



Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2026

Take us somewhere new.
Let your idea lead the way.

APPLICATION PACK

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William Bartolo and Daniel Evans in rehearsal
The Almighty Sometimes by Kendall Feaver
 Photo – Cinnamon Smith

From Dan

We believe in transporting audiences to transform audiences.

As part of the Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2026 we're calling on You to Take Us Somewhere; somewhere into our ancient past, somewhere that defies imagination, somewhere there's a reckoning, somewhere that gives us dazzling hope, somewhere we've never been before. Take us somewhere unexpected – emotionally, intellectually, theatrically ... you know the way.

In its 13th incarnation, in partnership with the Queensland Government and Griffith University, Australia's most preeminent theatre award returns looking for the next landmark piece of Australian Theatre.

We want to award a Playwright, a Theatremaker, a Collective or a Company the opportunity to create – with us – a piece of theatre that is as audacious, enticing, and as expansive as our State.

This year we are not about a completed script but rather a compelling idea. You don't need to know all the answers but you will need the spark, the hook. To this end, we encourage you to think about Audience – what might captivate or cajole them, enrapture or delight them?

The Story you tell might be large-scale or finely-wrought, side-splitting or heartbreaking... we know that Great Art arrives in different shapes, sizes and stages. We're open to all. You've got this.

Let's begin.

Daniel Evans
 Artistic Director

The Award

Since 2002, Queensland Theatre in partnership with the Queensland Government has recognised outstanding playwrights. Now, the Queensland Premier's Drama Award (QPDA) one of Australia's most prestigious awards enters a bold new chapter — more ambitious than ever.

For the 2026 Award, we're doing things differently. Queensland Theatre is ideas-led: we are interested in developing The Right Idea at The Right Time. We want to work with you (an individual artist, or an independent company or collective) to create bold and brilliant theatre from the kernel-out. Part of the Award's development process, therefore, will include a number of deep-dive developments held throughout the state across 2026. We're here to support, to collaborate, to work with you to tell the story.

This is the only national playwriting award to guarantee a mainstage production by a major performing arts company — Queensland Theatre - to writers, collectives, and independent companies from across the country. The award includes a \$30,000 cash prize (contributed to by Griffith University) as well as a full commission fee, box office royalties, and an extensive dramaturgical development program throughout 2026.

More than an award; the QPDA is a launchpad for extraordinary voices, a celebration of bold storytelling, and a powerful testament to the importance of Australian stories on our stage.

The Winner receives:

- \$30,000 prize money.
- Full commission fee to develop the play.
- The world premiere production in Queensland Theatre's 2027 Season. This also means the playwright or collective receive box office royalties, in addition to their prize money and commission fees.

This time,
let's do things
a little differently.

Daniel R. Nixon in *Drizzle Boy* by Ryan Ennis
QPDA Winner 2023
Photo - Brett Boardman

The Entry

1. Submissions:

Send us your idea in a pitch deck OR a concept document of no more than 6 pages. The layout can take any form but should include, at minimum:

- **A proposed title and logline**
A brief (1-2 sentence) description of the story or central idea of your work e.g. "In a city divided by rival dynasties, two lovers from opposing families risk all for forbidden love, unleashing tragic events."
- **An outline of your idea**
Describe the central conceit; what inspired the idea; a brief outline of the proposed story; the relevance of the idea: what makes this an important story for the stage right now? This should be a new idea that does not have a completed draft.
- **The proposed form or style of the work (comedy, drama, farce, adaptation etc.) and any relevant character or cast information (e.g. 3F, 2M).**
- **Include 20 pages of your best work - any work - that demonstrates your finest craft.**
- **Optional: You can also include any images, quotes or touchstones that help demonstrate your idea.**
- **You can submit only ONE application per person/collective. All applications must be submitted online [here](#).**

2. Longlisting:

Submissions are initially assessed by key Queensland Theatre artistic staff and two external theatre professionals who will longlist no more than 50 submissions based on the entry assessment criteria (See criteria overleaf).

3. Shortlisting:

Five theatre professionals from across Queensland, with extensive experience in their craft, will use the same entry assessment criteria to determine a shortlist of ten submissions for the assessment panel.

4. Shortlist Interviews:

Up to ten applicants will be invited to interview (online or in person) with an assessment panel to provide further details of their idea. Prior to their interview, shortlisted finalists will be sent the interview questions. This process is designed to help the assessors review proof of the creative concept, how well the submission meets the criteria of the QPDA, and craft - the capacity of the artist/creative team to deliver the proposed project.

This panel will select THREE finalists.

5. Finalists:

Finalists will have the opportunity to develop their idea into a full length script in 2026, through a rigorous dramaturgical development program, including a week long regional writing residency and development workshops.

6. Finalist Play Reading:

All three finalists will have their developed work presented in a public play reading in June 2026 at the Bille Brown Theatre before a panel of judges, including Queensland Theatre's Artistic Director. Judges will assess the winner based on the finalist criteria (see overleaf).

7. Winner Announced:

The judges will select a winner. The winning writer or collective will be announced at the launch of Queensland Theatre's 2027 Season.



Marty Alix in *Malacañang Made Us* by Jordan Shea
QPDA Winner 2024
Photo - Sam Scoufos

The Criteria

Entries Will Be Assessed On:

Entry Assessment Criteria:

- Strength of the idea: is it imaginative and ambitious, bold, clear, and exciting?
- Theatricality: is this a work that must be performed for a live audience in real space and time? Does it indicate strong theatrical elements?
- Relevance: a highly relevant idea that demonstrates clear capacity to be engaging for audiences. This is something audiences would want/need to see.
- Craft: does the artist/creative team demonstrate capacity and/or experience to deliver the project and work collaboratively?

