

MELBOURNE
FRINGE

MELBOURNE FRINGE
ANNUAL REPORT 2019



WOMINJEKA

Melbourne Fringe respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work, play and hold our Festival. We acknowledge that the oldest living culture in the world has been kept alive by a rich and continuing history of storytelling, music, dance, art and language. We pay our respects to the people of the Kulin Nation and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, who maintain an enduring spiritual and cultural connection to the land. Sovereignty was never ceded.



SIZE KWEENS, Rhythm Nation, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Duncan Jacob.

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WE ARE MELBOURNE FRINGE. ALL OF US.

Melbourne Fringe is committed to access and inclusion for all people. We believe in the Social Model of Disability, where disability is caused by a society and environment with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers. It's our responsibility to reduce these barriers to enable full arts participation by all people.

OUR ENVIRONMENT. OUR PLANET.

Melbourne Fringe is committed to a sustainable future, one that is a cleaner and safer place to live and work for future generations. We strive to improve the sustainability of our operations across the organisation to minimise our impact on the environment and create positive solutions to the climate emergency the world is facing.

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WE ARE FRINGE

“Melbourne Fringe Festival 2019 heralds an electrifying new chapter as the Festival takes over the historic Trades Hall as its civic heart and invites Melbourne’s most exciting independent artists and art-loving citizens to unite in the search for truth.”

—Kris Weber, Theatre People

Photo by Duncan Jacob.



Simon Abrahams
CEO & Creative Director
Melbourne Fringe

2019 marked the beginning of a new chapter in our 37-year history, as we took our commitment to cultural democracy to the next level.

We moved the Festival’s civic heart to Trades Hall where Melbourne united for the biggest Festival in Melbourne Fringe history, breaking every record in the book. We also fulfilled a long-held ambition to create a dedicated year-round accessible, supportive and dynamic space for independent artists with our own venue, Common Rooms. We also strengthened our year-round commitment to sector development by supporting thousands of artists to navigate the industry, gain critical artistic and professional skills, and connect with peers and industry.

Our 2019 Festival Program featured 260 new works and world premieres by 2,900 participating artists (of which 63% were emerging), including 565 culturally and

linguistically diverse artists, 885 LGBTQI+ artists, 142 artists that identify as Deaf or with a disability and 96 First Nations artists. 30 artists from diverse backgrounds received a microgrant to cover the cost of registration in the Festival. 2,819 artists attended in our artist info sessions, rego FAQs and Roadshows, 70 artists participated in our Creative Workshops and 80 artists joined us for Tour Ready. For the first time in Fringe history, ticket sales were in excess of \$1 million.

Opening Common Rooms – a dedicated home for independent arts, music and events in the rebellious heart of Trades Hall – is an enormous step for Melbourne Fringe. I’m so grateful to our community for immediately embracing the idea, and we’ve already attracted new audiences and created a safe space for artists to explore ideas and push the boundaries year-round. It’s been an enormous team effort – I’m forever in debt to the Melbourne Fringe staff, Board, donors, funders, artists and audiences for helping make it happen.

With momentum behind us and opportunity ahead, this next chapter continues our ferocity and determination to reach beyond the impossible to champion cultural democracy – art for anyone. Here’s to the next 37 years.



Nick Verginis
Acting Chair of the Board
Melbourne Fringe

The 2019 Melbourne Fringe was a class act. After 20 years in North Melbourne, the Festival moved its beating heart for cultural democracy to the city’s home of democratic rebellion, Trades Hall in Carlton.

With the echoes of past battles in its stone and timber, our artists charged the halls with creative abandon, optimism and energy. A record-breaking 308 Australian premieres and 352 Victorian premieres featured with another year of record ticket sales, driven by our open access programs and inclusive and enabling artist services.

We are deeply grateful to the tireless passion of our staff and volunteers. Your collective impact has awakened Carlton and positioned Trades Hall as the site of our city’s cultural revival.

This year is also historic for the creation of the new venue space, Common Rooms at Trades Hall. The foray into social enterprise will create a new revenue stream that is reinvested to support the Festival’s ongoing success.

Our CEO and Creative Director, Simon Abrahams, has been extraordinary in his vision, leadership and management of these seismic changes. Melbourne’s creative community is fortunate to have his clear vision and talent to unite us as we enter the uncertain 2020s.

On behalf of the Board and staff, I want to thank Gideon Obarzanek for his exceptional leadership as Chair of the Board since 2015. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be his deputy through a period of accelerated growth and historic impact. The successes of the 2019 year form part of his legacy.

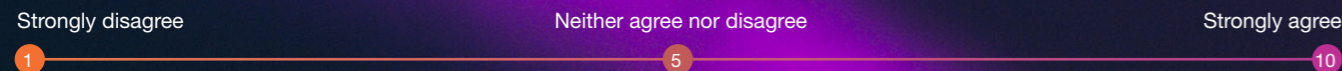
OUR IMPACT

We know Melbourne Fringe has always had a huge impact on the lives of our artists, audiences, volunteers and the city itself, but this year Melbourne Fringe created a Theory of Change to prove it. We're analysing our impact across five key areas: artistic participation, artistic risk taking, celebrating difference, creating place and leading arts sector development. Here's what we found:

Fringe celebrates difference by including a broad range of voices that reflect different people, different backgrounds and the different ways they express themselves through art.

Fringe creates safe and welcoming spaces, with audiences and artists feeling free from danger or risk of injury in the experience of the venues and spaces across Melbourne that host Fringe events.

Fringe supports a dynamic, diverse and representative arts sector.



ACCESS AND INCLUSION

“An amazing program of Deaf and disability led art.”

- Disability Advocacy Resource Unit

Melbourne Fringe’s Access and Inclusion program completed an impressive second year, nurturing and supporting emerging Deaf artists and artists with disability, increasing the diversity of our artists and audiences and implementing organisational change. We achieved a notable increase in participation by people who are Deaf or with disability (as artists, audiences and staff members), and increased the number of shows and events with one or more accessible feature.

HOW WE ACHIEVED THIS

For the first time in Fringe history, we moved our Fringe Hub into a fully accessible venue at Trades Hall and created the new role of Volunteer Access Champions to provide audiences with key access information. In another first, five blind or low vision designers exhibited their work in Fringe Furniture, and we expanded our networks by working closely with Scope – an organisation supporting people with intellectual and communication disability – to put on a show at Fringe.

Our Access and Inclusion Coordinator Carly Findlay raised awareness and understanding of inclusive arts practices with both our artists and venues. Carly also instigated a Victorian

Open Access Festivals Network to share access knowledge and practice with other peer festivals to improve accessibility across the sector. Fringe employed Deaf artist, Anna Seymour, as our Assistant Producer who raised awareness of Deaf culture for both our artists and staff, helped to shift perspectives and behaviours and played an integral role in outreach to the Deaf community.

Our inclusive mentorship, Navigate, supported eight emerging self-producing artists with disability through a series of Masterclasses and one-on-one mentoring sessions, with seven going on to present work at the Festival (more info on page 32).

