



## ETU Commission: \$20,000

### ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY

For 2025 Melbourne Fringe is offering a new **\$20,000 commission** for a show that will pack out our largest and highest production value Festival Hub venue; the **ETU Ballroom**.

Are you an ambitious producer with a hot new show in the works that you think could do three weeks in a 150-200 seat venue? This commission is for you! We have Fringe Fund commissions for artists at every stage of their career but this one is specifically for mid-career and established artists and producers who have a proven track record of high production value, tourable work. The kind of work that can be competitive in the national performing arts market.

This is a unique opportunity to develop and present a fully realised show during this year's festival (**30 September until 19 October 2025**). The work will be produced by the successful artist and will form an important part of the Melbourne Fringe Open Access Program at the Festival Hub.

The producer should be able to demonstrate an existing track record of high-quality works with commercial viability, marketing prowess, and a sprinkle of wow-factor. We are looking for something that fits the Melbourne Fringe values of creative risk-taking and is confident in their ability to get audiences talking (and attending!).

### KEY INFORMATION

#### Funding details

If successful, you will receive:

- **\$20,000** in commissioning funds to produce and present your new idea
- Guaranteed programming for 15 nights in the ETU Ballroom at the Festival Hub (1st – 19th October, 5 nights per week)
- Support from Melbourne Fringe staff to consult and guide your team – this includes staff who can provide expert advice relating to production management, marketing, administration, and accessibility.

Not included in the funding offer (i.e. there is no additional funding on top of the awarded amount, you will need to budget the following items):

- Your Melbourne Fringe Festival registration fee, ticketing charges, insurance and any other costs associated with producing your work;
- Access costs; and
- Presentation costs such as venue hire, artist fees, support staff, marketing and promotion costs, permits, licences, etc.

### **Eligibility**

This opportunity is for **mid-career** or **established artists** based in **Victoria**.

It is for a work that can be presented as part of a shared room programming structure at the Festival Hub (i.e. your production must be light on infrastructure, as there will be other productions in this room on the same nights)

It must be a **new work** and must be **premiered** during the 2025 Festival.

### **How to apply**

Please click on [this link](#) to access the application form.

Applications close at 11.59pm on **Sunday 30 March, 2025**

If using Airtable 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 [olly@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:olly@melbournefringe.com.au) and [milly@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:milly@melbournefringe.com.au) to start a conversation.

You can find more details on the application process and format below.

## **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'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.

There are some key features of this commission opportunity to understand:

### **1. You will self-produce a professional, high-quality event for the ETU Ballroom.**

That means we will pay the successful applicant the full \$20,000 commission fee, and they will be responsible to produce and deliver the event as part of the 2025 Melbourne Fringe Festival. We are also here to help with advice and guidance every step of the way, but this event will be produced by you and not our in-house team. You will be responsible for registering the event and undertaking all administration, planning, marketing and delivery. But you will also retain all profits!

## **2. The commission is for a performance work, but can be any genre or form.**

There is only one commission available, but you should not feel limited by genre, form, number of performers, or anything besides the limitations of Festival Hub programming. Which is to say, this work must be a ticketed performance that can fit within the shared programming model where one room hosts multiples shows per night, often with a tight turn around (~30 minutes) and limited storage space. As the building is heritage listed we also can't accommodate anything with high degrees of mess or risk (such as fire).

## **3. Your budget needs to consider the cost of all artist fees and presentation costs.**

This includes artist fees for yourself, your artistic collaborators, and any other team members (for example, a producer, a stage manager, designers etc). Your budget also needs to consider all production expenses, such as venue hire of the ETU (\$385 per night or 30% gross ticket sales, whichever is higher), set and costume costs or equipment hire, as well as administration costs such as public liability insurance, music licensing, ticket fees, and Fringe registration fees.

In summary: you will need to be confident that you have a budget that can cover all the costs of presenting your event. Your income would be the \$20,000 commission fee, plus a reasonable projection of income from ticket sales (hot tip: previous recipients of this grant averaged 50-65% sold across their seasons), plus any other funds already confirmed as available at the time of application.

