa Melbourne; Brighton Festival UK; Theatre der Welt, Hamburg; Sonica Festival Glasgow. Her collaborative work, Weekly Ticket, which asks how a public artwork was an artist? is now entering year two of a fifteen year run.

Susan Cohn – Australia Council Visual Arts Award – is an artist jeweller, designer and curator based in Melbourne. She works across the art-craft-design divide using a variety of media from jewellery to installation, photography and video. Her work explores the typology of jewellery and the different terms on which it is valued. Cohn has exhibited extensively in Australia and internationally, and her work is held in major public and private collections. Cohn’s broad understanding of making and design has also enabled her to work as a designer for Alessi, as a curator for the Design Museum, London and as editor/writer for Rizzoli International Publications, New York. Cohn is the current artist trustee at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and she is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne.
Rosemary Myers – *Australia Council Theatre Award* – is the Artistic Director at Windmill Theatre Co. Her productions with the company are regularly invited to theatres and festivals around Australia and the world. Previously she was the Artistic Director of the Out of the Box Festival, Melbourne University Union Theatre and Arena Theatre. She was a Creative Director for the opening ceremony of the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Recent career highlights include *Pinocchio* which won the Helpmann Award for Best New Australian Work, Windmill’s trilogy for teenagers: *Fugitive, School Dance and Girl Asleep* in the 2014 Adelaide Festival and her first feature film *Girl Asleep* for which she was nominated Best Director at the 2016 AACTA Awards.

Steve Mayer-Miller – *Ros Bower Award* – grew up in Manly in Sydney and developed his passion for community arts working at the Cabramatta Migrant Centre in Sydney with newly arrived refugees. In 1988 he was awarded the National Sharing our Future multi-cultural art award. He is currently the artistic director of Crossroad Arts in Mackay Queensland, where for 20 years, he has developed more than 40 new works with the Indigenous and Australian South Sea Islander communities, seniors and people living with a disability. His international work has included the co-writing/directing of the play ‘with Love’ with Mallika Sarabhai which toured India in 2012. His play *Melek mo Hani* was published in 2014. For the past 5 years, Steve has worked in Japan on a series of theatre, dance and film projects partnering with communities affected by the 2011 Great Earthquake and Tsunami.

Ali Kadhim – *Kirk Robson Award* – is a movement coach, stunt performer and filmmaker. He grew up immersed in physical movement, learning martial arts from the age of 12 and discovering the existence of Parkour (the art of overcoming physical obstacles in one’s environment) at age 15. He has been teaching the art to communities and students since 2006, and is the founder of ‘Team 9Lives’, a Fairfield based crew dedicated to movement and the growth of Parkour. Ali is also a self-taught filmmaker, what began as "just borrowing the high school camcorder to record himself and friends jumping and climbing" all eventually evolved into editing, writing and choreographing of all the movement, drama and action in his films. His short films have won awards and he is currently writing feature length screenplays while also continuing his movement training and coaching with students of all ages from across Sydney.

**About the Australian Council Awards:**

*Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature*, formerly the Writers’ Emeritus Award, acknowledges the achievements of eminent literary writers over the age of 60 who have made an outstanding and lifelong contribution to Australian literature. Past winners include David Malouf AO (2016), Thomas Keneally (2015), Frank Moorhouse AM (2013), Herb Wharton (2012) and the late Christopher Koch (2007).

*Don Banks Music Award* honours a distinguished artist aged over 50 who has made an outstanding and sustained contribution to music in Australia. It is named in honour of Don Banks, an Australian composer, performer and the first Chair of the Music Board. Past winners include Brett Dean (2016), Archie Roach (2015), Mike Nock (2014) Kev Carmody (2013), Jon Rose (2012) and Belinda Webster (2011).

*Australia Council Visual Arts Award* acknowledges the exceptional achievements of an Australian artist who has made an outstanding contribution to the development of Australian art. Past winners include Richard Bell (2016), Judy Watson (2015), Fiona Foley (2014), Tracey Moffatt (2012), and Fiona Hall (2011).

*Australia Council Awards for Emerging & Experimental Arts, Dance and Theatre* were introduced in 2015 to recognise the outstanding achievements and considerable contribution of artists in those art forms. Last year’s recipients were Kelli McCluskey (Emerging & Experimental Arts); Lucy Guerin (Dance); and Yaron Lifschitz (Theatre) and recipients in its inaugural year were Stelarc (Emerging & Experimental Arts); Garry Stewart (Dance); and Bruce Gladwin (Theatre).
**Ros Bower Award** is given to artists with a proven record of high achievement in community arts and cultural development, driven by the principles of equality, respect, and diversity. It is named in honour of Ros Bower, a journalist, television producer, community arts pioneer and founding Director of Council’s first Community Arts Board. Past winners of the Ros Bower award include Lily Shearer, Lockie McDonald, Steve Payne and Alissar Chidiac.

**Kirk Robson Award** recognises outstanding leadership from young people working in community arts and cultural development, particularly in reconciliation and social justice. It was established to honour Kirk Robson who tragically died in a car accident in 2005. He received the Council’s Young and Emerging Artists Initiative and was the Artistic Director of The Torch Project. Past winners of the Kirk Robson award include, Nathan Stoneham, Shakthi Shakthidharan, Jade Lillie and Alexandra Kelly.

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