

ARTISTIC REPORT

In 2023, Snuff Puppets presented 74 live performances reaching over 16,500 audience members, and six workshops with 140 participants.

In January, Nick Wilson was appointed co-Artistic Director alongside founder and CEO Andy Freer, cementing an 18-year partnership.

If there was one theme emerging from our first year of joint company leadership, it's the interesting balance between playing to our known strengths, and pushing out the envelope.

On the one hand, in our 33rd year, we have the stability of an established company with a distinctive style and a particular legacy, we have models that work, and frameworks that allow us to open up our practice to diverse communities with both a depth and immediacy that few artforms can manage.

On the other hand, part of that legacy is a spirit of experimentation, of boundary-pushing, of opening up our processes to new people, practices, and ideas. Our task is to find a balance

between maximizing those road-tested models that are the bedrock of our practice, while also testing the limits of what it means to be a Giant Puppet Company in the world today.

The strength, vitality, and longevity of Snuff Puppets would not be made possible without the incredible work of all the artists, managers, and board members who consistently support and nourish the company.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to the outgoing board members Chair Dave Roper, Erin Fairley, and Alex Cleary.

We're deeply grateful to <u>Snuff Lovers</u> for their generous support as well as our funders and gig partners.

Lastly, in 2023 we said adieu to our amazing Executive Director Ro Bright and welcomed our new General Manager the indomitable Sarah Houbolt.

- Co-Artistic Directors Andy Freer & Nick Wilson

ABOUT

SNUFF PUPPETS

Snuff Puppets is a community of Naarm-based artists dedicated to the art and theatre of puppetry.

Since 1992, Snuff Puppets has been unleashing giant puppet spectacles worldwide.

Our work is a collision of sculpture, music and physical theatre.

From our home in the Footscray
Drill Hall our artists and works have
travelled to festivals in
over 30 countries.

Our community
People's Puppet Project
workshops have created 40 new works.

We love performing for free with non-traditional arts audiences; reclaiming streets and public spaces for art.

We create giant shows, outdoor roaming acts, community workshops, installations and viral videos.

Snuff Puppets are deliberately anarchic, and rebellious. Our work tackles important, awkward and taboo topics.

We blur the traditional lines between audience and performer; creating other worlds that are unfamiliar, and sometimes uncomfortable and scary.

Snuff Puppets' experimental, handmade and joyful work celebrates the creativity in everybody.





WORKSHOP

BARKLY ARTS PPP

Snuff Puppets were honored to work with artists from the Barkly Collective, Waramungu Country, Northern Territory, Australia.

"The Artists of the Barkly Collective represents over fifty Aboriginal artists living in five remote communities across the Barkly region:

Mungkarta, Kulumindini (Elliott), Owairtilla (Canteen Creek), Tennant Creek and Wutunugurra (Epenarra)

The Collective includes seven language groups;

Alyawarr, Kaytetye, Mudburra, Jingili, Waramungu, Warlpiri and Warlmanpa

The Collective is facilitated by Barkly Regional Arts, a not-for-profit multidisciplinary art centre based on Waramungu Country. Barkly Regional Arts collaborates with remote Indigenous communities to foster access, development, and recognition of arts in the Barkly."

– artistsofbarkly.com.au

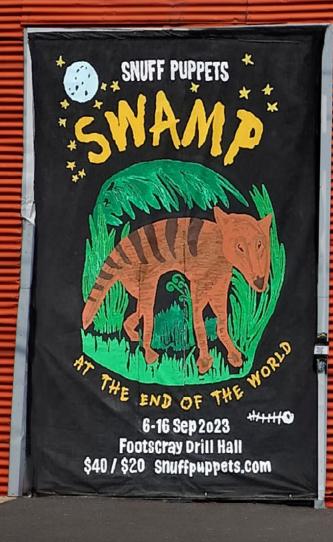
The workshop included longtime Snuff Puppets collaborator <u>Stefanie Oberhoff</u>.

Four giant puppets created at Barkly Arts performed at Tennant Creek's Desert Harmony Festival and Artali Festival in Ali Curung.

Ali Curung, or Alekarenge, means 'belonging to the dog' referring to the dog dreaming site that the town sits upon.