Fringe embedded inclusive marketing and communications across our organisation including:

- Producing a Disability Arts Guide to Fringe (a one-stop-shop for all events focussing on disability arts and profiling 28 works)
- Developing a Producers’ Guide to Access
- Improving visibility of accessible events online and in the Festival Guide
- Developing accessible marketing materials including plain text versions of collateral, audio files and Auslan videos
- Improving our categorisation of accessible events
- Distributing accessibility communication tools (such as communication boards) to our venues

OUTCOMES



Artists identified as Deaf or with disability

142



Navigate mentorships

8



Audiences identified as Deaf or with disability

8%



Leisa Prowd, Fuck Fabulous, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Duncan Jacob.

“I had an amazing time volunteering at the 2019 Melbourne Fringe Festival. In my role as Access Champion, I was given the opportunity to assist festival attendees that ensured they had complete access to the festival and maximise their experience. This was a great privilege for me and could not have been achieved without the unceasing support of the festival staff, especially the volunteer coordinators.”

- Access Champion Volunteer 2019.

2019 FESTIVAL FEATURED:

- ♿ 288 events that were wheelchair accessible
- 🗣️ 38 Auslan interpreted events, including two shows performed and devised entirely in Auslan
- 🗣️ 3 that were Audio described
- 👤 2 Tactile tours
- 👤 9 Hearing loop events
- 👤 11 relaxed performances



OUR FESTIVAL SNAPSHOT

“This festival is where new artists stand with big-named ones — where the ‘voice’ of everyday citizens and the ‘voices from the margins’ are amplified across Melbourne. It’s ‘art for anyone.’”

– Aldwin Matarawan, Hidden City Secrets



Festival attendees
385,166



Events
458

including:



Australian premieres
308



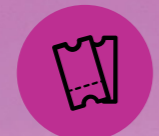
Victorian premieres
352



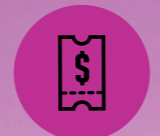
World premieres
286



Artists and participants
2,900



Ticket buyers
70,694



Average ticket price
\$23.90



Venues
116

MEDIA REACH



Facebook followers
32,339



Twitter followers
26,374



Instagram followers
9,202



Social media reach
10,621,800



Website views
1,093,464



Subscribers on our database
26,325



Media coverage
\$17,642,267



reaching an audience of
35,229,969



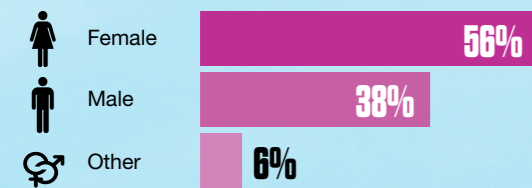
Neon Corroboree, Amos Roach, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Alexis Desaulniers-Lea.

OUR ARTISTS

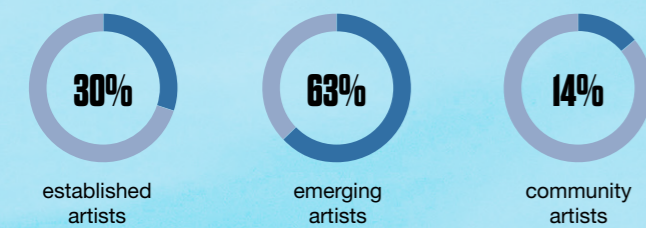
At the heart of the Festival are the 2,900 independent artists who are driven by curiosity and a desire for creative expression. They innovate and create, they shape ideas and are not afraid to introduce a point of view. By bringing together diverse voices, our Festival provides a space to reflect and gain a deeper understanding of the world we live and of ourselves.

Our artists are bold and brave, they truly are Fringe.

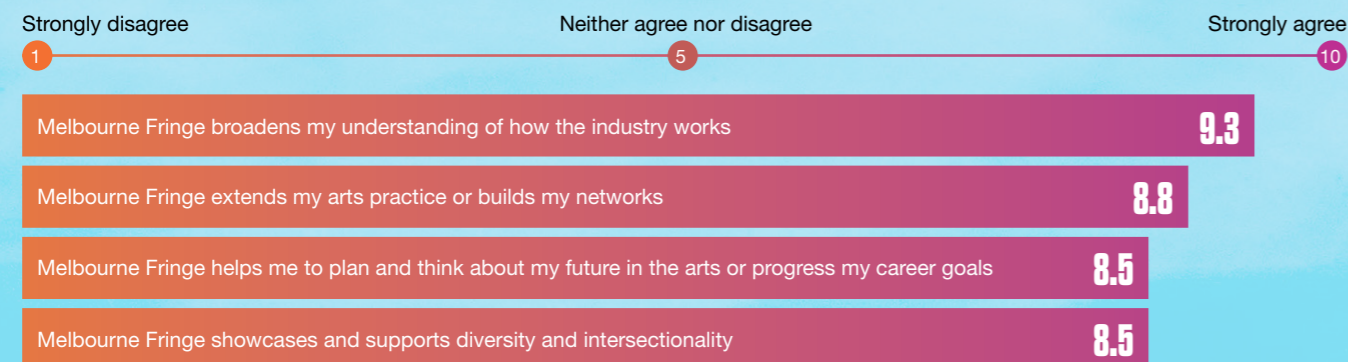
GENDER



EXPERIENCE



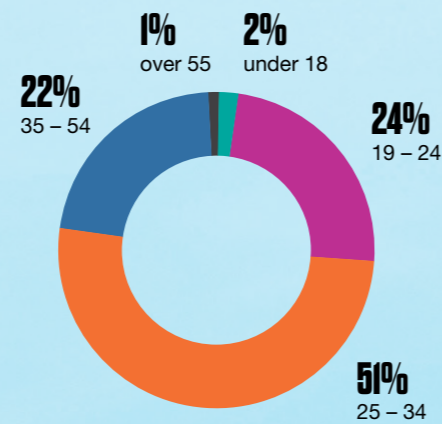
ARTIST DEVELOPMENT



“Melbourne Fringe is unlike any other festival, it’s a safe place for artists to try and showcase new work and dare to try something new. And because Fringe is so supportive it allows for some true magic to occur.”