The income in your budget may not include "prospective fundraising" (e.g. grants that you plan to apply for in the future). This commission will only go to an artist who is confident that they can present the proposed work with funds that would be available to them at the time of receiving the commission. We will support future fundraising activities where requested, but these must be to make your event idea even better – we cannot select an idea for this commission that could only proceed if other funding applications are also successful.

## **4. This opportunity is for an experienced producer or artist.**

We welcome you to define whether you are "emerging" or "experienced" – how we look at it is: if you're confident in the art you create, have a few works under your belt with great reviews and/or awards, and have the proven ability to pull together a team to help make your work a success, then you are an experienced artist!

## **5. You will work collaboratively with Melbourne Fringe.**

This means: Melbourne Fringe is a key stakeholder in your event, unlike a 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:

- dramaturgical advice to help you position the work for a Melbourne Fringe audience;
- advice or feedback for your budget, to help you work towards financial success; or
- inclusion in marketing or publicity opportunities; or
- suggesting the scale of your project might require you to allocate funds towards a producer, production manager or designer 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.

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.

#### **6. As part of your funding you will be asked to present one additional performance of the show.**

The commissions we're able to provide through the Fringe Fund—including the ETU Commission—are the result of a deliberate and dedicated stakeholder engagement program with private donors, funders, government and sponsors. As part of your funding, we will ask you to present a stakeholder engagement performance of the commissioned event on **Tuesday 30 September**. This will be an invite-only event to celebrate the opening of the 2025 Melbourne Fringe Festival, and will be a special occurrence in the ETU Ballroom the night before the Festival Hub officially opens. You will not receive any ticket income for this performance, but it will not compromise your potential earnings (you will still have 15 nights of shows to sell, just like any other Hub artist). You will present this performance as part of your deliverables for the commission fee and to support us to continue raising money for future Fringe Fund recipients; but you will also get direct benefits through having key donors, funders, government, media, and industry representatives attend your work.

## **APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS**

The 2025 ETU Commission is a two-stage application process. This first stage is open until Sunday 30 March 2025 and is a very easy process. We will ask you questions about your past work, and your

idea for a commission. We will also ask about your demographic, reach and marketing. There are 8 required questions and 2 optional questions.

Up to three applicants will then proceed to the second round. In this round we will ask for a more detailed budget and marketing plan and schedule a quick chat between one of our team and the lead artist/s to discuss the idea and any questions we might have.

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

## **Video or Audio Applications**

We expect most applications to be submitted in writing using the EOI form. However, we are also accepting applications submitted as a video or audio file. 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.

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 per question. If you submit multiple files please ensure each file is clearly named. The Dropbox link to submit your file(s) is in the EOI form linked above.

## **Applications in Other Formats**

If the Airtable form is not accessible for you, or if there is another way you would prefer to submit an application, please get in touch to let us know. You can call our office or email Milly Cooper at [milly@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:milly@melbournefringe.com.au). 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 30th March, 2025.

## **Questions you will be asked**

Whether you are providing written answers on the EOI form or submitted them by video or audio response, you will need to provide us with answers to the following questions:

1. **How would you describe your show?** - *Please provide a plain, practical description of the work, we're not looking for your marketing copy here (eg. tell us about the format, style, amount of collaborators, major topics and themes)*
2. **Who are the cast, crew, and creative collaborators?** - *The people involved in the work and their roles - please indicate whether these people are confirmed or proposed*