FOOTSCRAY DRILL HALL







SNUFF HUBB

SNUFFFEST FESTIVAL

This year marked a significant milestone for Snuff Puppets with the successful debut of Snuffest, our inaugural festival. Snuffest drew over 1,800 attendees. Sold-out nights; discounted tickets for Footscray locals. Tickets were cheaper than our peers, reflecting our "art for everyone" mission.

The festival showcased the diverse range of our work, from mainstage shows to interactive workshops,

installations, and collaborative projects.

over 1,800 people attended Snuffest

Held over five weeks at our transformed Footscray Drill Hall.

Highlights of Snuffest included the premiere season of Swamp, a Vietnamese community night in partnership with Australian Vietnamese Arts, and an indoor presentation of Cochlea.

The festival also featured a Snuff Labb workshop which culminated in a wild Snuff Party to close the festival.

Snufffest Bar Sponsor: <u>Purple Hen Winery</u>, Phillip Island

Snuffest supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria





MAINSTAGE SHOW

SWAMP

SWAMP is Snuff Puppets major new work: a dark and brooding world seething with life and flirting with disaster.

Swamp stars iconic Australian animals, brought to life in Snuff Puppets handmade style: a crafty Magpie; a bloodthirsty Mosquito; a Koala; a Lyrebird; a Frilled-Neck Lizard; a grand old Thylacine; a poisonous Cane Toad; and a 22-meter Red-Bellied Black Snake.

A series of incisive vignettes reveal their fraught relationship with the human world, before plunging the audience into a surreal and abstracted realm of visual poetry through transforming sets, huge projections, bodies, movement, music and symbols.

Swamp's sold-out two-week season at Snuffest Festival earned it a spot in Melbourne's Top 10 Shows of 2023 by 'My Melbourne Arts'.

Swamp is now poised to showcase at arts markets, seeking touring opportunities both in Australia and internationally in 2024 and beyond.

Created by: Andy Freer, Nick Wilson

Director: Andy Freer Producer: Ro Bright

Puppeteers: Nick Barlow, Liam Berg, Julian Chapple, Olivia Floate, Jet Min, OPAL, Lachlan

Plain, Nick Wilson, Caito Zacharias

Builders: Nick Barlow, Andy Freer, Colleen Burke, Erin Hall, Lachlan Plain, Ruth Twardy, Nick Wilson Music Composers: James Wilkinson & Nick Wilson

Additional Musicians: Lauren Garcia, Sara

Rafferton, Michael Edwards Atmospheres: J. David Franzke Sound designer: James Wilkinson

Lighting Designer & Operator: Gina Gascoigne Projection Design & Artwork: Andy Freer

Projection Mapping, Animation & Operation: Eben Greaves

Opening Video: Daniell Flood, Andy Freer Stage Manager: Caito Zacharias

Dramaturg: Pauline Cady

Volunteers: Polytechnic students, Collen's friends,

Jip Vaskess, Alessando Licul

Development & Premier Season Co-Director & Puppeteer: Rebecca Rutter

Creative Development Artists: KT Prescott, Shannon Quinn

Development Producer: Lauren Bok Public Relations: Zilla & Brook Front Of House: Ari Tampubolon

Bar: Naavikaran

Thank You: Womens Circus, The Village Festival, Remi Cady Freer, Ingrid Flood, Jack Covil, Clinton, Harry, Extinction Rebellion, Alex Cleary, Erin

Farley, Martin Bowman

Orginal developement supported by the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund,

Australia Council for the Arts

"Tremendous political punch"

- theatrematters.com.au

MAINSTAGE SHOW

SWAMP - REVIEWS

FIVE STAR REVIEW



"Swamp is an immersive tale which takes place on a mound occupied by oversized Australian wildlife.

Its inhabitants include a crafty magpie, a bloodthirsty mosquito, a dopey koala, an egocentric lyrebird, a skittish frilled-neck lizard, a grand old thylacine (Tasmanian tiger), and a poisonous cane toad. How they interact with one another and encroaching human contact, make up the essence of this dramatic story.

Swamp is connected by original music composition, multimedia projection and live movement. That the addition of fabric, plastic, sponge rubber, and wood can invoke viewer responses from laughter to tears, demonstrates the sheer enormity of Snuff Puppets' collective vision. (At times I was reminded of The Lion King and Warhorse, and how their narratives carried tremendous political punch as well.)

