



EMERGING PLAYWRIGHTS' LAB – EOI INFORMATION PACK

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About the Opportunity

The Melbourne Fringe Emerging Playwrights' Lab is an exciting opportunity to develop a new written work for live performance. With support from a mentor, a bespoke masterclass series, and facilitated peer exchange sessions, the lab will give three emerging playwrights the opportunity to develop a new piece of writing, culminating in an industry showcase night in the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival.

The Emerging Playwrights' Lab is a direct expression of Melbourne Fringe's mission to democratise the arts, ensuring that all artists, regardless of background, training, or access, have the opportunity to develop their practice and contribute to a vibrant, inclusive cultural landscape.

This opportunity is supported by the Malcolm Robertson Foundation, who are longtime supporters and advocates for new Australian writing.

Key Information

Funding & Support Details

Each selected writer will receive:

- **\$5,000** in cash to support the development of your idea and the presentation of a short, staged reading for industry;
- A bespoke one-on-one mentorship with an established playwright or industry professional. We will work with you to match you with someone who has applicable relevant experience and similar areas of focus;
- A bespoke series of masterclasses with established playwrights and industry professionals;
- Artist exchange opportunities with your fellow lab participants, facilitated by award-winning playwright, director and community organiser, Liv Satchell.
- Free access to all Melbourne Fringe Artist Development opportunities;

- A facilitated industry showcase and opportunity to present your staged reading.

Eligibility

This opportunity is for any artist based in Victoria, working in written text for live performance. As part of your application we will ask you to speak to an idea for a piece of live performance writing that you would like to develop throughout the lab.

Successful recipients will be emerging writers. By “emerging writers” we mean:

- in the first 5 years of their writing career; or
- a recent graduate from a writing program, course, or school; or
- plenty of live performance industry experience but new to the form (eg. an actor who has started to write).

You do not have to have written a play before, but you must have a passion for writing compelling text for live performance. We're open to a range of creative approaches and we love work that breaks the mold, but it must be an idea with theatrical presentation in mind (rather than a stand-up comedy set or 60-minutes of poetry with no stage directions). We want to see that you're thinking about stage dynamics, dialogue, and the fundamentals of dramatic (or comedic) storytelling.

The selected projects must be new works, with no presentations planned prior to the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival (29 Sept – 18 October 2026).

Applicants who are planning to present a full-scale production in the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival are welcome to apply, so long as the written work is still in development and would benefit from the Lab's mentorship and masterclasses.

Expected Outcomes

Unlike many of our other funding opportunities, there is no expectation for you to deliver a fully-realised production by festival time. The emphasis of the Lab is on taking the time to develop the work, and getting an opportunity to hone your craft with guidance from industry professionals.

However, that's not to say we don't expect you to have something to show for it! So by the conclusion of the lab, we expect you to deliver:

- Your first draft of a 60-minute performance work (written submission).
- A short, staged reading to present at the Industry Showcase. We'll provide the venue and the audience, you bring the content (along with any performers or a director you'd like to work with). Maximum of 15 minutes.

Our hope is that this showcase will help you make the connections that will eventually lead to a full presentation of your work at the 2027 Melbourne Fringe Festival.

Key Dates

All listed dates are in 2026.

- Sunday 19 April – Applications Close at 11.59pm.
- By Monday 27 April – successful applicants notified.
- Early May – recipients are paired with a mentor.
- Friday 15 May – Lab Intensive #1 – Project Development & First Pages (facilitated by Liv Satchell) at Fringe Common Rooms
- Friday 22 May – Lab Intensive #2 – Masterclasses at Fringe Common Rooms
- July – Artist Development workshops (details TBC).
- July-August – Mid-Lab check-ins. We'll reach out to you and your mentor to see how you're going and get any key updates.

- Mid August – Peer Exchange Sessions (facilitated by Liv Satchell). A series of three short sessions (2–3 hours each), each focused on one participant’s work. Excerpts will be read aloud, followed by facilitated group discussion addressing feedback, challenges, and next steps toward the final showing.
- Monday 14 September – Scripts due.
- 29 September to 18 October 2026 – Melbourne Fringe Festival. The Industry Showcase will occur within these dates.

