



## **Information Pack for Melbourne Fringe's 'Realising the Potential' Artist Laboratory**

Melbourne Fringe is excited to announce the *'Realising The Potential' Artist Laboratory*. An opportunity for artists to come together to seed new projects with embedded access. The laboratory is a part of Fringe's Radical Access program. This is an exciting opportunity for artists who are passionate about creating dynamic, accessible artistic experiences, both for audiences and their fellow creatives.

It is intended for performing artists, across any genre. However, we welcome artists working with other mediums to apply.

### **Artist Laboratory (May 2026)**

**This Laboratory will support 5 independent artists or groups.** The artists will be selected through an open national call out. With 4 spots available to Victorian artists, and 1 for an interstate artist.

The Lab is across 6 days, paced over two weeks. This is in recognition of 'crip time'. Artists will come together over 9 days in May throughout 4.5.26 - 13.5.26, and again for 1 day in October on Friday 16.10.26.

Each of the 5 artists or collectives will be paid a one-off fee of \$2500 (plus GST if applicable).

**The Lab prioritises Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent artists.** Non-Disabled artists with strong inclusive practice are also warmly welcome to apply. Fringe recognises that the responsibility for sector innovation cannot rest solely with Disabled artists.

**The Lab is designed to embed accessibility as a creative driver from the outset.**

Alongside this overarching goal, it aims to:

- Expand skills and ambition
- Create space for rich learning opportunities
- Encourage artists to think bigger and bolder

While this Lab has been crafted to be best suited as an in-person experience, we encourage applicants who require digital access to apply.

The majority of the Lab will take place at Fringe Common Rooms (Carlton). A day or two may be at other City/inner North venues that are tbc.

### **Key goals of the Lab**

- Develop new performance concepts centred on “access as dramaturgy”, where accessibility is in the DNA of the work. This is rather than traditional modes of making where it is often added as an afterthought.
- Work under the artistic leadership of facilitator Caroline Bowditch. Alongside guest artist “access provocateurs” and sector leaders. These experts will share their expertise in practices like embedded audio description and integrated interpretation.
- Combine practical workshops and artistic provocations with dedicated studio time. This will be to explore how the aesthetics of access can shape the form, content and audience experience.

- Present pitches of their developed concepts at the conclusion of the lab in a sector sharing. Melbourne Fringe will support selected projects through future creative developments, commissions, and presentations.

^Note: Melbourne Fringe is not necessarily expecting a presentation outcome from these performance concepts at the 2027 Melbourne Fringe Festival, although we do encourage artists with ideas and strong ambition to apply.

## **Check-in (August)**

In August, the Lab artists will meet with Caroline Bowditch and the Lab facilitators to check-in about their project pitches. This check-in is for artists to share their ongoing fields of enquiry, discuss any barriers that may have emerged, and brainstorm possible solutions.

This check-in will be held at Fringe Common Rooms on Tues August 11 for approximately 2hrs. Digital access to the check-in will be available for anyone unable to attend in-person.

## **Festival Opportunities (October 2026)**

The Lab artists will reconvene at the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival in October. Throughout the festival, local artists will be invited to attend a selection of Fringe shows that amplify access. The interstate artist will be invited to stay for 2 nights on Thurs 15 and Fri 16 October to join the local artists.

Within the festival context artists will have

- Structured engagement with industry delegates, peers, and touring presenters

- A platform to pitch and share the developing work from the *Realising The Potential Artist Laboratory* with industry

## The Application process

The 2026 *'Realising the Potential' Artist Laboratory* is, we hope, a relatively smooth process. We have one stage, which is the open call out EOI.

The timeline is:

**Thurs 19 March** EOI closes.

**Thurs 2 April** Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application.

**Mon May 4 – Tues 12 May** The Lab takes place

**Tues 11 August** Project pitch check-in

**Fri 16 Oct** The Lab artists will reconvene to pitch their works.

To start your application and look at the questions, please click here to go to the [EOI Form](#).