Several key moments during *Swamp* spring to mind. From the pesky mosquito which 'buzzed' members of opening night's front row, a ravenous cane toad eating everything in its path, to the desperate lizard caught in heavy traffic.

my plus-one and I were simply blown away by the level of stagecraft.

Each puppet is constructed to take full advantage of their operators' bodies. Sculpted entirely around human frames, requires intense physicality and trust needed to maintain the show's seamless momentum and audience interest.

Layered or peeled back to reveal painted muscles or bone, this awe was intensified by several huge inflatable props which somehow appeared from nowhere. That their venue can accommodate so much visual activity within its confined space, is impressive stuff indeed.

If the opening night audience is any indication, Swamp has wide-ranging demographic appeal. That the narrative tackles difficult subject matter (like the impact of pollution, deforestation, and bushfires) may be a consideration before bringing younger viewers. That being said, *Swamp* is an unforgettable experience."

- theatrematters.com.au

"SWAMP is phenomenal. It's an immersive experience that delivers unforgettable imagery, strong emotional responses (both laughter and sorrow) and a remarkable evening of entertainment. It is the perfect recipe to look into

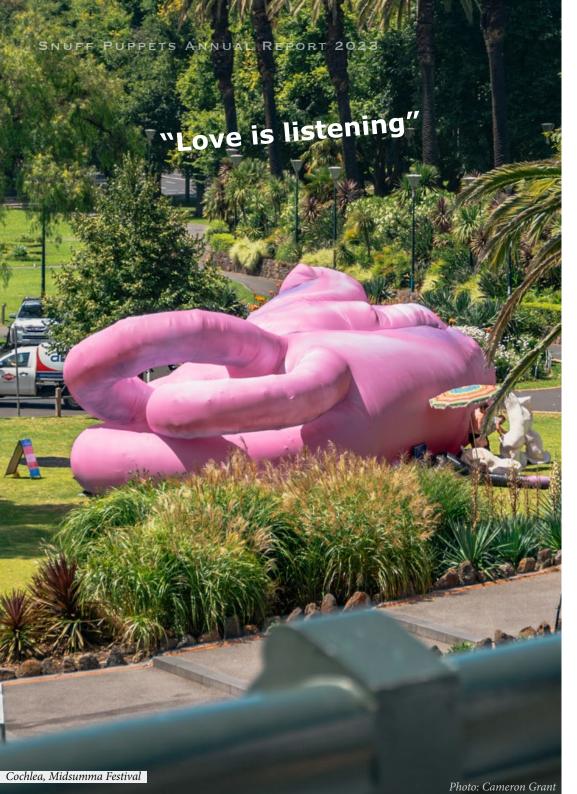
our own backyard and consider the responsibility and the powerful role we have in ensuring the survival of our land and its animals."

- mymelbournearts.com











NEW WORK

COCHLEA

Cochlea – a giant inflatable installation celebrating voices from the frontlines of gender debuted at Melbourne's Midsumma Festival.

The work incorporates inflatable sculpture, audio installation, community practice and roaming puppetry into a unique hybrid of forms.

Three giant Earbone puppets provide a familiar comic wierdness to draw people in, while the interior of the space creates a heightened focus and energy for listening to the voices of people from the transgender and nonbinary community.

SHOWINGS:

COCHLEA BLESSING With Saint Jo - Scribe of Our Souls (Jo Clifford, UK), Footscray Drill Hall, February 2023

MIDSUMMA FESTIVAL World Premiere, Alexandra Gardens, Melbourne, February 2023

SNUFFEST FESTIVAL Indoor installation, Footscray Drill Hall, September 2023

Voices: Jo Clifford, Parminder Kaur, Niki Koutouzi, Josie Hess, Lily Longman, Claire Mulraney, Clara Roebuck, Ash Spittal, Kikki Temple

Artistic Director, Designer, Builder: Nick Wilson

Resident Artist: OPAL

Producer: Ro Bright

Pupppet Builders: Erin Hall, Daniele Poidomani, Liam Berg, Andy Freer, Caito Zacharias

Thanks: H & M Cafe, Karen Bryant, Brendan Cooney, Shian Ching Lee

Cochlea at Midsumma x Ignite Melbourne has been supported through the Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund



COMMUNITY

SNUFF LABB & PARTY!

Snuffest Festival hosted a oneweek intensive Snuff Labb workshop.