How to Apply

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

Applications close at **11.59pm on Sunday 19 April 2026.**

Application & Selection Process

Applicants will be asked to submit an Expression of Interest, detailing their past work, vision for their idea, and identifying specific areas of their craft they wish to develop. Applications will be assessed and candidates will be selected by a panel of senior Melbourne Fringe staff.

Melbourne Fringe is committed to fostering an inclusive environment for all participants, with a particular focus on supporting artists from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.

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

To see the questions written out in full, please see below, on page 9 of this info pack.

What we’re looking for

In selecting the artists to offer a place in the lab, we will consider the following criteria:

- **Distinctiveness:** Does the proposed work explore bold, innovative, or complex themes?

- **Diversity:** Does the project bring new perspectives and contribute to a more inclusive arts sector, with an emphasis on intersectionality?
- **Capacity:** Does the artist demonstrate the skills and resources to deliver the expected outcomes within the program's framework?
- **Artistic Understanding:** Does the artist demonstrate a clear grasp of form, genre, and dramaturgy relevant to the proposed work?

Applications in Other Formats

If using Airtable forms isn't accessible for you, please get in touch. We are keen to understand how to best accommodate your access needs. We can accept applications in a variety of formats, including text documents, video files, and audio files. We are also happy to work with you on other accessible application processes. We have a great team to support access, so please email

access@melbournefringe.com.au to start a conversation. You can also call the Melbourne Fringe office by phone. The Melbourne Fringe phone number is (03) 9660 9600 (available Monday to Friday, 10am-6pm).

[You may contact us through the National Relay Service, and the link is available if you click on this sentence.](#) Alternatively, you could download Deaf-owned Relay Service [Convo](#).

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 **11.59pm, Sunday 19 April 2026.**

Context and 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're raising 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 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 your Lab outcome

This means: the Fringe Fund support will help you develop your idea, but you are responsible for getting it to the finish line, including:

- managing a creative project plan and schedule that will ensure your piece of writing is ready to be presented as a short reading at the Industry Showcase night;
- engaging any creatives and/or performers you would like to collaborate or assist with your Showing; and
- meaningfully engaging in the mentorship and artist exchange opportunities, including meeting progress deadlines.

2. You will work collaboratively with Melbourne Fringe.

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 may 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 might offer support including:

- marketing or publicity opportunities; or
- suggesting the scale of your project might require you to allocate funds towards a director or dramaturg 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 plan for the staged reading at the Industry Showcase;
- attend occasional meetings to discuss the work's progress and how we can better support you; and
- 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 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.

Questions you will be asked in the Expression of Interest

These questions appear in the [application form](#).

- 1. What is the current title of the idea you are proposing?** It can be a working title!
- 2. Tell us a bit about your idea.** What are the key themes you're engaging with? What do you know about the work so far? What questions are you asking? What kind of outcome do you imagine for the work in its final form? (1,200 character limit, or approximately 200 words)
- 3. Please tell us a bit about yourself and your experience writing.** We want to know about your past work, your skills, your inspirations, and what is most important to you in creating art. As part of this you can share some highlights of your past work with us, and you may also provide links to up to three reviews. Please also give us a sense for your level of experience in making art: whether in an educational setting, as an independent artist, or under the wing of an arts organisation. (1,200 character limit, or approximately 200 words)
- 4. Which areas of your craft are you interested in developing as a part of the lab and mentorship?** What skills are you most interested in learning, and how do you see this benefiting your career and craft as an artist? (1,200 character limit, or approximately 200 words)
- 5. Whose work are you inspired by?** Who have been your key touchstones when approaching writing? Who lights a fire in your belly, in writing or beyond? (600 character limit, or approximately 100 words)

Support Material (Optional)

We want this application process to be as easy and straightforward as possible, so we are not requiring any supporting documentation as part of your application. However, you will have the opportunity to share supporting documentation should you feel it bolsters your application.

Please note the following supporting material limits:

- **Video Material Limit:** 3 minutes. If your video material is longer than 5 minutes, panelists will be advised to only watch the first 3 minutes.
- **Script/Writing Excerpt Limit:** 5 pages. If more than 5 pages are submitted, panelists will be advised to only read the first 5 pages.
- **CV Limit:** 2 pages. Please note, if you are a group of more than one person, we appreciate you condensing your CVs to 1 page per person.
- **Images Limit:** You're welcome to upload as many images as you like, so long as you feel they make a strong case for your application and show relevant experience or work.

