



Deadly Fringe x Fed Square Public Art Commission 2026

Presented by Melbourne Fringe & Fed Square

Information Pack

About Melbourne Fringe

Melbourne Fringe democratises the arts. We believe access to the arts and creative expression are fundamental rights of our citizenship and vital to a healthy, inclusive, creative society.

We support the development and presentation of artworks by, with and for the people of Victoria, running the annual Melbourne Fringe Festival and our year-round venue Fringe Common Rooms at Trades Hall.

The Deadly Fringe program invites First Nations artists to create, develop and showcase new work in the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Festival. Debuting in 2017, Deadly Fringe is an annual performance and development program for First Nations artists and creatives to explore and showcase their stories, knowledge, and culture. Sitting within the Melbourne Fringe Festival, Deadly Fringe aims to unearth and develop artworks from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, enabling the creation of works that channel strength and connection to culture and history, shifting the creative landscape of Australia's identity.

With eight successful years of operation, Deadly Fringe is an artist development program that continues to expand and support innovative new works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. Artists who are part of Deadly Fringe receive financial support, as well as broader production and artistic support where needed. Also available are industry mentorship opportunities, community engagement initiatives, and dedicated assistance from the Deadly Fringe Program Coordinator.

About Fed Square

For thousands of years, the land around Birrarung (the Yarra River) has been Melbourne's meeting place – an area of cultural significance for First Peoples and a place of creative expression. Today the site is home to the Melbourne Arts Precinct; a vibrant creative community and the artistic heart of our city.

Fed Square is the gateway to the art precinct – and as Melbourne's public square it is the civic, cultural and community heart of the city. It is also home to three of Victoria's major cultural institutions: ACMI – Australian Centre for the Moving Image, the Koorie Heritage Trust (KHT) and The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia. Located opposite the iconic Flinders St Station, Fed Square is also Melbourne's premier meeting place, tourist destination and event venue for thousands of events a year – since opening in 2002, it has seen more than 110 million visits.

In 2019, Fed Square was listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, the youngest building in Australia to ever be recognised in this way.

At Fed Square, our programming is centred around community, gathering and storytelling in the public sphere, across a diverse range of public art commissions, festivals, concerts, and events. As a central part of this artistic program, we commission First Nations artists, storytellers and creatives to create artworks and events that share their cultural expression, knowledge and artistic excellence. Public artworks currently on display include *wurrung dhumbunganjinu* by Brooke Wandin (Wurundjeri), a sound and video installation featuring a family recording woiwurrung speaking to the river; *now you see me: seeing the invisible #2* by Maree Clarke (Mutti Mutti, Wamba Wamba, Yorta Yorta and Boonwurrung), a video artwork

exploring the microscopic structures of river reeds; and *ngaka – look here* by Tarryn Love (Gunditjmara Keerray Woorroong), an installation of Kooyong the eel as he travels through the cosmos.

Fed Square is run by the Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation (MAP Co), the organisation responsible for bringing to life an expanded, single continuous arts, civic and cultural precinct. MAP Co also oversees the delivery of the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation Project. More information is available here: <https://artsprecinct.melbourne/>

About this commission

We are looking for bold and ambitious ideas in any artform that respond to Fed Square as a site, that will have a huge impact on audiences, and that will draw the public in as key participants in the artwork itself.

A panel will then select one amazing idea to receive **\$150,000** to develop and deliver their work, which will be centred at the heart of the 2026 Melbourne Fringe Curated Program at Fed Square.

Given the ambitious scale and nature of the commission, this opportunity is aimed primarily at established First Nations artists with experience in creating works of scale, or who have enough experience to demonstrate the capacity and readiness to create an exciting and complex public artwork of scale that engages the people of Melbourne. The selected work must be creatively led by First Nations artists and/or community and must be operating within [best practice protocols](#) for First Nations cultural and intellectual property in the arts.

Why?

Fed Square and Melbourne Fringe have a strong history of working together to make interactive works in public spaces. As the 'town square' for Melbourne, Fed Square is a hub for cultural, civic and community activity, and provides an opportunity to present work in a free, widely accessible space in the centre of the city. Fed Square and Fringe Festival have partnered together to produce participatory artworks that bring audiences in and showcase a diverse breadth of art forms, through our shared interest in the importance of the arts and creative expression to public space and civic life.

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

How to apply

Despite the scale of the commission, we have kept the application process as streamlined as possible, with just three steps outlined below.



Stage 1: Expressions of Interest

Expressions of interest are open to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artists nationwide! However, given the ambitious context and size of this commission, we expect it to be awarded to an established artist with strong connections in Victoria, and with the experience necessary to create works of scale.

While we have tried to keep the EOI form as easy as possible with minimal requirements, this is your opportunity to tell us as much as you can about the work. Whether it's the seed of an idea right now or

you've been holding onto something for a while, waiting for a big cash injection to make it a reality, we want to hear from you. The more context and detail you're able to provide will help us identify how it fits the brief of a participatory public work of scale.

We will be considering the following criteria in selecting ideas to progress to the second round:

1. **Site:** Does the project respond to the past, present or future of Fed Square as a site of public space?
2. **Impact:** Does the project take bold creative risks that leave an impression on audiences and ensures high visibility for the people of Melbourne?
3. **Interaction:** Does the public interact with or participate in the artwork in interesting or compelling ways?

And we're more than happy for you to vibe check an idea or two with us before submitting an EOI – we recommend a conversation with Deadly Fringe Coordinator Peta Duncan. [Email Peta](#) to organise a time for a yarn with us.

Then: when you're ready, you can preview the form or go right ahead and submit an EOI [HERE](#). Expressions of Interest will remain open until **11.59pm on Sunday 20 July**.

Stage 2: Second Round Application

Following the EOI, a small selection of applicants will be invited to meet with the selection panel to further discuss their concept. At this stage we will consider a fourth selection criterion:

4. **Viability:** Can you and your team deliver your idea in full within the \$150k budget?

You will have two weeks to provide some more detailed information about your idea (we'll guide you in what we'd like here), then a meeting with the panel of representatives from Fed Square and Melbourne Fringe on Tue 12 August. Two ideas will then be selected to proceed to the final application stage.

Stage 3: Funded Scoping of Project

A maximum of two applicants will be invited to complete a detailed scoping phase of the project over the next five weeks in order to present a full project proposal to the panel. We will provide guidance on what's needed, production support to assist you in this process, and \$5,000 to cover the fees for you and your team as well as certain costs, such as engineering assessments. The final project pitches and commission selection process will occur on Tue 16 September.

Need more information?

Make sure to check out our FAQ Document [by clicking here](#)

Melbourne Fringe and Fed Square believe in access and inclusion. If any part of this EOI process is not accessible to you or if you have feedback on how we can better meet your access needs, please email milly@melbournefringe.com.au or call 03 9660 9600.

Deadly Fringe is proudly supported by the Sue Beeton Fund, Craig Semple and our partners:



Australian Government
Indigenous Languages and Arts

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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.