

# MEDIA RELEASE

September 2016

## **PENGUIN BLOOM and SEW WHAT FOR WILDLIFE?** **An exhibition featuring lifesaving bird slings, and a magpie that saved a family**

**Penguin Bloom and Sew What for Wildlife?** is a collaborative exhibition featuring slings for injured birds designed by Country Arts SA and Australian Landscape Trust Arts and Environment Officer Alexandra Randell, and the profoundly beautiful photographic images from Sydney-based artist Cameron Bloom's collection of Penguin Bloom – a little magpie who saved a family.

Penguin was a small, vulnerable chick when photographer Cameron Bloom's son Noah found her lying on the grass after being blown out of her nest, 20 metres up a Norfolk Island pine. She was lucky to survive the fall. Without care, she would have died.

The Bloom family, living in NSW, took her into their home knowing it was a huge commitment. What followed was an unexpected and wonderful connection with this sweet bird. She arrived in 2013 at a crisis point in the Bloom household following a terrible accident – a fall that shattered Cameron's wife Sam's spine and left her paralysed and wheel-chair bound.

"Caring for Penguin bought us happiness on so many levels," Bloom said. "She became a lovely soul mate for Sam and helped us all heal. The intimacy of Penguin's song and feathered cuddles in bed is something the boys will never forget. Photographing Penguin taught me so much about nature and how important it is to our own wellbeing."

In Renmark, SA, self-confessed "mum" to magpies Iddy (now 20) and the late Oigle, Randell was developing an eco-arts program for the Australian Landscape Trust when she chanced upon an image which led her to Cameron Bloom's collection and news of the pending launch of Bloom's book *Penguin Bloom* written by Bradley Trevor Greive. This book has since gone on to become Australia's #1 biography/memoir in 2016 and is soon to be published in Japan, USA, UK, Germany, among others.

Randell's eco-arts program aims to build empathy between people and native wildlife - especially birds. The exhibition is timed to coincide with spring - baby magpie season – a time when many birds suffer leg and spinal injuries when they first fledge and when people often find the wounded chicks.

"I wish more Australians could know what tender, funny, brave companions these birds are so it was wonderful to find Cameron's beautiful imagery and the story of Penguin Bloom. Perhaps Penguin can help people, not only to stop fearing birds, but encourage them to understand them, care for them and fight to save their natural worlds."

Randell invented a sling for Iddy when he was a baby and needed help to recover from a spinal injury that left him unable to walk or stand up. He was not expected to survive but after ten days in the sling he walked out of it a new bird. Now a volunteer sewing group in Renmark makes the slings and they are decorated by local artists with images of the landscape, leaves and blossom of the birds' habitats.

**Penguin Bloom and Sew What for Wildlife?** is funded through the Regional Arts Fund, the Australian Landscape Trust and Renmark Paringa Council.

**Cameron and Sam Bloom will be at the launch of the exhibition at the McCormick Centre, Renmark, on October 16, at 2pm.**

**10% of proceeds from the sale of *Penguin Bloom* go towards Spinal Cure Australia - [www.spinalcure.org.au](http://www.spinalcure.org.au)**

For more information on Penguin go to: <http://www.penguinhemagpie.com>

The Penguin Bloom and Sew What for Wildlife? exhibition opens 16 October 2016 – 30 November 2016 at the McCormick Centre for the Environment, Ral Ral Avenue, Renmark, 0456 531 622 or 8586 4777.



Photo: Cameron Bloom



Media enquiries: Joy Lothian [Joy.Lothian@countryarts.org.au](mailto:Joy.Lothian@countryarts.org.au) or (08) 8444 0417 / 0423 828 035 or Helene Sobolewski  
[Helene.Sobolewski@countryarts.org.au](mailto:Helene.Sobolewski@countryarts.org.au) or (08) 8444 0429