

2026 DEADLY FRINGE X KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST EXHIBITION

COMMISSION INFORMATION PACK

About the Opportunity

Deadly Fringe, in partnership with the Koorie Heritage Trust (KHT), is inviting First Peoples visual artists or artist collectives based in Victoria to apply for a **\$10,000** exhibition commission to be presented in Gallery 2 at KHT during the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival (29 September – 18 October 2026).

This is a unique opportunity to develop a brand-new exhibition for the gallery, supported by a cash grant, alongside curatorial support from the Deadly Fringe Program Manager and curatorial team at KHT. The commission covers the creation, installation, and presentation of the work for the festival period.

We are seeking proposals from individual artists or artist collectives who wish to create an original, site-responsive exhibition that engages audiences with First Peoples perspectives, stories, and creative practice.

Curatorial Provocation

Times have changed in a lot of ways, but some things stay the same. In a modern world that feels dire, we as Blakfulla's find comfort in community and grounding ourselves in Culture and identity. From inherited knowledge to fragmented relationships - Artists are invited to reflect on what community and Culture means to them and how these connections continue and shift. We are particularly interested

in submissions that explore concepts of community and Culture through the use of new and emerging technologies, including digital, multimedia and interdisciplinary practices.

This exhibition in Gallery 2 will coincide with KHT's main exhibition of the year which will be in Gallery 1. Gallery 1 highlights themes of kinship and knowledge sharing in community. The direction for Gallery 2 is for artists to contribute to a more nuanced picture of kinship and knowledge by exploring how these have shifted over time.

Words by Peta Duncan, Program Manager (Deadly Fringe).

About Melbourne Fringe

Established in 1982, the identity and reputation of Melbourne Fringe is synonymous with the representation and elevation of independent artists across all forms and mediums throughout Victoria and nationally. Year-round programming culminates in an annual festival showcasing more than 450 events and performances which push the boundaries of mainstream creativity and engages with audiences and communities in meaningful ways while keeping the artist at the forefront of the experience.

About Deadly Fringe

Debuting in 2017, Deadly Fringe is an annual performance, visual arts and development program for First Nations artists and creatives to explore and showcase their stories, knowledge, and culture in any form or genre. Sitting within the sphere of Melbourne Fringe, Deadly Fringe aims to unearth and develop conceptual artwork from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, enabling them

to create works that channel strength and connection to culture and history, shifting the creative landscape of Australia's identity.

Koorie Heritage Trust

The Koorie Heritage Trust (KHT) was established in 1985 by Uncle Jim Berg and other Elders to act as a community base for the collection and preservation of South-Eastern Australia's oral histories, art and cultural belongings. Our collections are extensive and house the cultural belongings and histories of our Victorian Koorie community. The KHT is a not-for-profit organization, offering a range of programs and services including exhibitions throughout the year, permanent collections displays, oral history program, workshops and public programs; a Cultural Experiences Program that includes guided walking tours and cultural competency training and programs open to the public to promote the importance of South-Eastern First Peoples culture; a Koorie Family History Service; and a retail shop dedicated exclusively to showcasing the uniqueness of Victorian First Peoples art and design. The KHT is housed in the Birrarung Building at Melbourne's iconic Fed Square, <https://korieheritagetrust.com.au/about-us/history/>

Key Information

Applications close at **11.59pm on Tuesday, 24th of March 2026.**

What You Get

If successful, you will receive:

- **\$10,000** cash from the Fringe Fund to produce and present your new idea
- In-kind venue hire from Koorie Heritage Trust

- Free event registration for the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival, including an event listing on the Fringe website and in the Fringe Magazine.
- Inclusion in the Deadly Fringe program, which forms part of the Melbourne Fringe Curated Program of works and will receive bespoke marketing support.
- Curatorial support from the Deadly Fringe Program Manager, Peta Duncan as well as venue support from KHT.
- A bespoke mentorship from a senior First Nations arts producer or artist.
- Exhibition installation and invigilation costs covered, including venue hire, installation, didactic panels and label printing as well as staffing at the gallery.

What is the Project Fee intended for?

- The Project Fee is intended to pay you – the artist – as well as any creatives you decide to work with on delivery of the project.
- Materials costs associated with creation of work/s in the exhibition

Eligibility

Deadly Fringe is for people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander who reside in Melbourne and the neighbouring lands of the Kulin Nation. We particularly would love to hear from Boon Wurrung and/or Wurundjeri artists.

Deadly Fringe is also for people who identify as emerging or mid-career Artists, which is often people who are in the first 10 years of their professional experience as artists, but you could be considered “emerging or mid-career” and be very experienced, such as:

- You may be using Deadly Fringe to try something new, such as an Actor who now wants to be a Director or a Painter who wants to become a Storyteller.

