# City of Port Phillip EOI – Louisa Briggs Sculpture Commission

## The project

### Looking Through & Looking Beyond: Celebrating the legacy of Louisa

With funding from the Victorian Women's Public Art (VWPA) program, City of Port Phillip is seeking to commission an artist/artist team to create a permanent public sculpture that captures Louisa Briggs rich cultural and historical identity. The sculpture will stand as a prominent, iconic piece that invites visitors to explore the precinct and serves as a landmark.

In partnership with the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council, led by N'arwee’t Carolyn Briggs, a direct descendant of Louisa Briggs, the project will celebrate her significant contributions to the Indigenous community and their history. The sculpture will serve as a powerful symbol of resilience, cultural heritage, and the ongoing fight for social justice, promoting gender equality and raising the profile of women in public spaces.

## About Louisa Briggs

Louisa Briggs was born in 1836, on the country of the Yallukit Willam people of the Boonwurrung. As a young girl, she was abducted by sealers from Port Phillip Bay. Together with her female relatives, she was held captive on the remote islands to the north-east of Tasmania. After surviving years of forced labour as a seal hunter, she returned to her country with her husband, John Briggs. The couple, with their ten children, worked on stations in Victoria’s central highland goldfields before settling at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station.

On Coranderrk, Louisa reunited with other families from the Kulin Nation. She acted as nurse and midwife and in 1876, she was appointed matron. Louisa was the first Aboriginal to replace a European on salaried staff. By ability, position and hereditary right, she actively fought for the rights of her family and kin. Louisa’s spirit of independence gave her the strength to resist the inhumane treatment of the colonial authorities and was repeatedly punished for her activism.

In 1886, under the ‘half-caste’ Legislation Act, Louisa Briggs and her family were exiled from Coranderrk and sought refuge at Maloga & Cummeragunga Aboriginal Reserve on the NSW side of the Murray River.

Louisa died at Cummeragunga Aboriginal Reserve on September 6th, 1925.

Louisa’s spirit survives through the oral history and songs passed down through to her great grandchildren. Her strength of character, pride and the spirit of activism is still evident in the work of her many descendants.

*Written by N’arwee’t Professor Carolyn Briggs AM (Great Granddaughter)*

## Artist brief

The artwork intends to commemorate and celebrate Louisa Briggs, a prominent figure in Victorian Aboriginal history, known for her tireless advocacy for the rights of her people and her contributions to the social and cultural fabric of Victoria. Louisa Briggs was a matriarch, nurse, midwife, and activist, whose life was marked by resilience, leadership, and a profound commitment to the welfare of her community.

Louisa Briggs' life is a testament to the strength and perseverance of Indigenous women. Her journey from a childhood on Tasmania's Preservation Island to a key figure at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station reflects the challenges and triumphs faced by many Aboriginal people during the colonial era. At Coranderrk, she played a pivotal role as a nurse and dormitory matron, advocating for better conditions and equal treatment for the residents. Her activism was instrumental in improving rations and wages at Aboriginal reserves, despite facing personal hardships and systemic discrimination.

The sculpture will symbolise Louisa Briggs's enduring legacy as a protector of her people's rights and a guardian of cultural traditions. It will highlight her significant contributions to the fight against the injustices faced by Aboriginal communities, particularly women and children. The artwork will be designed to reflect the strength, compassion, and wisdom that defined Louisa Briggs's life, serving as both a memorial and a source of inspiration for future generations.

This commemorative sculpture will not only celebrate Louisa Briggs as an individual but also honour the broader contributions of Aboriginal women to Victoria's history. It will provide a permanent and visible acknowledgment of their role in shaping the state's social and cultural landscape, challenging the historical underrepresentation of women, especially Indigenous women, in public art. Through this project, the City of Port Phillip and the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council will aim to foster greater recognition and appreciation of the diverse histories that constitute the heritage of Victoria.