At Snuff Labb, we collaboratively build, devise, experiment and play, throwing together a whole range of giant puppets, sounds, projections and ideas, and end the workshop with a wild *Snuff Party!*

A team 20 artists joined seven creatives including Snuff musician James Wilkinson, makers Rebecca Rutter and Colleen Burke, projection artists Caroline Packham and Eben Greaves, and Snuff Puppets Artistic Directors, Andy Freer and Nick Wilson.

Snuff Labb Artists

Alec Wilson Annie Fayzdaughter Ariel Magnes Catalina McKay Chris Tynan Ed Griffiths Ella Doonan Fernanda Rippel Herbz Rah Kate Stevenson Meg Mussehl Mich Molly Nadira Sanif Oliver Ebdon Pat Rhys Skip Ulla-Britta Westergren



Thanks Frank Mejia Flood for documenting Snuff Labb

LEGACY

SKULLIE PUPPETS

We re-skinned our iconic Skullie puppets, which have been a company staple for over three decades.

This is their third refurbishment giving them a new lease of life.

At the same time, in Berlin, a young Congolese artist, Claude Bwendua, who participated in one of our workshops in Kinshasa in 2017, was performing on stage in one of our Skullie puppets alongside three more Skullie puppets that he was commissioned to make for the Deutsches Theater Berlin.

The uncanny connection between our seminal Skullie puppets, the Congo, Germany, and Australia reflects what is so strong and vital about Snuff Puppets' process.



OUR HOME

SNUFF HUBB

Snuff Puppets workshop is open to artists at low or no cost, fostering independent art-making.

Snuff Hubb serves as more than a venue; it offers resources and support in various aspects of artistry, enhancing production quality and engaging wider audiences.

In 2023, Snuff Puppets hosted giant puppet artist Daniele Poidomani from Memetica.

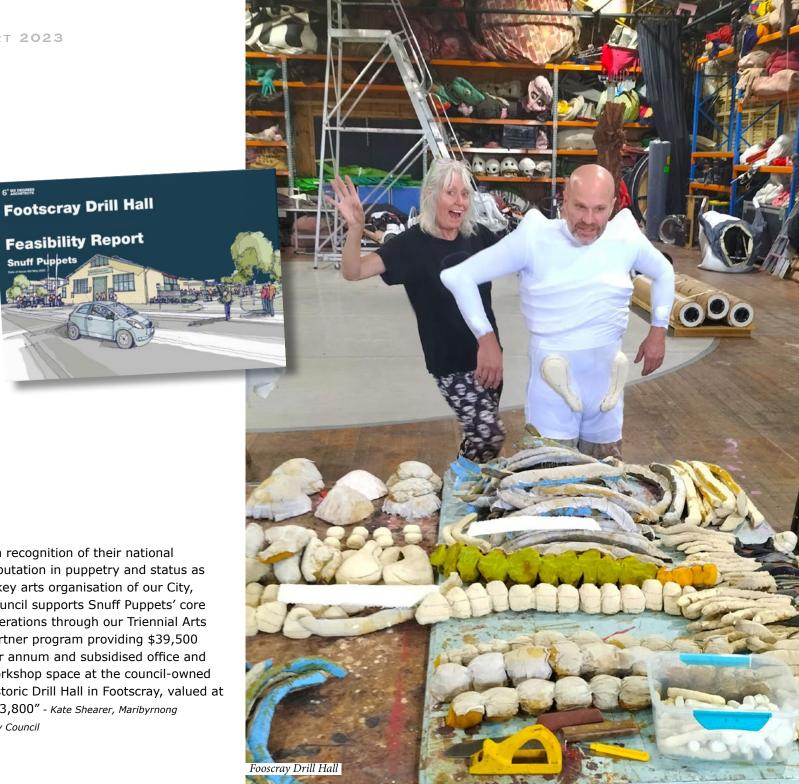
Collaborating with award-winning Six Degrees Architects, future renovation plans were created for the Drill Hall, prioritizing theatrical functionality and environmental sustainability.

This year we installed theatre lighting, loud speakers, a professional projector, a 15-meter movie screen, new flooring, and massive drapes.

Thanks to <u>The Village Festival</u> for donating drapes & Six Degrees Architects for generious support!