- Deadly Fringe also encompasses the opportunity for leadership and initiative; you may be an experienced artist wanting to lead a new creative team/project that includes many emerging Artists.

You can apply as a solo practitioner or as part of a group.

If you're applying as a solo artist, we'd also like to know what kinds of expertise you think you will need to develop and present your new project. If you know specific people you might approach then tell us who, but you can also just let us know the roles that you would need to support you in your project development, and we can help you find the right people.

If you are part of a group, you'll need to decide on a lead applicant to make the application on behalf of the team. During the application process you can include all your bios.

The exhibition must be ready to be presented during the exhibition dates specified in 2026.

Venue

Koorie Heritage Trust - Gallery 2, Level 2, Birrarung Building
Flinders St & Swanston St, Melbourne Victoria 3000

For more information about the space and the dimension, please see the [Koorie Heritage Trust Gallery 2 Floorplan Pack](#).

How to apply

Please complete [the application form](#) on Airtable.

Applications close at **11.59pm on Tuesday, 24th of March 2026**.

Key Dates

- Applications Close – 24 March 2026, 11:59pm.
- Successful applicant notified – 7 April 2026
- Melbourne Fringe Festival Registrations Open – 16 April 2026 – this is when we collect all of the information about the exhibition, including a lead image and event copy, so that we can promote the exhibition in our festival guide and on the Melbourne Fringe website.
- Melbourne Fringe Festival Registrations Close – 22 May 2026 – this is the lock-off date to have all of your key marketing material ready and input into our registration portal, Eventotron.
- Installation commences – 22 September 2026
- Exhibition Opens - 29 September 2026
- Exhibition Closes – 22 November 2026

Keen to Apply?

Even if this is your first time being part of a festival, or it's just a seed of an idea, Deadly Fringe wants to support you and your vision. So, if you are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person with a creative idea, we would love to hear from you!

For any questions you can email us, give us a call during office hours (10am-6pm), or make a time to chat with us over Zoom:

- Email Peta Duncan, Program Manager (Deadly Fringe) at peta@melbournefringe.com.au
- Call the office on (03) 9660 9600 and ask for Peta.

- Make a time to have a yarn: email, call or we'll sort out a Zoom time for you.

What to expect in the application form

To complete the online expression of interest application, you will need to:

- Outline your vision of the project you want to create, and how it relates to the curatorial concept
- Tell us a bit about yourself as an artist, and explain your artistic goals and ambitions
- Include biographies for yourself and any other key artists in your team (as an attachment)
- Attach supporting information like photos, sound or videos as examples of previous work

Is writing not your strong suit? We also accept video entries of up to 10 minutes, where you need to answer the same questions, but can do it as you instead of writing it down. Just follow the instructions in the online EOI form linked to above.

If using the application form isn't accessible for you, please get in touch so we can better understand how to best accommodate your access needs. We can accept applications submitted as text documents, video or audio files and are also happy to work with you on other accessible application processes. Please email both Peta, Program Manager (Deadly Fringe), at peta@melbournefringe.com.au and Milly Cooper, Program Manager (Access Fringe), at milly@melbournefringe.com.au to start a conversation, or call the Melbourne Fringe office by phone or the [National Relay Service](#) at (03) 9660 9600.

What kind of work will be selected?

We are looking for an exhibition that aligns with the curatorial theme. Any form of visual art is welcome. Bonus points if the artist has ideas about additional public programming to coincide with their exhibition.

What support do Deadly Fringe Artists receive?

If your application is successful, you will receive support from the Deadly Fringe Program Manager and the curatorial team at the Koorie Heritage Trust. As well as bespoke mentorship from a senior First Nations arts producer or artist. We will work with you to make a tailored plan based on the nature of your project and your stage of career.

You will also be guided in how best to participate in Melbourne Fringe's Artist Development Program including FAQs, Info Sessions, and other professional and creative development opportunities that are designed to support and equip artists with the tools and skills needed to excel in the festival and beyond.

The Melbourne Fringe Artist Development series includes:

- **Melbourne Fringe Resource Hub** our library of helpful info to guide you on your Fringe journey, found [here](#).
- **Let's Talk Program** includes talks, workshops and sessions for up-skilling emerging artists across disciplines and career trajectories, exploring a range of skills such as accessibility, touring, marketing and producing.

- **Rego FAQs** are group sessions that help artists register events in the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

Why

Deadly Fringe aims to platform the ideas and artistic exploration of First Nations voices by providing the opportunity to develop and share artistic works through funded commissions. At Melbourne Fringe we believe that programs such as Deadly Fringe are integral for breaking down barriers to artistic expression and creating access. This is integral to the cultural fabric of the arts industry.