– Kaitlyn Rogers, Fringe Judge 2019

AGE



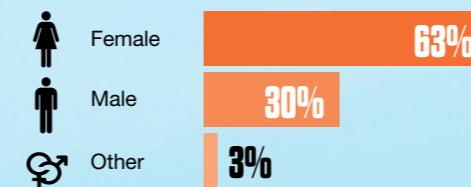
DIVERSITY



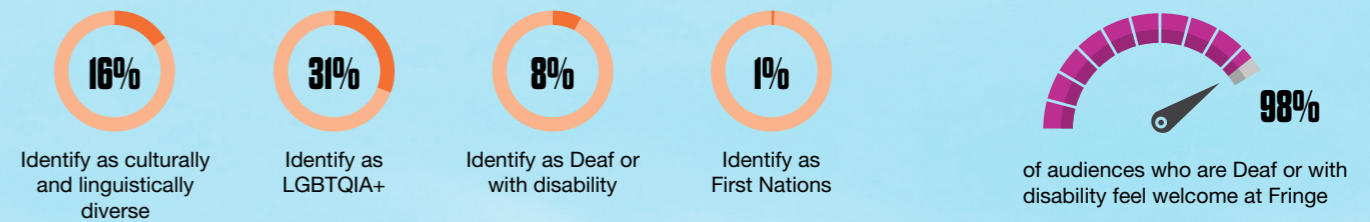
OUR AUDIENCE



GENDER



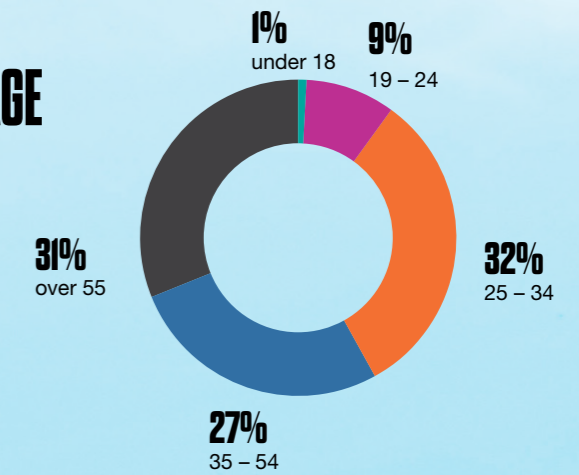
DIVERSITY



“I just wanted to say a big congratulations to you and the whole Fringe team as well. It’s an amazing organisational feat you achieved. All those shows and all so smooth!”

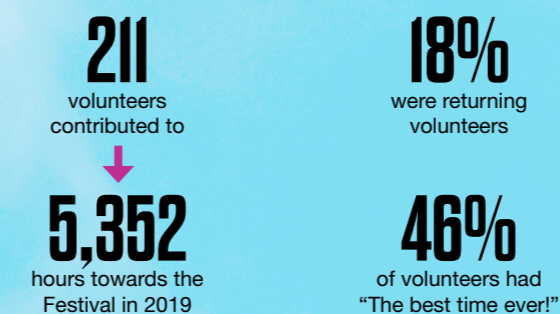
– Tom Gutteridge, Audience Member 2019

AGE



OUR VOLUNTEERS

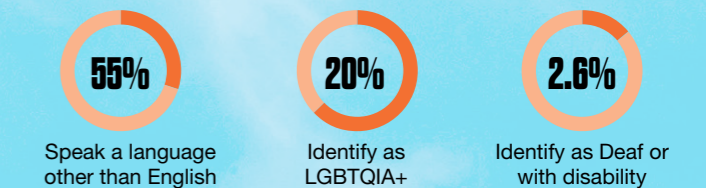
Our volunteers come from all walks of life to contribute across all areas of the Festival from production to front of house, from marketing to accessibility. We really couldn’t do it without them.



“Honestly, Melbourne Fringe was a top-to-bottom fantastic experience. A crowning moment of my time in Australia. Thank you for having me - I’m going to miss everybody so much!”

– Melbourne Fringe Volunteer 2019

DIVERSITY



OPEN ACCESS PROGRAM

408 events
2,499 artists and participants
86,513 attendees

“BRING ON THE ART in every form - what a great opportunity it was to kick an art heart shaped hole in Melbourne’s stratosphere.”

- Emma Bathgate, Fringe Artist 2019

In an unadulterated expression of our commitment to cultural democracy, our open access program presents a bold celebration of artistic discovery and self-expression.

In 2019, more than 2,499 emerging, mid-career and established artists, alongside everyday citizens with something to say, took Melbourne as their stage, presenting events across every artform imaginable.

Our artists drew thousands of audience members outside of their comfort zone - their everyday - to discover new work, hear diverse stories, and see their world anew.

The open access nature of our Festival supports our commitment to cultural democracy; the idea of art for everyone. Every year, our artists create transformative artistic experiences on a shoestring and with an average ticket price of \$23.90, provide Melburnians with bold and accessible art. Our Open Access program gives artists an equal platform for cultural expression, and each year we are astounded by the imagination, creativity and bravery abound in our great city.

MAJOR VENUES

We joined forces with four iconic Fringe establishments to support major venues across our great city, each presenting mega programs of Fringe events.

Gasworks Arts Park, The Butterfly Club, The Melba & Beyond and the Wonderland Spiegel Tent were hives of activity during the Festival. Our Major Venues harnessed their creativity and expertise to deliver programs of Fringe work that were unique to their venues and their distinct programming visions. Activating multiple performance, exhibition and social spaces, each of our Major Venues offered Fringe audiences a chance to experience that all-important Festival vibe.



THE BUTTERFLY CLUB



FRINGE HUB

24,817 attendees
92 events
446 artists

After 20 years in North Melbourne, we packed up our disco balls and glitter and moved into the one and only Trades Hall.

In 2019, the Festival’s civic heart beat from the historic chambers and corridors of one of Melbourne’s most iconic buildings. Melbourne’s history and Fringe’s future met under the mighty columns as our entire Festival Hub unified under the one roof.

Trades Hall - our new Fringe Hub - was the ultimate meeting place of the Festival; the unifying site for thousands of artists and audiences to gather and experience some of the weirdest, wildest and most wonderful art the Festival’s program had to offer.

“I was so impressed by Trades Hall this year. It was such a warm, vital, lively space that made me want to hang around.”

- Margot Fenley, Audience Member 2019

Each night at the Young Henry’s Loading Dock, lines blurred between artists and audiences, assembling to dissect and reflect on the evening’s revelries; on new ideas and bold artists, and on boundary-pushing work.

Around dimly lit nooks and poster-clad walls, audiences could uncover spaces both intimate and enormous, transformed between works of every genre to transport people through stories imagined by some of the most exciting artists.



Fringe Hub, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Duncan Jacob.

Ebony Hickey, Fuck Fabulous, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Duncan Jacob.



YOUNG HENRYS

CAMPARI



ALV



KIDS CLUB

2
events

8
artists

60
attendees



Now in its third year, our Kids Club is a space where our littlest Fringe-goers (and their adult humans) can come together to express themselves creatively and be whoever they want to be. It's just like our big Club but with more giggling and dribbling.

Accessibility was at the heart of our Kids Club programming this year, featuring two events that created welcoming and inclusive spaces for children and their families. We kept it chill with Juan Vesuvius says RELAX! creating a relaxed environment for children who experience Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or similar sensory and communication disabilities. Children were free to join in with the interactive storytelling, have a boogie or just have a quiet sit. Mini SPIN was our immersive interactive dance rave for Deaf, CODA (children of Deaf adults) and hearing children and families. A club full of kids joined Deaf hosts Anna, Luke and Robbie for dancing and stories of Deaf culture.

Our Kids Club is a space where our littlest humans are safe to be free, explore who they want to be through creativity and play.

9 events
337 artists
3,722 attendees

“The beating heart of the Melbourne Fringe Festival is its raucous club, where art-loving audiences dance and drink at themed parties presented by different performers every night.”

- Time Out

“I was really impressed by all the theme nights at Fringe this year. I think it was the best year by far for Club nights... I loved the variety of interpretation on the themes, and the quality of acts.”

- Anna Thomson, Fringe Artist, 2019

A new Hub means a new Club. This year Club Fringe presented a program of exciting and immersive art parties where you could be yourself (or whoever you wanted to be!) and party until the wee hours of the morn.

Club Fringe is the beating heart of the Festival, a physical manifestation of our core values of inclusivity, bravery and creativity. Each of the curated nights featured leading independent artists from across the Festival and beyond, showcasing diverse voices from the margins.

