

**Media Release**

7 May 2026

# Opera Australia appoints John Kotzas AM and Cass O'Connor to Board

Opera Australia (OA) Chairman Glyn Davis today announced the appointment of two highly experienced leaders to the OA Board, with John Kotzas AM and Cass O'Connor presenting a powerful combination of performing arts leadership, governance, commercial and creative industries expertise.

Glyn Davis said, "John and Cass are outstanding appointments for Opera Australia. John brings exceptional experience leading one of Australia's major performing arts institutions, with a deep understanding of audiences, artistic organisations and cultural leadership.

"Cass adds tremendous boardroom capability, strategic insight and a rare combination of commercial acumen and commitment to the creative industries. Together, they will strengthen the Board as Opera Australia continues to evolve and build on its remarkable 70-year legacy."

John Kotzas AM has more than two decades of senior leadership in the performing arts, including 22 years at Queensland Performing Arts Centre, where he served as Chief Executive from 2008 to 2024 after earlier roles as Artistic Director and Executive Director, Programming. John has a demonstrated record of audience growth, major commercial development and cultural leadership, including doubling QPAC's annual audiences and reshaping the organisation's funding and commercial model to strengthen its financial sustainability while maintaining artistic integrity.

John offers extensive sector knowledge through his current and recent roles with Live Performance Australia, Screen Queensland, the Association of Asia Pacific Performing Arts Centres, Griffith University and the Italian Chamber of Commerce. Earlier leadership roles with Brisbane and Warana Festivals provided further experience in programming and stakeholder engagement.

Cass O'Connor brings more than 30 years' experience as a corporate adviser and non-executive director across the arts, media and business sectors. Her background includes senior roles in equities research, investment banking and advisory work focused on media and entertainment, including positions with Deutsche Bank, Turnbull Partners and Goldman Sachs, before establishing her own advisory practice in 1999.

Her board and chair experience spans listed, private, government and cultural organisations, demonstrating her strength in governance renewal, restructuring, financial discipline and skills-based board leadership. Cass's longstanding involvement in Australia's creative sector through cultural policy and arts organisations has given her a deep understanding of audience driven businesses operating in challenging environments.

Cass has firsthand experience at leading arts organisations such as Carriageworks, where she first served as Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and then as Chair, helping guide the organisation through the pandemic, a time of significant financial and structural challenges.

See following page for bios.

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PATRON-IN-CHIEF  
DR HARUHISA HANDA

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**John Kotzas AM**

John Kotzas AM is a dynamic leader whose 40-year career has reshaped Australia’s cultural, civic, and economic spheres through visionary leadership and inclusive engagement. Renowned for blending strategic insight with social impact, he has driven transformative initiatives across arts, education, and community development, establishing global benchmarks and fostering powerful symbiotic connections.

As Chief Executive of Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) from 2008 to 2024, Kotzas doubled audiences to 1.2 million, generated \$1.27 billion in ticket sales, kept QPAC resilient through COVID, and secured \$175 million for construction of the new Glasshouse Theatre.

He founded the Brisbane Festival, turning it into a world-class event, and pioneered the Out of the Box Festival for children. In 1995, his leadership of Australia Remembers united communities for national commemoration marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. His diverse programming, from global icons to local talent, champions inclusivity.

An educator, mentor, and a Vice President of Live Performance Australia, Kotzas forges global partnerships with a “think local, go global” approach, preparing Brisbane for the 2032 Olympics. Honoured with a Member of the Order of Australia, and honorary doctorates, he remains grounded, driven by lifelong learning. Kotzas’ legacy of innovation and resilience continues to shape Queensland as a thriving cultural and civic hub.



**Cass O’Connor**

Cass is a seasoned Chair, Non-Executive Director and Corporate Advisor.

With a background in investment banking, private equity and equities research analysis, Cass’ industry focusses include digital and mainstream media, film and television production and exhibition, cultural venues and premium consumer goods.

To each role she aims to bring considered counsel, usually based on financial assessment of the entity coupled with key stakeholder appraisal. Organisational behaviours, market trends and regulatory issues provide context for Cass’ evaluations.

Cass’ 35-year board career spans commercial, government and non-profit sectors. She has served on the Carriageworks, Bundanon Trust and Creative Nation entity Australia Multimedia Enterprise boards, and currently chairs Goalpost Pictures and Television, Tribe Group (digital media) and ASX listed Airtasker Limited. She is a Non-Executive Director and Treasurer of independent Australian arts and culture focused think tank A New Approach.



Cass holds a B.Business (Econ, Fin) and is a graduate of the AICD and of Goldman Sachs Executive Leadership courses.

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