You will have the option to provide your support material in one of two ways:

1. Share a link to an online drive or document
2. Upload file/s directly into the application form.

Availability

As part of the Lab you will receive 10 contact hours with your mentor, which can be arranged as suits you both best. However, there are a number of key in-person activities that will be held at Fringe Common Rooms, Trades Hall, Carlton:

- **Friday 15 May, 10am-6pm: Lab Intensive #1 – Project Development & First Pages**

Facilitated by Liv Satchell

You will gather with fellow participants and Liv to share your ideas, read the first five (or more) pages of your work, and develop a clear plan for expanding it into a 60-minute piece.

- **Friday 22 May, 10am-6pm: Lab Intensive #2 – Masterclasses**

A full day of guided masterclasses with established playwrights and industry professionals, focusing on craft and process.

- **Mid August: Peer Exchange Sessions – Works-in-Progress Feedback**

Facilitated by Liv Satchell

A series of three short sessions (2–3 hours each), each focused on one participant's work. Excerpts will be read aloud, followed by facilitated group discussion addressing feedback, challenges, and next steps toward the final showing.

- **29 September–18 October: Melbourne Fringe Festival & Industry Showcase**

One evening in festival time where each playwright will present their 15-minute staged reading.

As a part of the form, you will be asked to confirm your availability for these key activities.

Final Comments

You will have an open text box to write any additional information or comments you would like to include in your application.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who owns the work?

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

What are the Festival Dates this year?

The industry showcase must take place as part of the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival (29 Sept – 18 October).

Who is the facilitator of the Peer Exchange Sessions, Liv Satchell?

Liv Satchell is a theatre maker, writer, dramaturg and community organiser committed to building platforms for independent artists through her company VIMH. Her work includes *Ballkids (or, scenes from a friendship)*, co-directed with Julian Dibley-Hall (La Mama); *The Grief Trilogy* (La Mama); and *SIRENS* by Benjamin Nichol (Melbourne Fringe Festival). She has won three Green Room Awards for Outstanding Writing for Independent Theatre and was awarded the 2024 Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award and the inaugural New Writing Award, supported by Melbourne Theatre Company as part of Melbourne Fringe Festival, for *Ballkids (or, scenes from a friendship)*. Her community work has included co-founding Small and Loud in 2016, a monthly performance program for new works in development that worked with over 300 artists across its three years of programming. Her most recent initiative, THINKING GROUND, centres the civic function of art in new project development and has been presented in collaboration with Next Wave, Darebin Arts, and Theatre Works.

Can I apply to redevelop an existing work?

The intention with the Emerging Playwrights' Lab is to support the development of new works – however, we're definitely open to ideas of how you might redevelop an existing work in a new or exciting way. If you have done a development before, or perhaps a work-in-progress showing or season – that's OK! As long as, hand on heart, you can say you are invested in learning and interested in making significant updates to the work, it'll probably be fine. If you're unsure of whether your new ideas would make it a "new work" or not, please just get in touch!

Can we apply if we are a duo or writing team?

Yes, absolutely. Just note that the funded amount remains the same irrespective of your number of collaborators.

Why do you ask demographic questions as part of the application process?

We have a commitment to ensuring that events Melbourne Fringe funds collectively represent the breadth of Melbourne's diverse communities, and we have specific quotas and targets of funding allocations towards our communities of focus, which include artists who are: First Nations, People of Colour, culturally and linguistically diverse people, d/Deaf, Disabled, and LGBTQIA+ people with a separate quota to specifically support transgender artists. Assigning quotas to our funding allocations ensures that we are properly representing lead artists from these communities.

Questions or Enquiries

If you have any questions about this opportunity, please contact us. You can reach our Artist Services team at artists@melbournefringe.com.au.

Do you have questions about access or applications in other formats? You can reach our access team at access@melbournefringe.com.au.

Alternatively, for all queries you are welcome to phone our office. The Melbourne Fringe phone number is (03) 9660 9600 (available Monday to Friday, 10am-6pm).

[You may contact us through the National Relay Service, and the link is available if you click on this sentence.](#) Alternatively, you could download Deaf-owned Relay Service [Convo](#).

Submission Due Date

Expressions of interest via [the application form close](#) at **11.59pm on Sunday, 19 April 2026.**

*The Emerging Playwrights' Lab is generously supported by the
Malcolm Robertson Foundation.*