"In recognition of their national reputation in puppetry and status as a key arts organisation of our City, Council supports Snuff Puppets' core operations through our Triennial Arts Partner program providing \$39,500 per annum and subsidised office and workshop space at the council-owned historic Drill Hall in Footscray, valued at \$43,800" - Kate Shearer, Maribyrnong City Council

Snuff Puppets



OUR HOME SNUFF HUBB

Mentorship - Olivia Floate

We hosted puppeteer and potter Olivia Floate (aka <u>Sausage Woman</u>) in a residency/mentorship as they developed their giant puppet work Poops!

Poops is a giant baby puppet who is also a floating boat, during the residency, the baby's mother was created, Jessica Sausage, who pulls her child along waterways with an umbillical cord.

Olivia worked with the whole Snuff team to develop, document the work and present it as a standalone tourready roaming act and digital work.

Project supported by Maribyrning Council's Western Artist Mentorship Program.





OUR HOME SNUFF HUBB

Guest Artist - Enormousface!

"NYC's Most Avant-Garde Nihilist Subway Performer" - New York Magazine

We hosted a night of anti-narrative object puppetry, with visiting New York City artist Enormousface presenting *Pink/Nothing* as part of their massive End of the World Tour.

Snuff Puppets responded to Enormousface's work and Israeli attacks on Palestine with an impromptu performance featuring the Butcher beheading a Baby.



INTERNATIONAL

with Snuff Puppets

Tour sponsor Crumpler

SINGAPORE

Singapore's Flipside Festival featured Snuff Puppets presenting giant roaming Seagulls and hosting a Snuff Skool workshop at the Singapore Esplanade.

The tour teamed old Snuff puppeteers Aidan Min and Daniele Poidomani with emerging artists Caito Zacharias and Opal, on their first international tour

Additionally, Skullies and Laurent the Wonder Dog made an appearance at the Crumpler bag store in ION Mall.

Australian company Snuff Puppets entertains with its larger-than-life constructions TAKE OVER ESPLANADE WATERFRONT





















The Straits Times



INTERNATIONAL

GDYNIA, POLAND

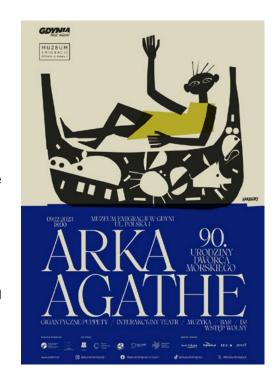
"Agathe's Ark" - Agathe, a girl from the Congo, arrived via tugboat at the Emigration Museum Gdynia, Poland, to celebrate her birthday.

The event showcased Agathe's story alongside her collection of exotic animals.

Drawing in several hundred attendees, the performance marked the culmination of a multi-week event celebrating the 90th birthday of the Maritime Station.

Agathe's Ark unfolded across three stages, featuring workshops where participants, including Gdynia residents of diverse backgrounds and ages, collaborated with volunteers and artists to create large puppets and develop the show's concept.

Created by artists from Germany (Stefanie Oberhoff, Anne Brüssau, Johannes Werner), Australia (Andy Freer), Congo (Christian Kipoke) and Poland (Patryk Pufelski) as well as an international team of volunteers worked on a giant puppet project with the residents of Gdynia, Poland.



INTERNATIONAL

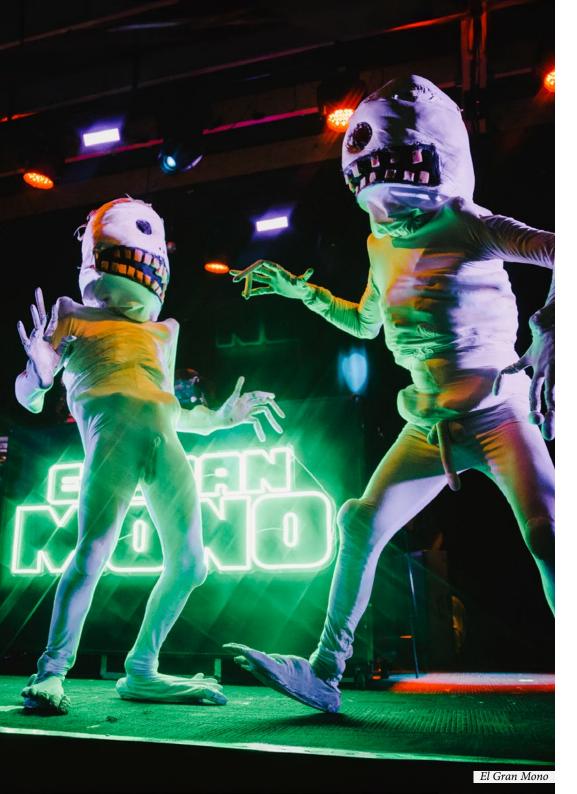
OSTNABRUCK, GERMANY

International collaborations continued to evolve through continuing work with Stuttgart-based collaborator Stefanie Oberhoff and a network of global artists.

