



Paul Little and Jane Hansen have donated \$1 million to the Melbourne Theatre Company. PHOTO: JESSE MARLOW

Little's big donation to Melbourne Theatre Company a 'true milestone'

Lucille Keen

Melbourne Theatre Company launched its foundation with the announcement of the largest single donation in any one year of \$1 million from prominent Melbourne business figures Paul Little and his wife Jane Hansen.

The donation from The Little Foundation was announced at a cocktail party at the Little's Toorak residence on Wednesday night. The donation will establish the organisation's endowment fund – with the interest off the initial investment being used to fund more and varied performances.

Ms Hansen, who is a leading businesswoman, will chair the foundation. She said the organisation's work "challenges, confronts and stimulates" audiences and it was worthy of support.

"I've always loved theatre and working on the board of management," Ms Hansen said.

"I've always seen how tightly these things are managed and how difficult it is to fund all sorts of things out of subscriptions and donations," she said.

"So I thought it was worthy of support, worthy of having more money so they can do other interesting things other than just trying every year to put on main stage plays with a declining number of actors and shorter rehearsal times and all the limitations that come about when the art sector doesn't have enough money."

The newly established MTC Foundation has been set up to assist the company in attracting major philanthropic support so that many important aspects of its core business such as play readings, new writing commissions and family and education programs, all of which are primarily funded by donations, can continue.

University of Melbourne vice-chancellor and MTC board member Professor Glyn Davis said the donation was a "true milestone for MTC and a wonderful act of philanthropic leadership from The Little Foundation.

"The MTC Foundation marks the beginning of an exciting time for the company and the broader community who stand to reap the benefits of a stable and enriched state theatre com-

pany that is at the heart of Melbourne's art and culture sector," Professor Davis said.

Four new trustees of the MTC Foundation were also announced at the launch – Dr Samuel Margis, Louise Myer, Hilary Scott and Richard Tegoni.

These four new members join chairwoman Jane Hansen, Terry Bracks, Fiona Griffiths, Janette Kendall, and Leigh O'Neill on the foundation's governing board to encourage and manage MTC's development funds.

MTC Artistic director Brett Sheehy said the passion and vision of philanthropic leaders was integral to bringing the organisation's artistic ambitions to life and ensuring MTC, and Melbourne, remained "vibrant and culturally stimulating".

According to MTC executive director, Virginia Lovett, the establishment of the foundation and the endowment fund would provide benefits that will flow through the sector.

"It will enable more plays to be written, more creatives to be employed and greater access for the wider community," Ms Lovett said.

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