This year was one of our Club's most diverse programs with 24% of artists coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, 54% identifying as LGBTQ+, 53% identifying as female, 3% identifying as First Nations artists and 2% identifying as Deaf or with a disability.

Club Fringe is a space for celebration and for community, a space to let loose, dress up, dance on and party out.

DEADLY FRINGE

Deadly Fringe unearths and nurtures brand-new work by First Nations artists.

This year, we were pleased to partner with the Koorie Heritage Trust and move across mediums to support three emerging artists to create new visual artworks. These artworks expanded the Deadly Fringe program attracting new artists and audiences and facilitating new connections with community.

Our Deadly Fringe visual arts program featured *Current* by Pierra Van Sparkes, *KALKADOON* by Arkie Barton and *Edwards Gammin Café* by Gammin Threads' Tahnee Edwards and her dad,

Uncle (Choco) Talgium Edwards. The three works were linked by the theme of connection to home and memory, which they all interpreted and explored in different ways whilst incorporating the specificity of the site into their works. *Edwards Gammin Café* also incorporated intergenerational engagement with artist Tahnee Edwards working alongside her father Uncle Talgium Edwards, and it was also nominated for the Best in Visual Arts Award. Haley Millar Baker also ran a workshop constructing a photographic assemblage of a childhood story in *An Assemblage of Memories* at Woods Street Arts Space.

Emerging Deadly Producers Kalyani Mumtaz and Savanna Kruger supported our Deadly Fringe artists to present their work at the Festival. Together, Kalyani and Savanna brought their rich and varied experiences to the positions, connecting with artists and community to support and illuminate the artworks in the Deadly Fringe program. Alongside producing these works, they also facilitated Yarning Circles, community outreach and engagement.



Kalkadoon, Arkie Barton, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Michael Jalaru Torres.

Current, Pierra Van Sparkes, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Michael Jalaru Torres.

FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT IN THE FESTIVAL

36
events in the Festival featured First Nations' artists involvement

9
events in the Festival were produced by a First Nations producer

96
First Nations artists participated in the Festival



Edwards Gammin Café, Tahnee and Talgium Edwards, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Michael Jalaru Torres.

Alongside our Deadly Fringe program, Melbourne Fringe continued to support First Nations artworks across all genres through a variety of artist development initiatives.

Artist Amos Roach participated in Navigate, our inclusive mentorship program and received additional support through our Microgrants program. Amos' work, *Neon Corroboree*, brought traditional dance back to King's Domain, land that has not been danced on for more than 150 years and received the Wilin Centre's (VCA & MCM) award for Best Emerging Indigenous Artist at the Melbourne Fringe Awards.

Actor and dancer Jack Shepherd received a ShowSupport microgrant for the initial development of his remarkable work *Crackpipe Dreaming*, a solo work that explored the impact of drugs on First Nations communities.

First Nations artist Loki Liddle participated in our Navigate mentorship program to develop *Snake of Light*, one night only of spoken word and music.

KEYNOTE PROJECTS

Grounded by our new geographical heart at Trades Hall, our Keynote Projects spread out farther than ever before, inviting citizens right across Melbourne to unite in the name of art and in the search of truth.

Through varied works that drew on the minds and bodies of its participants, hard truths were dismantled to create space for reflection, interaction and exploration; bridging divides and fostering deeper understandings of ourselves and each other.

Our Keynote Projects reflected the diversity and creativity of our community, collecting, sharing and inspiring stories that revealed the unifying features of the human experience.

11

events

54

artists and participants

288,742

attendees

IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH

5,242

viewers

140

confessions

47

exhibition entries

In Search of the Truth is a global project investigating the inner motivations of individuals and social movements across cultures at different places and times across the world. During the first weekend of the Festival, we took over Prahran's Grattan Gardens, installing a large-scale public sculpture in the form of a giant white cartoon 'truth booth'.

As a participatory public artwork, citizens were invited to express themselves inside the booth – to talk about important things on their minds, to express their own inner truths and make important comments on society at large. A mix of people – from older adults, school kids, people sleeping rough, to people whose first language is not English – expressed their diverse and divergent views on the world inside this unique, surprising and engaging global project.

As video installation and exhibition, *In Search of the Truth* brought a high-quality artwork to Chapel off Chapel, engaging with audiences who could either watch a single Truth confession, or sit for half an hour and watch the series. Those who did were rewarded, gaining the strongest understanding of our community's truths: personal secrets, political viewpoints and worldviews were shared, compared and contrasted as the diversity of Melbourne's citizenship were given the chance to express themselves.



SKIN



13 participants
59,891 engaged viewers
 Fed Square
55,548 engaged viewers
 Trades Hall

Led by artist and queer activist Alison Bennett, *Skin* was a large-scale projection work that mapped photographs of the skin of neurodiverse queer Victorians' tattoos on the digital façade of Fed Square and on the walls of Trades Hall, representing a proud, indelible statement of non-conformity and self-expression.

To create this original work, Alison scanned the tattoos of people who identified Neurodiverse and Queer, or Neuroqueer to create an abstract digital artwork to showcase this community via the highly personal markings on their skin.

“The way in which SKIN operates in Federation Square — a digital, organic, and tattooed chimera — sets up the dynamics for asking questions about future definitions of human. It also focuses attention on the problems of power and representation current neurodivergent people may experience.”

– Fareed Kaviani, Archer Magazine, 2019



FACES OF FRINGE

23 participants
166,939 viewers

Commissioned in partnership with Metro Tunnel Creative Program, *Faces of Fringe* captured artists at work at Trades Hall, lifting the lid on the artistic process for all to see. Captured by Melbourne photographer Sarah Walker, the portraits were displayed between Trades Hall and Melbourne City Baths on the side of the acoustic shed which houses construction of the Metro Tunnel's new State Library Station.



Scout Boxall, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Sarah Walker.

BATMANIA

“A razor-sharp parody of Australian hypocrisy.”

– Robert Reid, Witness Performance

On the other side of town, The Very Good Looking Initiative welcomed brave adventurers on a tour of a mythical yet familiar place; Batmania – a town caught between cultural cringe and reassuring nostalgia. The *Batmania Bus Tour* took visitors on a guided tour through the town's most iconic sights, while *Batmania Expo '19* offered up a glimpse of what the future holds for Australia's newest holiday destination.

**THEATRE WORKS
 AMPLIFIED BY MELBOURNE FRINGE**



Ancient Shrines and Half Truths, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by J Forsyth.

ANCIENT SHRINES AND HALF TRUTHS



“Ancient Shrines and Half Truths opens our eyes and mind to the stories around us and most importantly, to the stories that are out there yet to be realised.”

– Myron My, My Arts Melbourne

Binge Culture's *Ancient Shrines and Half Truths* took its audience on an audio journey from tourist to local through a satirical interrogation of what it means to be 'from around here'. Starting at the Werribee War Memorial, the site-specific work navigated through the tokens, rituals and places of interest unique to

Werribee and its citizens. With a narrative crafted specifically to respond to the area, the work had audiences navigate their way through pathways, plazas, parks and public toilets for a constantly surprising journey into Werribee's people and places.



