

Gripping New Play *Unprecedented* a warning bell for the upcoming Bushfire Season

After three years in development, a remarkable ensemble of six extraordinary actors breathe life into *Unprecedented*, a landmark new Australian play by multi-award-winning playwright, Campion Decent.

Wagga Wagga audiences will be amongst the first to see this new play, which was created in this region by HotHouse Theatre and has a star-studded cast that includes Riverina locals.

Unprecedented delves into the events of the 2019-2020 'Black Summer' bushfires that swept through the nation – right on the cusp of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I don't hold a hose, mate."

Based on Coronial Inquiry reports, testimonials, and submissions to the Royal Commission, including those infamous words of the former Prime Minister, *Unprecedented* stands as a rallying cry, an urgent theatrical work and powerful tribute to people fighting for their communities.

With heart and unexpected humour, the play speaks to the resilience of community, the long road to recovery, and the courage it will take to make change.

Decent's anger over what he sees as the inaction surrounding climate change became the spine of *Unprecedented*, providing a poignant contrast to the narratives conveyed by the media.

Though the Black Summer fire season is now three years behind us, there is a story to be told – not just about the fire, but more broadly, about Australia's changing relationship to the climate.

At the helm of this ground-breaking theatrical endeavour is the Riverina's Karla Conway, an award-winning director, dramaturg, and theatre-maker, currently serving as the Artistic Director & CEO of HotHouse Theatre.

"We never had the opportunity to process it properly and recover or use the learnings to be more prepared for the next round of fires," Karla remarked.

The play is meticulously researched, reflecting on the lasting impact of the fires, and the pivotal unpacking of the buzzword describing the event, asking 'was it, in fact, unprecedented?'

"The word 'unprecedented' became the buzzword of the Black Summer fires," Karla said. "It's a scapegoat word which suggests no one could have conceived this could happen or that we could have been prepared for it.

"We had ample reports and recommendations dating back to 1939, yet we find ourselves grappling with this catastrophe. How did we arrive at this point?"

The play sets out to challenge this idea and along the way takes audiences on a fascinating and entertaining journey through Australia's relationship to the fire, the environment, and the changing climate.

The play features six artists, including three from the Riverina – Rachel McNamara, Noel Hodda and Craig Alexander – as well as Wagga-born and bred, sound designer Brendon Boney.

"We are committed to championing regional artists; weaving the authentic voices of our people into the very fabric of our plays," Karla said.

"Our job as a company is first, to entertain our audiences – from gameshow to vaudeville, verbatim to bouffon, these six incredible actors take on 70 characters to carve a path through the story, helping audiences navigate through this important information that at times feels overwhelming.

"We bring every theatrical trick in the book to shift the audience from a place of knowing to feeling and in doing so, hopefully we inspire them to take action."

The powerful and timely production challenges the audience to consider whether the status quo is sufficient, or if we must demand more. It calls for a critical reassessment of our values and how we perceive climate change as a nation.

Unprecedented is supported by the Australian Government, Create NSW through the Rescue & Restart Program and was commissioned by HotHouse Theatre with the support of Playwriting Australia through the Ignition Program. Special thanks also to Arts on Tour.

SHOW INFORMATION:

Sat 2 Sept | 7:30pm

Running Time: 100 minutes, no interval.

Content Advice: Suitable for ages 15 and above. Contains strong language, descriptions, and references to bushfire and its impacts.

Book Tickets: www.civictheatre.com.au

HotHouse Theatre is a regional creative powerhouse and first-class incubator of new Australian work. Located on the border in Albury Wodonga, HotHouse has been the home of professional theatre for over 25 years, with a rich and celebrated history of commissioning, nurturing, producing and presenting contemporary Australian theatre that ignites the imagination of the region and the nation.

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A cultural facility of the City of Wagga Wagga



HotHouse
THEATRE

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About Wagga Wagga City Council

Wagga Wagga City Council serves more than 68,000 residents across an area of 4825 square kilometres with an overall budget of more than \$236M.

The organisation manages more than \$2.48 billion in assets, including a 2300km road network, Wagga Wagga Airport, Livestock Marketing Centre and the Oasis Aquatic Centre.

Council also provides important community facilities such as Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Wagga Wagga City Library, Museum of the Riverina and Civic Theatre, as well as maintaining countless parks, playgrounds and sporting facilities to ensure Wagga maintains its reputation as 'the City of Good Sports'.

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