Nick Wilson joined the Punch Agathe team at Osnabrück Figurentheater in Germany, tasked with commemorating the Westphaila Peace Agreement in a time of war.

A giant flapping white dove puppet, suspended from a crane 30 meters above the town square, dropped buckets of blood onto the cobblestones before diving headfirst into the ground and being devoured by maggots.





MELBOURNE

ROAMING GIGS

In 2023, our giant puppets filled the streets and festivals of Melbourne.

Lalor's Summer Series

The Village hosted our Magpie & Lyrebird in the City of Whittlesea

THICK 'N' JUICY

We got down at THICK 'N' JUICY with Betty Musgrove's Business Bunnies!

Bundoora RMIT

Lyrebird & Magpie entertianed students at O-week

El Gran Mono

Butcher, Skullie and Eyeball partied hard at Howler Melbourne

Big Picture Fest

Skullies entertianed crowds in Frankston

Be Bold Festival

Seagulls flew to Brimbank!

Snooper

Butcher and Skullie crowd surfed with touring punk band Snooper (Nashville) at Nighthawks Bar

M-Pavilion

Alpha60 collaborated with Snuff Puppets and choreographer Amber McCartney at Tadao Ando's M-Pavilion



20 Million Youtube views in 2023



ENGAGEMENT

ONLINE AUDIENCES

Snuff Puppets art continued to reach millions & millions of people worldwide in 2023.

Our award-winning Youtube channel enjoyed 20 million views generating \$9,600 in revenue.

YouTube subscribers increased by 27,000 to over 525,000.

Tiktok followers remained around 90,000 all year.

Instagram followers grew from 19,700 to 20,300.

Facebook followers remained steady all year at over 34,000.

A revamped <u>snuffpuppets.com</u> website attacted 11,000 engaged sessions in 2023, with an average engagement time of 57 seconds. *World average is 54 seconds.

We push conventional boundaries of theatre and puppetry in the digital age.

COMMUNITY

ACTIVISM

Critical Mass

The Butcher released new political policies to '*Transform The World'* at Footscray's Critical Mass!

Rally For Native Forests

The Beasts Of Oz stood on the steps of Parliment House with the Bob Brown Foundation demanding protection of our native forests!

Kidical Mass

Skullies joined our neighbours for a bike ride protest from Footscray to our local Council.



PEOPLE

ARTISTS + STAFF + BOARD

Snuff Puppets Artists

Nick Barlow Liam Berg Colleen Burke Jo Clifford Pauline Cady

Julian Chapple

OPAL

Michael Edwards

Olivia Floate

Daniell Flood

Ingrid Flood

J.David Franzke

Andy Freer

Lauren Garcia

Gina Gascoigne

Eben Greaves

Erin Hall

Mitch Jones

Stefanie Oberhoff

Caroline Packham

Lachlan Plain

Aidan 'Jet' Min

Daniele Poidomani

Sara Rafferton

Rebecca Rutter

James Wilkinson

Nick Wilson

Caito Zacharias

Snuff Puppets Staff

Andy Freer – Artistic Director/CEO Nick Wilson – Artistic Director Ro Bright – Executive Director Sarah Houbolt – General Manager Daniell Flood – Digital Artist/Marketing Hugh Nguyen – Accounts Manager

Snuff Puppets Board

Dave Roper - Chair
Annie Hariharan - Treasurer
Janis Lacey - Secretary
Alex Cleary - Committee Member
Kate Callingham - Committee Member
Erin Farley - Committee Member
Joanna Feely - Committee Member
Daniell Flood - Committee Member
Kelly Farrow - Committee Member

Andy Freer - Committee Member



Snuff Puppets is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. City of Maribyrnong & Crumpler