Expectations for Funded Artists

Receiving support through the Fringe Fund isn't quite the same as a grant, but it isn't quite the same as having your work bought by a curated Festival – it falls somewhere in-between. That's because we've raised money from trusts, foundations, government bodies and private donors, and we'll need your help to ensure certain deliverables are met so we can acquit those funds. It's the circle of (funding) life. If your application is successful, you will receive all of the support listed above in "Funding Details".

You will also be asked to sign a contract that requires an understanding of the expectations that we will have from you as a Fringe Fund artist, which are:

1. You will self-produce a professional, high-quality exhibition in the Deadly Fringe program.

This means: the Fringe Fund support will help your exhibition proceed, but you (or your team!) are responsible for all elements of the production, including:

- managing a creative project plan and schedule that will ensure your project is delivered as a fully realised work;
- budgeting for costs responsibly, ensuring you have put aside funds for materials, artist fee/s, and transporting your work etc;
- producing the event to a high standard of delivery, and completing administration tasks such as registering the event and arranging permits / licences / insurance, etc; and
- sourcing any additional funding required through sponsorship, partnerships or grants.

2. You will work collaboratively with Melbourne Fringe and the Koorie Heritage Trust.

This means: Melbourne Fringe is a key stakeholder in your event, unlike a standard grant where the funder just wants an acquittal report at the end. Because we have a vested interest in the success of your work, we will ask you to collaborate with Melbourne Fringe in certain ways while working on your project. We won't encroach on your artistic vision, but we will offer support including:

- all of the support outlined above in "Funding Details";
- curatorial advice to help you position the work in the context of KHT, and for a Melbourne Fringe audience;
- advice or feedback for your budget, to help you work towards financial success;
- inclusion in marketing or publicity opportunities;

- suggesting the scale of your project might require you to allocate funds towards certain infrastructure, an assistant, or outside eye, to help you achieve your creative vision.

To support you in this way, we will ask that you:

- update us on the creative development of the project, and share your project timeline, budget and marketing plan (once they're ready to share of course!);
- attend occasional meetings to discuss the work's progress and how we can better support you;
- be open and available to listen to our feedback, built on many years of experience.

You may also be asked, as part of your funding: to participate in a public panel / conversation event discussing your work (no more than 60 minutes of your time), and/or to collaborate in our evaluation processes (which could consist of a brief interview with a member of our team, a self-filmed video reflecting on your experience, or a short survey – but definitely no long acquittal forms!)

We don't require a share of the work's intellectual property, but we do ask for permission to film or photograph the event for marketing, promotional and archival purposes. We also ask that you keep us updated on any future seasons of the work, and always credit Melbourne Fringe as an original funder.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the Festival Dates this year?

Your exhibition must take place as part of the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival (29 Sept – 18 October).

Who owns the work?

The artist owns the work. Melbourne Fringe just has the right to premiere the work as part of the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival, and to capture images and/or video of the work for documentation, acquittal and marketing purposes; but the work belongs to the artist.

Has Deadly Fringe been run before?

Yes, this will be the 10th season of the program! The program has previously and continues to support various contemporary visual and performance art commissions with wonderful success.

Last year (2025) Deadly Fringe supported 6 artists in realising their works:

Maddi Mercer - *'How I See You'*

An intimate installation of works woven from raffia, displaying members of the artists family represented as various native wildlife. Displayed at the Koorie Heritage Trust.

Amelia Jean O'Leary – *'Ngambaa'*

A duo dance work told through the story of the dhinawan (emu) Baawaa (sisters.)

Cynda Beare - *'Poems of a Transsexual Nature'*

Theatre, poetry and burlesque collide in this queer coming of age piece.

Alliance for Praxis - *'Projections of a Current Future'*

A unique blend of group cycling, storytelling, and multimedia art, participants will embark on a journey to uncover the hidden water domains of Williams

Creek and Naarm's urban landscape.

A Daylight Connection – 'The Blok!'

Chaotic theatre piece that plays with the idea of the 'auteur', exploring relationships of power, censorship and the erasure of history.

Natisha Tabua - 'Blak Sovereignty'

A fashion and textile installation

Questions or Enquiries

If you want to discuss other ways to submit your application or have questions about this info pack, please contact us.

- Email Peta Duncan, Program Manager (Deadly Fringe) at peta@melbournefringe.com.au
- Call the office on (03) 9660 9600 and ask for Peta.
- Make a time to have a yarn: email, call or we'll sort out a Zoom time for you.

[You may contact us through the National Relay Service, and the link is available if you click on this sentence.](#)

In 2026 Deadly Fringe is proudly supported by the Beeton Family Fund, Craig Semple and our program partners:



Australian Government
Indigenous Languages and Arts



MECCA

Melbourne Fringe respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work, play and hold our Festival and events. We pay our respects to the people of the Kulin Nations and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present.