

Media Release

The Hon Colin Brooks MP

Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing
Minister for Creative Industries



Thursday, 19 February 2026

SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF COMEDIC TALENT

The Allan Labor Government is backing local comedians to showcase their talent at the 2026 Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks today announced the three comedians who have received support through the 2026 *Stand Up!* Grants program to develop and present their work at this year's Comedy Festival.

The program provides \$5,000 to three Victorian women and non-binary comedians to support the delivery of their 2026 Comedy Festival shows and propel their professional careers forward. This year's recipients are Alex Hines, Mish Wittrup and Tarsh Jago.

Award-winning comedian, actor and creative Alex Hines will bring her absurdist theatre show *BIRDS*, created with collaborator Sarah Stafford, to the Malthouse Theatre.

Mish Wittrup, known for her work with *Aunty Donna* and on shows like *Fisk*, invites her audience to take a walk down memory lane at her show *Not As Good As I Remember*.

Tarsh Jago, a proud Palawa woman, will present her first solo stand-up show, *Cherub*, bringing her razor-sharp comedy and heartfelt storytelling to Melbourne Town Hall.

Stand Up! was established by the Labor Government in 2019, in partnership with the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. It honours the life of the late Eurydice Dixon, a Victorian woman whose promising career in comedy was cut tragically short.

The Melbourne International Comedy Festival is the biggest dedicated comedy festival in the world. It creates hundreds of jobs and generates \$43.2 million in economic impact for the state. This year's festival will feature 2,000 performers in more than 750 shows, with an expected 800,000 attendees.

The Melbourne International Comedy Festival runs from 25 March – 19 April 2026. To book your tickets to *Stand Up!* supported shows and to view the full 2026 program visit comedyfestival.com.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks

"The Melbourne International Comedy Festival is a huge launching pad for emerging talent and these grants will support Alex, Mish and Tarsh to make the most of this opportunity while bringing plenty of laughs to festival goers."

"We're proud to honour the legacy of Eurydice Dixon and help these talented comedians overcome some of the barriers that still face women and non-binary performers working in comedy."

Quote attributable to Melbourne International Comedy Festival Director Susan Provan AO

"Alex, Mish and Tarsh represent the breadth of style, originality and huge talent defining the current Victorian comedy scene. Weird, wonderful and hilarious, they'll all be grabbing our attention for years to come."