### Cultural Compliance and Sensitivity

Under the guidance of N'Arwee’t Carolyn Briggs, the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council will ensure that the artwork complies with cultural protocols and accurately reflects the heritage and values of the First Peoples community. The Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council will provide essential advice on the appropriate symbols, narratives, and materials to be used in the artwork, ensuring that the project adheres to cultural protocols and sensitivities.

The selected artist/artist team may also be required to attend consultations with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation in the development of the artwork.

#### Themes that may be considered could include:

* Acknowledge first peoples of the area with symbols, language or stories.
* Reflect connection to land and water, incorporating important local flora and fauna.
* Artists may wish to explore the use of materials in relation to the site and cultural history, pertaining to the requirements for permanent public artwork.

#### The following things must also be considered when applying:

* The artwork/installation will require little to no maintenance, however it would be integrated into the Port Phillip City Collection as a Council asset and maintained accordingly.
* The proposed concept must be original and must not contain business logos, advertising material, or imagery that is offensive; nor is it to be seen to promote anti-social behaviour or political bias.
* No access to power is possible for this installation.

#### Locations

The sculpture will be installed on the St Kilda/Elwood foreshore. The exact location will be confirmed in Stage 2. Artists/artist teams can expect coastal conditions in relation to artwork materiality.

### Project delivery

All elements of the sculpture must adhere to the following specifications:

* Be heavy enough to not be movable by two adults
* Be easy to clean
* Respond to the public realm context in form and colour
* Be durable enough to remain in place permanently.
* Must be able to withstand Melbourne’s unpredictable weather such as wind, temperature changes, heat, hail, salt corrosion.
* Be resistant to vandalism including fire
* Meet all necessary Australian Standards for safety and accessibility
* Ensure no obstructions or impediments to pedestrian, bicycle or vehicle traffic

Work on the site location will need to be completed during business hours. It is the applicant’s duty to maintain a safe working environment and immediately report to City of Port Phillip any issues that may arise on site.

When working on the site, contractors must provide protection to the adjacent property, lights, trees, kerbs and paving if required. Any damage made must be fixed and reported to the Council immediately. A risk assessment and work safety statement must be supplied to Council.

#### The artist(s) will be responsible for:

* Design and fabrication of the artwork
* All costs associated with the artwork installation
* Attending meetings as required and working with Council to develop the artwork concept and installation schedule within Council’s timelines.
* Working with Council to ensure the artwork is appropriate for the site
* Delivery and installation of the artwork as mutually agreed with Council and relevant stakeholders
* Providing a maintenance schedule if required.
* Participation in media calls, interviews and publicity if requested
* Public Liability Insurance to cover $20,000,000 (insurance will be covered by Auspicious Arts)

#### Council will be responsible for:

* Maintenance of the work after 6 months.
* Project management.
* Permits where required.

#### Copyright

The artist will be asked to sign a Non-exclusive copyright agreement with the City of Port Phillip to cover usage of the artwork by the City in the following instances:

* Online use for Port Phillip City Collection online database.
* Possible future publication of the artwork in Council promotions, Port Phillip City Collection exhibition programs and publications.

#### Port Phillip City Collection (PPCC)

* The work will be acquired into the Port Phillip City Collection.
* The work will feature in the online collection database.
* The work will be cared for according to PPCC collection management processes.

### Project timelines

#### Stage 1

**5 May 2025** Expressions of interest due date

**May 2025** Artists will be notified of the outcome of their submission.\*

#### Stage 2

**May 2025** Shortlisted artists invited to develop their concept.

**June 2025** Shortlisted artists submit developed concept proposals, and interviews will be scheduled to present to N’arwee’t Carolyn Briggs.\*

**July 2025** Shortlisted artists notified of outcome, selected artist/artist team awarded contract.

#### Stage 3

**August 2025** Final concept confirmed, fabrication commences

**September 2025** Public announcement of artist, design and location

**December 2025** **to January 2026** Installation\*

**February 2026** Official launch of the artwork

\*Please note, timelines are subject to change.