Finalist Criteria:

- Idea: originality - the work offers a fresh perspective or unique voice and avoids clichés and predictability; the story has impact.
- Form and Structure: the work is theatrical, well structured, maintains tension/interest, and either conforms well to a genre or breaks new ground.
- Character and dialogue: engaging characters/roles that are interesting/challenging/exciting for actors to play; avoids exposition and demonstrates strong subtext/thematic impact.
- Themes: thematically interesting, relevant and clear without being didactic.
- Audience engagement: captured and maintained audience interest, evoked emotional and/or intellectual response, transported audiences in some way.

All assessment and judging processes will include culturally diverse artists. Where a submission requires specific cultural consultation not already represented, an appropriate cultural consultant will be found.

The Time Frame:

Submissions Open	14 August 2025
Submissions Close	1 October 2025
Shortlist Notified	31 October 2025
Shortlist Announced	3 November 2025
Finalists Notified	December 2025
Finalists Announced	January 2026
Regional Residency 1	February 2026
Regional Residency 2	May 2026
Finalist Play Reading	June 2026



Steve Pirie in *Return To The Dirt* by Steve Pirie
QPDA Winner 2020
Photo – Brett Boardman



Amy Ingram, Lucy-Ann Langkilde, Anthony Standish in *Trollop* by Maxine Mellor
QPDA Winner 2012
Photo – Stephanie De Rozario

Frequently Asked Questions

Q) I don't live in Queensland, can I still enter?

A) Yes. The award is open to all Australian citizens and permanent resident artists or collectives. Entrants who progress to the finalist stage, whose usual place of residence is further than 100km from Brisbane, will have their domestic travel and accommodation expenses covered by Queensland Theatre. No international travel will be provided. It is expected that finalists will be present in Queensland for the creative development phases.

Q) My idea has First Nations themes, characters and content but I am not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, can I enter the award with this idea?

A) Yes, however, your idea must adhere to Creative Australia's protocols regarding Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).*

**Source: Creative Australia*

Q) Does the idea have to be set in Queensland, or have characters who are Queenslanders?

A) No. We are looking for great ideas that could be set anywhere, anytime. It might be a small bruising two-hander, a striking re-imagining of a Classic, a monumental State-Of-The-Nation narrative, or a wild idea performed in the wild.

Queensland is more than a place, it's a state of mind - help us transport Queensland audiences to another place; imaginatively, emotionally, spatially.

Q) My idea is for a musical/play with music, is it eligible for this award?

A) Yes. But please do not supply music or song samples. Links to previous works can be submitted as evidence of craft.

Q) I'm part of a theatre collective that creates work in a devised process, can I still enter?

A) Yes. The Award is open to all Australian theatre collectives however the finalists' work must matriculate into a performance draft or text that can be presented to the Judges.

Q) The idea I wish to enter has been, or is currently, part of a grant application for development – can I still enter the award?

A) Yes, however, the idea must not have a completed rehearsal-ready script draft or be attached to a performance outcome by another company or organisation that has claim over the first production.

Q) My play has had a professional public reading, but not a complete professional production, is it still eligible for this award?

A) No. We are looking for ideas, not existing extant works.

Q) Do I need to submit my pitch deck/concept document in a particular layout?

A) No, however, you must provide the details requested on **Page 04 under 1. Submissions**. The layout of this pitch deck or concept document is completely at your discretion although we underline that the emphasis is on the idea. Be certain that all of the contents of your deck/document feeds into this idea; everything should bolster the premise.

Q) I'm submitting as part of a collective, how does this impact the prize, commission fee and box office royalty?

A) The total prize, including commission and royalties, remains the same whether you submit as an individual or collective. For collectives, the total prize pool will be shared.

Conditions of Entry

1. The Award is open to all Australian citizens and permanent residents who have an idea for a new play that has never been professionally produced. Playwrights of all ages, emerging or established, are encouraged to enter.
2. Entries are restricted to no more than ONE pitch per individual/collective and only one sample of writing.
3. Submissions with First Nations themes, content, and characters, which do not meet Creative Australia protocols regarding Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property are not eligible for entry.
4. Eligible submissions will not previously have had a professional public performance or existing draft.
5. Pitches cannot be under commission by, or otherwise have any contractual obligations with, any other theatre company.
6. Ideas currently or previously commissioned by Queensland Theatre are not eligible for entry.
7. Permanent full-time or part-time employees of Queensland Theatre are not eligible to enter.
8. Submissions must be original ideas or, if adaptations, have written consent of the originating author/s to use the text for adaptation. Rights to other copyrighted materials featured in the submission should also be sought by the applicant. Queensland Theatre will not be liable for any third-party licensing arrangements but will expect to see written evidence of the rights being granted by the rights-holder to the playwright.
9. All submissions should be submitted either in English, or the applicant should provide Queensland Theatre with an English translation if the work is in a language other than English.
10. The judges' decision is final, and no correspondence or discussion will be entered into.
11. Shortlisted and finalist applicants will agree to participate in promotional campaigns arranged by Queensland Theatre and/or the Queensland Government through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
12. Queensland Theatre shall have the first option to produce, or further develop, the work of the two finalists not selected as the winner.
13. The winning applicant/s assign/s to Queensland Theatre the option to produce their work. However, Queensland Theatre does not commit to programming or producing the work if its presentation is likely to damage the profile and reputation of the award, Queensland Theatre, and/or the Queensland Government.
14. Breach of the conditions of entry will render an application invalid whether prospectively or retrospectively.

All details are correct at time of publication and are subject to change.



Applications Close
1 October

Hsiao-Ling Tang and Kirsty Best in *Rice* by Michele Lee
QPDA Winner 2016
Photo - Brett Boardman



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