### Video or Audio Applications -

While we expect most applications will be submitted in writing using the EOI Airtable form, we also accept a video or audio file submission. If you submit a video or audio application you will still need to fill out some of the applicant details in the form linked to above. But you will submit your answers to all assessable questions by uploading a video or audio file. If your video is in another language, such as Auslan, you are welcome to suggest a preferred interpreter for us to engage when assessing your application.

Please note, this option to submit by video or audio is not about creating something with high production values. It is an option provided for access purposes. The following formats will be accepted: MP4, MOV, WMV, AVI, MKV, M4A, MP3, WAV or

AAC. You may submit a single file for each of the questions, or one file for the whole EOI. If you submit multiple files please ensure each file is clearly named. The link to submit your file(s) is in the EOI form linked above.

### **Applications in Other Formats -**

If the form is not accessible for you, please get in touch to let us know. If there is another way you would prefer to submit an application, we welcome alternative format submissions. You can call our office or email Milly Cooper at [milly@melbournefringe.com](mailto:milly@melbournefringe.com) or call the Fringe office and ask for Milly on [\(03\) 9660 9600](tel:(03)96609600).

Please let us know how you would prefer to submit your answers to the questions. We are open to your ideas around process. However, we cannot change the timeframes unfortunately – you'll still need to get your proposal in by 19 March, 2026.

### **Expression of Interest Questions application questions –**

The EOI process is a digital form through a platform called Airtable. You won't need an account in order to complete the form. If you have any issues when clicking the link or completing the form please let us know. Details of alternative forms of submission are later in this document.

#### **The form will ask you to share:**

- A summary of your practice
  - Including
    - Key influences
    - Artistic questions that currently shape your practice
    - How accessibility is currently thought about or embedded in your practice
- How you intend to use the Laboratory as a site for experimentation, testing, and iteration

- Including
  - The bold new project or inquiry you wish to develop
  - Questions about access, form, or audience you are most interested in exploring
  - Initial ideas you have to embed access as a dramaturgical driver both within your work broadly and specifically within this Lab project
  - What has prevented you from making your work accessible in this, or other ways? *Eg. Barriers around knowledge, resources, funding, lived experience collaborators, etc.*

#### Support material

- You will be asked to share examples of previous works that embed or experiment with access.

It will also ask you to share your:

- Access Requirements
  - Including everything we might need to know to make the Lab work for you
    - Ideal length of day, rest time within that etc.
- Availability
  - Are there any dates, or times within the select dates, that you already know you are unable to attend? Please outline in as much detail as possible.

Each answer will be limited to 200 words if written (two minutes if video or audio).

Except for the question on access requirements, which has no limit.

### **Selection Criteria -**

Selection panel (including Disabled artists/industry leaders) assesses applications against:

- artistic merit
- innovation, and
- commitment to access as dramaturgy.

### **Questions or enquiries -**

If you want to discuss other ways to submit your application or have questions about this info pack, please contact us. Send your email to Milly Cooper at [milly@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:milly@melbournefringe.com.au).

Alternatively, you may phone our office: Melbourne Fringe on (03) 9660 9600 and ask to speak to Milly. You may contact us through the National Relay Service, and the link is available [if you click on this sentence](#). Alternatively you could download [Convo](#).

If you would like to discuss access provisions at Melbourne Fringe more broadly, or would like to discuss how Melbourne Fringe holds safe cultural spaces for Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent artists please email our Access Advisor, Carly Findlay: [carly@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:carly@melbournefringe.com.au) or call our office on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday and ask for Carly.

### **Submission due date**

Applications close at 11.59pm on Thursday 19 March, 2026.

### **About Radical Access -**

Radical Access launched in full in 2022, beginning a ten-year social change project in partnership with Arts Access Victoria. This program imagines a radical version of best practice accessibility for the independent arts sector and moves the conversation beyond the provision of access services and into cultural equity.

Radical Access is a provocation for change and a call for accelerated action. Fringe commissions bold new work by d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent artists, provide creative development opportunities, run workshops, masterclasses, and mentorships, and provide employment opportunities for d/Deaf and Disabled arts workers. All of this is with the aim to significantly increase access and inclusion for d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent artists across the independent arts sector.

To learn more about Fringe's Radical Access program, head to [the website](#).

*Supported by*