YOU SHOULD BE DANCING

“A liberating, fun-filled experience.”

– Patricia Di Risio, Stage Whispers

Led by performance collective Everybody NOW!, *You Should be Dancing* took citizens on an exhilarating exploration through the decades of dance in a shiny, glitter-studded party for all ages. From two-step to twerking, everybody and all bodies came together in a celebration of music and movement.



XS



52 sessions

1,571 Attendees

Returning for its second year, XS continued to deliver experimental, contemporary and live art programming to children and their families; providing unique, immersive opportunities to explore, create and play. Featuring four events across Melbourne, XS ditched the storybook, instead placing kids in worlds where they were at the centre of the narrative, offering the extra smalls an XS of possibilities.



Sonic Labyrinth, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by TJ Garvie.

SONIC LABYRINTH

Kids and families journeyed through an immersive world of sound with Aviva Edean and Justin Marshall's new work, *Sonic Labyrinth*. In an other worldly environment inhabited by the labyrinth keepers, 182 participants chose their own journey with opportunities for solitary, intimate and collective sound-making. The work reflected the age-old use of the labyrinth for problem solving, accessing creativity, transformation and communication that is both ancient and futuristic.



We Are The Robots, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by TJ Garvie.

WE ARE THE ROBOTS

Taking over Nicholson Street Mall for the middle weekend of the Festival and then finding its home at ArtPlay, *We Are The Robots* gave 300 kids free rein to unleash the creative beasts within, bringing to life wild creatures using modular robot designs. Enter 'The Pod' – a massive, translucent dome-shaped performance space, animated by a sonic landscape fuelled by kids' design choices, exploring synthesis and composition through tactile, touch-sensitive technology.

The work was truly democratic in its approach, empowering the voices of children in our culture and giving them agency in the creation of new artworks. The Pod itself was a spectacular intervention in the landscape, an alien filled deposit filled with creativity and constant surprise. *We Are The Robots* was an absolute crowd favourite, with every session booking out before the Festival even started.



TETRIS

“Far more satisfying than playing Tetris on your own, this performance lifted the game to an experience of joy and humanity.”

– Rebecca Waese, Theatre Press

Classic games were brought to life using strength, agility and acrobatic skill in *Tetris*, a participatory dance work by Dutch company Arch8 at Arts Centre Melbourne.



MAKING STORIES WITHOUT WORDS

Led by performance maker Caroline Bowditch and designer Laura Hook, *Making Stories Without Words* supported art-makers to explore how design and non-verbal forms of communication can be used to create inclusive works for children and young audiences. In the morning, participants used movement and design to create character narratives, then explored these further with children and families in the afternoon.



FRINGE FURNITURE 33

“There is no shortage of Aussie design talent on the rise and Fringe Furniture offers a unique, affordable and an inclusive opportunity to showcase ideas in a public realm.”

– Kate Stokes, Coco Flip, Fringe Furniture Mentor 2019

Fringe Furniture 33, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Tanya Voltchanskaya.

Returning for its 33rd year, Fringe Furniture continued to be the vanguard of abstract and high-concept design. Our proudly open-access exhibition featured 129 works across every design discipline, drawing over 3,000 people to witness the next generation of designers alongside the industry’s elite, testing out new ideas that explore, challenge and extend the limits of design.

The 2019 exhibition celebrated our individuality and our differences, supporting access and participation by designers at all levels and from all backgrounds. The extension of our Ralph Mclean microgrants program supported designers facing financial barriers to participate in the exhibition. With the support of the Naomi Milgrom Foundation, we continued our commitment to increasing gender equality in the design industry by offering a subsidy on our registration fees for female-identifying and non-binary designers. Our Tactile Tours supported people who are blind and vision-impaired to engage with the exhibition, while targeted outreach supported five designers who are blind or have low-vision to participate in the exhibition for the first time.

Our free Artist Talk by internationally renowned designer, Laura McCusker, and artist-led tours facilitated deeper engagement between designers and design-lovers, while providing a vital meeting place for Melbourne’s design community. Six emerging artists were paired with leading designers as part of our Fringe Furniture mentorship program and our Fringe Furniture Awards presented 10 Professional Development and Special Awards to both established and emerging designers selected by a panel of industry professionals.

“Fringe Furniture continues to be Melbourne’s leading exhibition for both practitioner support and camaraderie, and also as an active and conducive space for experimentation within the design discipline.”

– Dale Hardiman, Dowel Jones, Fringe Furniture Mentor

AWARDS

BEST IN CATEGORY AWARDS

Best Cabaret – *BOOBS*
Best Circus – *YUCK Circus*
Best Comedy – *The Living Room*
Best Dance & Physical Theatre – *Surge*
Best Experimental – *The Power of the Holy Spirit*
Best Kids – *Mad as a Cute Snake*
Best Music – *The Unravelling*
Best Theatre – *I'm a Phoenix, Bitch*
Best Visual Arts & Film – *CRITICAL MASS @ BLAK DOT*
Best Words & Ideas – *The Unfolding of Benjamin's Misery*

SPECIAL AWARDS

Best Emerging Artist
Scout Boxall: Good Egg

Best Feminist Work
Supported by MC Security
BOOBS

Melbourne Fringe Living Legend
Anni Davey

People's Choice Award
twenty-something

Spirit of the Fringe
YAY FOR CANE TOADS!

Sound and Technical Excellence Award
Supported by ALV Productions
Game Boys Cinematic Universe

Venue of the Year
Camp Conscious Collective

TOURING AWARDS

The New Zealand Tour Ready Award
Supported by New Zealand Fringe
PO PO MO CO presents Flutter and Flounce

The NSW Tour Ready Award
Supported by Sydney Fringe
I Still Haven't Found What I'm Cooking For

The Queensland Tour Ready Award
Supported by Brisbane Comedy Festival
Oliver Coleman: Poolside

The SA Tour Ready Award
Supported by Adelaide Fringe
Happy-Go-Wrong

The Summerhall Award
Supported by Summerhall, Edinburgh
Waterloo

The WA Tour Ready Award
Supported by FRINGE WORLD Festival
Poopie Tum Tums

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

Access and Inclusion Award
Supported by Arts Access Victoria
Qualia

Best Emerging Circus Performer
Supported by Theatre Network Australia's CaPT Initiative
Georgia Deguara – YUCK Circus

Best Emerging Indigenous Artist
Supported by Wilin Centre (VCA & MCM)
Amos Roach – Neon Corroboree

Best Emerging Performance Ensemble
Supported by Theatre Network Australia
Oh No! Satan Stole My Pineal Gland

Our Festival culminates with our coveted Awards Night, where a total of 38 Category, Professional Development, Touring and Special awards are chosen by a panel of over 120 industry judges and presented. These awards recognise and encourage artists to continue the life of their work through touring and professional development opportunities.