### Budget

The maximum budget for the project is $185,000 (ex GST).
*This does not include the Stage 1 – concept development fees.*

This budget will need to cover all costs associated with the project and the awarded applicant’s scope of work, including, but not limited to:

* investigations
* meetings (This does not include consultation with the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council)
* reporting
* engineering
* equipment
* materials
* transport
* delivery fees
* maintenance of defects to the artwork/structure for up to 6 months
* risk assessment
* insurances
* design
* fabrication
* installation
* traffic management plan if required
* Auspice fees if required

Additional claims for disbursements will not be accepted. The artist/artist team should prepare, as part of their quotation submission, a project budget showing how the fee has been derived. The submission must also clearly articulate any assumptions and exclusions.

#### Contractual arrangements

Applicants must be an incorporated body/ company, or auspiced by a body, such as Auspicious Arts.

Payment of the fees will be as follows:

* Stage 2: Shortlisted artists will each receive a concept design fee of $3000 (+GST) to develop their proposal.
* Stage 3: Selected artist/ artist team - 50% Upon signing contract
* Stage 3: Selected artist/ artist team - 50% Upon installation

### Selection process

Assessment criteria will include:

* It is an original artwork/s designed and created by a professional artist/s. The artists CV will reflect the artist’s past commissions, education and practice.
* The artwork achieves standards of excellence and innovation.
* The artwork/s contributes to an attractive, stimulating and functional environment, and does not detract from the amenity or safety of the public realm.
* The public artwork is robust, and materials have been selected for durability. Artwork materials will not cause impediment or interference with surrounding property, business or traffic. Any inherent risk (i.e. light, reflectivity) is addressed in the proposal where relevant.
* Consent from the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council representatives will be noted as required where cultural material and traditional Arts images and icons or symbols are used or referenced. A
* An indicative budget is clearly articulated in the proposal.
* The artist has indicated that they can meet the required timelines for the project.

## How to submit and what to include

* Name of applicant or company, postal address, legal entity, Australian Business Number (ABN). Please note, applicant must be incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act or supported by an Incorporated Association that is deemed to be non-profit, as classified by the Australian Taxation Office (section 103A(2) (c) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936).
* Rough sketch, or description of intended work.
* Cost estimates, methodology and design response:
	+ This should include graphics, sketches, or a brief methodology in point form only to show consideration of the timeframe and developmental stages with a budget.
* Resume or portfolio:
* Evidence of previous project experience.
	+ Organisation description and details of each associated discipline and contractor required such as Fabricator, Landscape Architects, Structural Engineer, Lighting and Electrical Engineers.
	+ Examples of completed public domain installations (of a similar nature), concept statements and total project cost.
	+ Nomination of two referees.
* Certificate of Currency of required insurances.

Proposals are to be **submitted via email on or before 5 May 2025** to publicart@portphillip.vic.gov.au

For all enquiries, please contact the Art Activation Officer on 03 9209 6164 or 0482 127 030

## About the VWPA

The Victorian Women’s Public Art Program is funded by the Victorian Government’s Community Support Fund and run in partnership with McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery. McClelland supports contemporary artists to develop, create and present their work, and manages a range of programs to commission artwork.

The Victorian Women's Public Art Program aims to address the underrepresentation of women and their achievements through enduring public artworks. Women are systematically underrepresented in public life, with their achievements and contributions historically overlooked. This is why ‘[Our Equal State’,](https://www.vic.gov.au/our-equal-state-victorias-gender-equality-strategy-and-action-plan-2023-2027) the Victorian Government’s gender equality strategy, prioritises elevating women’s achievements and supporting women artists through the Victorian Women’s Public Art Program.

This project is designed to meet all objectives of the VWPA program by addressing the underrepresentation of women, particularly First Peoples women, in public spaces and promoting gender equality.

For more information, [visit the VWPA website](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-womens-public-art-program).