



## **Renew Adelaide, Steve Maras win AbaF award**

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Renew Adelaide and Deputy Chair, Steve Maras, took out national honours last week, winning the Woodside Better Business Award at the Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF) Awards.

More than 700 leaders from the arts, business and philanthropy, as well as state winners from around Australia, gathered for a spectacular black tie event in Melbourne to name national AbaF Award winners in partnering, volunteering, access, giving and leadership.

The Woodside Better Business Award recognises business volunteers or board members who have achieved significant business outcomes for arts and cultural organisations or individual artists.

Renew Adelaide is the SA version of the successful Renew Newcastle project, a not-for-profit enterprise which allows cultural and community organisations to occupy empty buildings.

"When it began, the volunteer group behind Renew Adelaide was highly skilled in the arts, however, they needed someone who knew the local property industry to succeed," says Board member and former Renew Adelaide CEO, Dr Ianto Ware.

"Steve Maras, MD of SA property entity, Maras Group, joined the board in 2011 and immediately filled this crucial gap. Through Steve's connections and networks, Renew Adelaide was introduced to a number of high profile commercial property owners who were able to provide empty spaces. These included 199 and 200 North Terrace – buildings which had stood vacant for almost a decade and were successfully transformed into key venues for the Adelaide Fringe Festival in 2012 with a bar, a café and six amazing theatres."

Since Steve joined the Board, Renew Adelaide has more than doubled the amount of vacant spaces it has been able to activate, including temporary spaces from his own portfolio.

"Steve generously shared his detailed knowledge and understanding of the property industry, governance and regulatory issues with Renew Adelaide providing a level of expertise previously lacking," Dr Ware says.

"Thanks to his mentorship, he has helped Renew Adelaide shift from a volunteer board of five young people with limited experience to an incorporated organisation with an eight-person board consisting of highly skilled professionals."

The AbaF 2012 Gold Book, which lists and details the state and national winners, says: "Both the Maras Group and Renew Adelaide share a belief that nobody benefits from empty shops, unused buildings or vacant streets. The passion Steve Maras shares with Renew Adelaide for urban renewal has made him not only an invaluable member of the Board but also an ideal advocate for the organisation as it continues to grow."

Renew Adelaide and Steve Maras took out the state award at a ceremony at Government House back in August.

"We were extremely grateful to have received the state award a few months back and decided to attend the

national event so that a core group of the Renew team could mingle with others from across the country, and also to have a bit of fun," Steve says.

"Being awarded the national prize was totally unexpected and it came out of left field but it is tremendous recognition for what this group here in Adelaide is doing for the State and all in such a short period of time.

"This has now firmly put Renew Adelaide on the map across the country."