Best Emerging Producer
Supported by MILKE
Clare Rankine

Best Emerging Writer
Supported by Emerging Writers' Festival
Christopher James White – KIGALI2097

Children as Creative Collaborators Award
Supported by ArtPlay
Alex Morris – Kid-aoke

Evolution Award
Supported by Arts House
Waterloo

Innovation in Culturally Diverse Practice
Supported by Multicultural Arts Victoria
The Melanin Monologues

Market Ready Award
Supported by Regional Arts Victoria
Game Boys Cinematic Universe

Original New Circus
Supported by Circus Oz
Tully Sedorowjtsh, SOCIETY

The Discovery Award
Supported by Melbourne International Arts Festival
What Am I Supposed To Do? (WAISTD)

The Phantasmagorical Award
Supported by Temperance Hall
Alexander Powers, Time Loop I

Trades Hall Residency Award
Supported by Melbourne Fringe
Doors Shut

Young Creatives Award
Supported by SIGNAL
Daisy Nduta, Assimilate

FRINGE FURNITURE AWARDS

Authentic Design Award of Merit
Supported by Authentic Design Alliance
Joandita Centika – Anthropos

Award for Experimental Design
Supported by Lovell Chen
Samuel Johnson sem designs – CAST

Award for Lighting Innovation
Supported by Rakumba
SOZOU studio – Kohtaroh Maatsura

CNC Production Award
Supported by Like Butter
Alex Lesniowski – Scimitar Stool

Design for a Circular Economy Award
Supported by Banyule City Council
Darcy Jones – Brighton Beach 6PM

Emerging Designer Award
Supported by Craft Victoria
Tom Hewitt – Elk Dining Chair

Finely Crafted Award (Emerging)
Supported by The Shed
Cassie Carter – Thanks Hipparchus

Maker in Residence Award
Supported by FAB9
Phoebe Rogers – Bernard

Unite Exhibition Provocation Award
Supported by The Abbotsford Convent
Paul Savage – Treelights

Design Innovation Award
Supported by Tait
Kathleen Prentice – Bomba Chair

MONEY FOR ART

SHOW SUPPORT

Our match-making service paired independent artists with our amazing donors to commission original work to premiere at the Festival.

In 2019, recipients and donors were:

Crackpipe Dreaming supported by Craig Semple

Eyes Wide Open supported by Rosemary Forbes and Ian Hocking

Gone Girls supported by Pinky Watson and Rosemary Walls

Hard to Reach Places supported by Jenepher Martin

Inexcusable supported by Ron and Margaret Dobell Foundation and Vinay Kumar

Mad as a Cute Snake supported by Debbie Dadon AM

Neon Corroboree supported by Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers

Netsuke and Inro supported by Michael Watt and Cecilie Hall

Placebo supported by John and Lorraine Bates

RALPH MCLEAN MICROGRANTS

With the help of our enormously generous donors, we expanded this program to reduce barriers to participation for more artists than ever before, continuing the great legacy of Ralph Mclean, former Chair of Melbourne Fringe. This year, 30 artists received a microgrant to cover the cost of their registration and help them participate in the Festival.

We acknowledge a significant gift from Michael Agar and Caroline Farmer, as well as our supporters Tamara and Mark Boldiston, Jason Craig, Dan Koop, Maggie Maguire OAM, and family and friends of Ralph Mclean.

Our Money For Art program supports emerging artists from diverse backgrounds to present new work at the Festival.

In 2019, we significantly expanded the program to support more artists facing structural barriers to participate in the Festival, reflecting our long-term commitment to fostering a dynamic, diverse and representative arts sector.

JEWEL BOX PERFORMANCES GRANTS

We teamed up with Jewel Box Performances to provide support to three artists of colour participating in this year's Festival: Daisy Nduta, Vidya Rajan and Amos Roach. The grant covered registration fees, advertising and marketing support, as well as one-on-one mentoring sessions with the Fringe Marketing Team.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS

The Cities of Port Phillip and Moreland generously supported 27 free registrations for events taking place within their municipalities. Projects by Laura Collins, Catherine Holder and Jayson Patterson also received support to take part in Coburg Carnivale at this year's Festival. The grant provided development and rehearsal space, presentation space, marketing support and technical support.



SIGNAL INCURSION

Supporting a young artist looking to take the next step in their creative practice, SIGNAL covered registration and venue costs, rehearsal spaces, and provided a range of workshops and development opportunities. The 2019 recipient was Juetheng Soo.

SIGNAL

OUR VENUE

COMMON ROOMS



Women of Soul, Common Rooms 2019. Photo by J Forsyth.

46 events
202 artists
3,936 attendees

At Melbourne Fringe, we don't believe in doing things by halves, which is why in November we launched Common Rooms, a year-round venue. Common Rooms is a home for independent arts, music and events, bringing the Fringe spirit of rebellion, inclusivity, creativity and great parties to Trades Hall.

Common Rooms extends our support to the community year-round, bringing people together to celebrate cultural democracy and have a good time while they are at it. Common Rooms is a meeting place, a salon for one-off and regular events including live music, performance, comedy, cabaret, dance parties, spoken word, workshops and rehearsals.

Across two spaces (the Old Ballroom and the Annexe), Common Rooms supports artists at all stages of their careers to develop and present their work. More than just a gig space, Common Rooms is a place where artists are safe to test ideas, explore genre and craft, connect with other artists and find new audiences. It's just one of the ways that Fringe continues to strengthen our sector development and support the independent arts industry.

As a key project of Melbourne Fringe, Common Rooms proudly embodies our vision of cultural democracy: the idea of art for anyone by providing a culturally and physically safe space for our community including LGBTQIA+, First Nations, Deaf and people with a disability.

Common Rooms is where culture and community collide.



Tony Wheeler AO & Maureen Wheeler AO

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

TOUR READY

Our Tour Ready program fills an important gap in the industry by equipping independent artists with the necessary skills to extend the life of their work through touring. Each year, we run a series of workshops for artists presenting work at the Festival that cover the basics of creating work that is suitable for touring, packaging and pitching your work to presenters and that all important skill, networking. During the Festival, we provide our artists with opportunities to test out their new skills by inviting a delegation of national and international Producers to the Festival and hosting a series of informal networking sessions.

Our Tour Ready partnership with Showcase Victoria resulted in 37 Fringe shows applying to present their work at the 2019 Showcase marketplace, a record number for Fringe events. Six of these shows subsequently went on to present their work at Showcase Victoria, with all six shows subsequently booking tours as a direct result of their participation in the event.

We work hard year-round to support independent artists and artworkers with development opportunities to help to create a vibrant and sustainable arts industry. Fringe fosters the talents of emerging and mid-career independent artists and arts professionals to become some of the industry's most prominent practitioners and leaders.

STEPPING STONES

If you look through our Alumni, it's literally a 'who's who' of the arts industry with many professionals getting their start at Melbourne Fringe. We believe that investment in professional development and providing career support not only benefits our staff but also equips and trains the next generation of arts professionals. This year we created Stepping Stones, our new professional development program designed to support emerging arts workers to progress in experience, confidence and career planning.

In 2019, Caitlin McNaughton (Artist Liaison and Ticketing Manager) and Brigit Ryan (Fringe Furniture Coordinator) were selected as our Stepping Stones participants. Brigit and Caitlin received on the job learning, support from experienced industry mentors, access to workshops and masterclasses in addition to professional development and career planning.