3. **What is your previous experience?** - We want to know about your past work, your skills, and/or professional experience. By “you” we mean you personally, as well as any other people that you consider as a “lead artist” on this work. 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: do you feel at the beginning of your career, or well established in your practice?
4. **How would you describe this show's projected reach and demographic?** - Who makes up your existing audience base? Who does this particular show appeal to? We want to hear about how you understand this work to be positioned in the overall arts market, and how broad of an audience you plan to reach.
5. **How do you plan to market this show?** - Please describe the marketing and advertising strategies / activities you plan to undertake to sell tickets. A full marketing plan will be required by applicants who are selected to proceed to stage 2, if you would like to fill out this plan now you can find a form [HERE](#)
6. **What forms of accessibility are you planning to provide?** - How have you thought about accessibility for disabled audience members so far? Do you plan to engage any services such as Auslan interpretation, Captioning, Audio Description, Tactile Tours, Sensory Friendly performances or other approaches?
7. **Please provide a top-level budget** - Here we're asking for an overview of your budgetary categories. This should be a project budget that includes development and delivery, not just how you'd spend the \$20k. It should demonstrate that you have thought about the practical nature of your idea.
8. **Please provide a draft timeline for the development of your project, if you are successful in receiving the funding** - E.g. 2 weeks of creative development with full cast (3-14 April). 4 weeks of full time rehearsal with full cast (1-26 May). etc.
9. **Anything else you want to tell us? (This question is optional)** - This is a chance to mention anything you think is important that these questions haven't asked you.
10. **Do you have any access requirements for us to be aware of at this stage? (This question is optional)**

Each answer will be limited to 250 words if written (two minutes if video or audio), except for Question #10 which has no word limit. The best answers will be honest and engage with the heart of your work; the less good answers will be drafted by ChatGPT and will be well-written but quite generic in content and lacking in your personality!

We will also ask some optional basic demographic data about how you identify, your answers to this question helps us better understand who is engaging with Melbourne Fringe. These answers are not made public and will not be shared outside the selection team. Please only answer this question if you feel comfortable to do so.

## **Selection Criteria**

In selecting the successful project(s) we will consider the following criteria:

- **Concept:** does your project put forward exciting ideas and creative thinking? Is it an interesting idea that we would want to program at the Festival Hub? Is it a marketable idea that has strong appeal to the general public?
- **Viability:** do you have the skills and the team to present what you want to achieve? Will you be able to deliver a high-quality outcome for your project? Do you have a good understanding of the level of marketing activity required to sell 150-200 seats per night?

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Has the ETU Commission been run before?**

In 2023 and 2024 we ran what we called the “200 Seats Grant” which was similarly focused around activating the ETU Ballroom, but distinctly different in that the funds were for marketing and publicity specifically, and hence had a different set of criteria. The works presented under that past model were:

- *YUMMY: Joy Machine (2023)*
- *Le Freak! (2023)*
- *GRRRL Power (2024)*
- *Finucane & Smith: Global Smash Club (2024)*

This year we’ve changed it up with the intention of allowing producers more flexibility to allocate funds as they see fit, and hopefully get some different big bold ideas!

### **Who owns the work?**

The artist owns the work. Melbourne Fringe just has the right to premiere the work as part of the 2025 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.

### **Can I apply to tour or remount an existing work?**

Unfortunately not, as the funds for this stream are committed to commissioning new works – however, we’re definitely open to ideas on how you might redevelop an existing work in a new or exciting way.

As long as, hand on heart, you can say this is the premiere first season, 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!

**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, 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 want to discuss other ways to submit your application or have questions about this info pack, please contact us. Send your email to Olly Lawrence at [olly@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:olly@melbournefringe.com.au). Alternatively, you may phone our office: Melbourne Fringe on (03) 9660 9600 and ask to speak to Olly.

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

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 or Tuesday and ask for Carly.

## SUBMISSION DUE DATE

Stage 1 applications close at 11.59pm on **Sunday, 30th March, 2025.**

And just so you don't need to go looking for it, here is the link to the application form again:

<https://airtable.com/app4kI2dwKr2Wg8zg/pagVS0ka1uhbl3Pxb/form>

*The ETU Commission is a part of the Fringe Fund, proudly supported by:*



*Melbourne Fringe respectfully acknowledges the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Eastern Kulin nation. We recognise that our interactive venues, performance spaces, theatres and offices are firmly enrooted into the soil of Australia's First Nations peoples, and with that we pay our respect to the custodians of this city; the Elders, past, present and future.*