The
Hugh Williamson
Foundation

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

22 events
2,969 participants

Our Artist Development Programs focus on supporting emerging and mid-career artists through training and education, skills development (both in creating and producing art) and providing open access commissioning opportunities. Fringe plays an important part in the ecology of the Australian Arts landscape, providing many artists with a safe platform for their 'first-step' into the industry, creating a space for bold new ideas and diverse perspectives.

NAVIGATE

Our inclusive mentorship, Navigate, paired 14 emerging artists with professional mentors to help them create original work for the 2019 Festival. Each participant received access to masterclasses, one-on-one support and mentorship, registration assistance and training in producing their work. To ensure strong representation and diversity in the program, we reserved a number of positions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Deaf people and people with disability.

The 2019 participants included Jacqueline Brady, Ngioka Bunda-Heath, Jaycob Campbell, Selwyn Hoffman, Irene Holub, Pippin Latham, Loki Liddle, Sammaneh Pourshafighi, Charlotte Raymond, Amos Roach, Tom Skelton, Rosy Thurston, Kimberley Twiner and Dan Wei.

CREATIVE VICTORIA

Collier
Charitable
Fund

The Samuel
Nissen Charitable
Foundation

INFO SESSIONS

Presented in partnership with MILKE, our free Info Sessions provide artists with useful information and advice in producing their work. These sessions are available to all artists including those who are not presenting work at the Festival and to expand the accessibility of these sessions, this year we went digital and live streamed the sessions. Thousands of artists from across Australia and the world, tuned into sessions that covered everything from marketing to social media advertising, producing accessible events to touring, and the all-important 'self-care' – Fringe's way of contributing to better mental health outcomes within the industry.

MILKE

CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

This year, we partnered with Arts Centre Melbourne to deliver a series of Creative Workshops to provide independent artists with opportunity to work with some of the industry's leading professionals in the areas of creative practice including embedding access into performance, intercultural performance and queering your practice. These workshops are designed to question contemporary artistic practice and are spaces where ideas are boldly challenged.



ARTIST SERVICES

This is a shout out to our Artist Services team who roll out these year-round Artist Development programs and provide vital one-to-one support for artists participating in the Festival. We are really proud that 91% of our artists would present work at Melbourne Fringe again and it's all thanks to them. Our Artist Services team are always available to help, no matter how big or small the enquiry and create a wide range of resources to support artists in producing their work. They also liaise with our independent venues and provide them with a range of support from programming to accessibility making the Festival a better experience for everyone.

Think of them like the best art mums ever.



Railed, Head First Acrobats, Program Launch, Melbourne Fringe 2019.
Photo by Tanya Voltchanskaya.

FINANCE

This is an overview of all things Fringe Finance*. It's a summary only and not intended to replace the information that you can find in our 2019 audited report. As you can see, 2019 was another successful financial year for Melbourne Fringe, with turnover growing to \$3.62m – a 22% increase from 2018. The organisation's financial position remains strong going into the 2020 with net assets of over \$522,000.

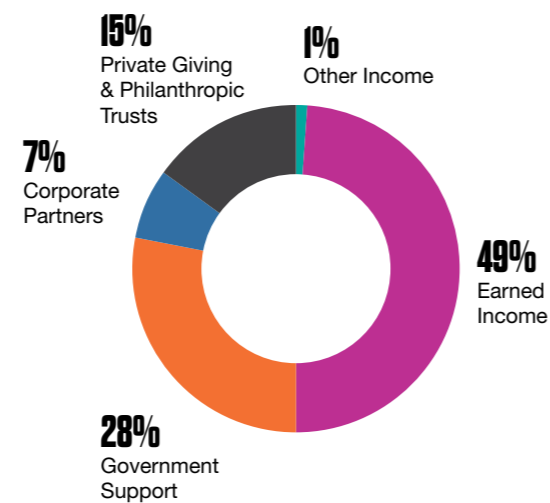
*Now would be the time we make 'show me the money' gags or we mention the word 'cha-ching' several times, however, we feel that the numbers speak for themselves.



Jay and the Holograms, Rhythm Nation, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Duncan Jacob.

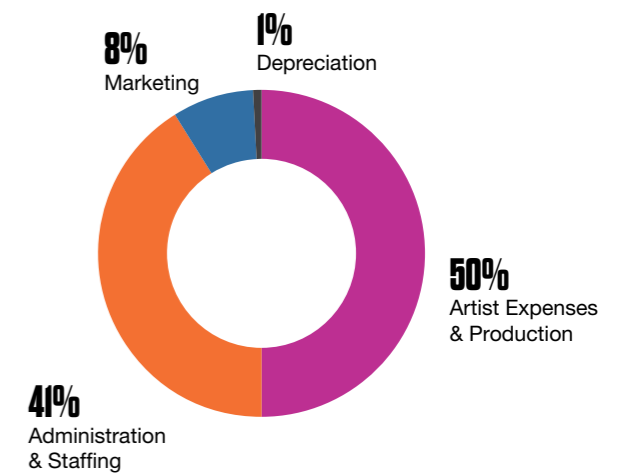
INCOME

Earned income such as registrations, venue hire, ticket and bar sales continue to make up almost half of the organisation's revenue, demonstrating Melbourne Fringe's commitment to financial sustainability in an era of funding uncertainty. Support from federal, state and local governments continues to be an integral area of funding, accounting for 28% of income. The organisation's fundraising campaign for the move to Trades Hall meant it was a bumper year for philanthropy, rising to 15% of the organisation's income (an increase from 11% in 2018 and 1% in 2014). Thanks to everyone who helps us do the amazing things we do. Corporate partnerships, both cash and in-kind, continue to be a significant source of income.



EXPENDITURE

In 2019, Melbourne Fringe continued to do a lot with very little. Payments to artists and the production of the Festival remains our single biggest cost, making up exactly 50% of our expenditure. Administration and staffing make up a further 41% of the organisation's costs because without people, there 'aint no Fringe. Marketing costs remain low as a proportion of the organisation's overall expenditure (at only 8%) and much of this is made up of in-kind partnership values.



OUR SUPPORTERS

FRINGE DWELLERS

Fringe Dwellers are our amazing members, they are our champions, those beautiful people who buy lots of tickets to the Festival to support our independent artists. This year, we were thrilled to welcome more of our Fringe Dwellers to the margins as our membership base increased by 93% to 193.

For their membership, Fringe Dwellers receive discounts on tickets to Fringe projects year-round including Common Rooms tickets (for those who skipped page 30), free entry to Club Fringe, discounted drinks at Fringe Hub bars and Common Rooms, and access to free tickets at events around town. More than that, our Fringe Dwellers have that warm glowing feeling knowing that they support hard working, independent artists.

OUR DONORS

Fringe is a not-for-profit organisation that believes in cultural democracy – art for anyone – and is committed to making a lot happen on a shoestring. That's why each year, we are overwhelmed by the support we receive from our Fringe community, individuals that stand up for independent artists, pop their hands in their wallets and give generously to support them.

This year we saw a 28% increase in the overall number of donations that we received and a 40% increase of people joining our Friends of Fringe community (\$200+ donations). There was a 60% increase in the amount of money donated to special projects like our ShowSupport and Microgrants programs that specifically address reducing barriers to participation in the Festival.

Your support is incredible, you guys truly are our Fringe fam. We couldn't do this without you, so a very big thanks.



Kick On, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Theresa Harrison.



Opening Night Party, Melbourne Fringe 2019. Photo by Theresa Harrison.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

TRADES HALL VENUE (\$100,000+)

Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO

FRINGE FURNITURE FOR GENDER EQUALITY (\$15,000+)

Naomi Milgrom Foundation

SHOWSUPPORT (\$5,000+)

John and Lorraine Bates
Debbie Dadon AM
Ron and Margaret Dobell Foundation and Vinay Kumar
Rosemary Forbes and Ian Hocking
Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers
Dr Jenepher Martin
Craig Semple
Rosemary Walls and Pinky Watson consortium
Michael Watt and Cecilie Hall

RALPH MCLEAN MICROGRANTS (\$10,000+)

Michael Agar and Caroline Farmer

(\$250+)

Tamara and Mark Boldiston
Jason Craig
Maggie Maguire OAM

FRINGE SUPPORTERS

CREATOR — \$10,000+

James McCaughey
Craig Semple

DISCOVERER — \$5,000+

Daniel Besen
Linda Herd
Jewel Box Performances

EXPLORER — \$2,500+

Sam and Monica Abrahams
Sally Browne Fund, Australian Communities Foundation
Phlyssa Koshland
Maggie Maguire OAM
Nicholas Wimbush

INNOVATOR — \$1,000+

Nicole Beyer
Alison Currie
Jason Craig
Susanne Dahn
Carrillo Gantner AO
David Geoffrey Hall
Fox & Hickey
Catherine Hutchison
Jayne Lovelock and Neal Harvey
Gideon Obarzanek
Ian Pidd and Sue Giles
Vanessa Pigrum
Toby Sullivan
Scott Welsford
Peter Wetenhall and Jo Horgan
Paul Wheelton AM KSJ and Angela Wheelton OAM
Sue and Ted Woodward
Anonymous (1)

RABBLEROUSER — \$500+

Don Anderson
Steven Carew
Linda Catalano
Liza Gelt
Matt Jones
Richard and Andrea King
Nicky Klempfner and Marcus O'Reilly
Paul Muller
Liz O'Brien
Kaylene O'Neill
Lou Oppenheim
Juanita Pope
Dr Jill Smith in honour of Joan Kirner
Leonard Vary and Dr Matt Collins AM QC
Pinky Watson

ACCOMPLICE — \$200+

Julia Adams
Sarah Austin and Nicholas Verginis
Penelope Bartlau
Simon Bedford
Hugh and Elizabeth Bradlow
Richard Chambers
Billie Giles-Corti
Stephanie Hamilton
Nick Hays
Jerry Hodgins
Mike Hyde
Robyn Lansdowne
Benjamin Lee
Michele Lee
Sabina Lunja
Peter Manasantivongs
Luke McKinnon
Georgie Meyer
Alice Nash

Tye Norman
Felix Preval
James Ralston
Jerry Remkes
Bertha Rubin and Ron Elisha
Katrina Sedgwick
Andrea Stahel
Tim Stitz and Petra Kalive
Kevin and Liz Walsh
Kate and Abby Woosha
Anonymous (2)

FRINGE COMMUNITY — UP TO \$200

We would also like to thank all of our wonderful community of donors that give so generously. Thanks for your ongoing support.

You're all legends.

LEGACY

Thank you to Mark and Tamara Boldiston for their generous bequest to Melbourne Fringe.

PEOPLE

Fringe is first and foremost a community of like-minded people who make the impossible happen. Every year we rely on hardworking dedicated people, so a very big thank you to everyone who has made this year happen – from the extraordinary beast of a Festival to launching our brand-new venue and all the other tricky bits in between.

MELBOURNE FRINGE STAFF

Creative Director & CEO – Simon Abrahams

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS TEAM

General Manager & Deputy CEO – Will Dawson
 Business Operations & Systems Manager – Shirrah Comeadow
 Common Rooms Venue Manager – Simone Porter
 Common Rooms Venue Supervisor – Ali Graham
 Administrator – Christa Jonathan
 Ticketing Manager & Participant Liaison – Caitlin McNaughton
 Ticketing Coordinators – Stacey Lavender and Lauren Simpson
 Volunteer Coordinator – Alice Moloney

MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Head of Marketing & Development – Miranda Borman
 Marketing & Communications Manager – Dan Beacom
 Funding Strategy & Evaluation Manager – Pauline Cady
 Marketing & Development Coordinator – Michelle Tseng (to April)
 Marketing & Communications Coordinators – Nicole McKenzie and Lillian Birch
 Development Coordinator – Cat Graveson
 Mascot and Office Pet – Mao Mao

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS TEAM

Senior Producer – Danny Delahunty
 Producer (Artists, Venues & Events) – Tom Browne
 Associate Producer (Artistic Development) – Patrick Hayes
 Access & Inclusion Coordinator – Carly Findlay
 Production Manager – Ian Corcoran
 Assistant Producer (Participation) – Anna Seymour
 Assistant Producers (Deadly Fringe) – Savanna Kruger and Kalyani Mumtaz
 Fringe Furniture Coordinator – Brigit Ryan
 Production Coordinator – Rylan Beckinsale

A big thanks goes out to all of our casual staff who work hard year-round across all our organisation to help us achieve our ambitious goals. We would like to say a big thank you to the hundreds of hard-working volunteers who give up their time in the name of independent art, critical thought, bold ideas and one hell of a party. And a big thank you to our families, friends, partners, parents, children, children-to-be, lovers, ex-lovers and heart-breakers, who have forgiven our absences and accepted our sacrifices to the gods of Fringe.

CONSULTANTS

Auslan Training – Auslan Consultancy – James Blyth and Luke King
 Bookkeeping – Sam Ryan (S.A.Y.S.O. Pty. Ltd.)
 Branding & Creative Agency – Raft Studio
 Deadly Fringe Mentor – Erica McCalman
 Pro Bono Legal Advisers – Baker McKenzie and Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers
 Professional Development Consultant – Laura Milke-Garner
 Photography – Jackson Grant and Sarah Walker
 Publicity – Zilla & Brook
 Registration System – Eventotron
 Risk Management – Tracey Wall, Safety in Numbers
 Sponsorship Consultant – Abby Elisha
 Ticketing – Red61
 Trades Hall Venue Marketing Strategy – Luke McKinnon, Common State
 Video Production – Lachlan MacLeod
 Website and social media – efront and Design by Wolf

BOARD

Acting Chair – Nicholas Verginis
 Chair – Gideon Obarzanek (to July)
 Company Secretary – Juanita Pope
 Treasurer – Rob Camm, Liza Gelt (to June)
 Directors – Alison Currie (from July), Kirsty Ellem, Stephanie Hamilton, Michael Hyde, Ben Lee, Nicky Klempfner (to June)
 Observer – Chris Booton (to June)
 Fundraising and Advocacy Advisor – Maggie Maguire OAM
 Bar Advisors – Tracey Lester, Daniel Manly & Matthew Mullins

PARTNERS

Major Government Partners



Federal Government Partner



Local Government Partners



Philanthropic Partners



Festival Partners



Program Partners



Festival Supporters



Industry Partners



Cultural Partners



Media Partners





CREATIVE VICTORIA

M CITY OF MELBOURNE