



# talent camp

2020

National

AFTRS



## What is Talent Camp?

Talent Camp is a skills development program for emerging screen creatives. The program spans two years and begins with a week-long intensive workshop in each state. We then select up to 15 state participants to take part in our National Camp through a second-round application process.

Through National Talent Camp, we further finesse the participants' storytelling and screen writing techniques and aim to provide them with mentoring, internships, placements and production opportunities, where possible.

Talent Camp is a multi-partner screen industry initiative made possible with the support of AFTRS, AWG & Scripted Ink, Screen Australia, Screen Queensland, Screen NSW, Film Victoria, Screen Tasmania, South Australian Film Corporation, ScreenWest, Screen Territory and Screen Canberra.

# Tomorrow's Storytellers



# Alysha Herrmann (SA)

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Daughter of regional Australia, writer, tea-drinker, big dreamer and thinker of confusing thoughts. #myriverland #letstalkyoutharts

## Biography

Alysha Herrmann is a proud parent, daughter of regional Australia, writer, theatre maker, creative producer and community organiser. She makes performances, installations, experiences, presentations, poetry, digital exchanges and small moments of connection in public places.

## Story

*SAFE HAVEN*: When her haunted hometown demands her IOU be paid, an uptight new foster-mother must confront a volatile ghost in order to save her new family from the deadly history of her first family.

## Project

At its heart, *Safe Haven* is about what it means to live in a small regional community when something goes dreadfully wrong and what it means to forgive ourselves. It's intended for an Australian audience of women in their 30s and 40s and I'm in the early stage of writing a pilot.



# Anna K. Miers (NT)

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Just trying to make the world a little better.

## Biography

Anna K. Miers is a documentary filmmaker and photographer focused on human and environmental rights. She recently developed a documentary series for children about bugs with funding from Screen Territory and has developed several other documentary projects to begin shooting in early 2021. This is her first foray into fiction. She's pretty pumped.

## Story

*UNTITLED*: Set amongst the hills of small town Australia, this anthology series takes us into the stories of six young people navigating their lives amidst the unique social issues that their identities force them to contend with.

## Project

Through my work, I realised that the image of small-town, rural Australia is often quite far from the reality of the vibrant diversity of people that actually live here. Based on lived events and the insights of real people, this series will provide a window into contemporary social issues by creating a realistic portrait of small town Australia and the people that live, work and struggle here. The series is in the research and development phase, and hopes to appeal to people who do not ordinarily see their narratives reflected in mainstream media.



# Charley Rico (TAS)

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Failure is true enlightenment; when you've got nothing to lose, the only thing standing in your way is you.

## Biography

After being made redundant for the second time in a career I never wanted in the first place, I took up surfing again. Cowabunga, dude! Life has never been better now that my office is the ocean.

## Story

*\$K8ER BANDIT\$*: Mid-30-something twin sisters are forced to move back to their dad's house after simultaneously 'failing' at life. Plus: pandemic! With nothing but an old skateboard and a busted BMX for transport, the twins begin to solve petty crimes around town – much to the chagrin of the local cops and a crime boss who's a lot closer to home than they think.

## Project

This story popped into my head one night and won't leave. It's intended for young and old adults who either don't want to grow up or don't know how. It is very much at the developing plot/characters stage, but tipping into episodes soon!



# Emily Dash (NSW)

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Disabled writer and actor whose work emphasises social justice.

## Biography

Emily is a scriptwriter, producer and project manager for Maitree House. Her most recent film, *Groundhog Night*, was due to premiere at Sydney Film Festival 2020. She also participated in the Screen Australia and SBS Digital Originals initiative. Other film writing and performance credits include *The Milky Pop Kid* (2017 - Highly Commended for Writing at Sydney Film Festival), *The Cards I'm Dealt* (2016) and *I Am Not A Work Of Art* (2016). Through her internship with Matchbox Pictures in 2017, she was credited as a consultant on ABC's *The Heights*.

## Story

*PEARLY GATES*: When the flamboyant Oscar Gates falls into a coma, his estranged group of friends must battle professional dilemmas and personal demons – as well as interference from the spirit world – to keep his cafe afloat.

## Project

My then-collaborator Jesse Blackadder and I envisioned an authentic and diverse dramedy about letting go and learning to live. More inspiration came when I was on a set catered by people with disability.

The intended audience is members of the Australian disabled, LGBTQIA+ or culturally diverse communities, ages 18–35. It will appeal to those who enjoy watching offbeat relationship dramas. I am writing the pilot episode and have an idea of series arc.



# Katrina Irawati Graham (QLD)

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“Resistance is the secret of joy.”

– TASHI, *ALICE WALKER'S POSSESSING THE SECRET OF JOY*

## Biography

Katrina is a writer and director, as well as an emerging playwright. She writes in many genres, but her true love is feminist horror. She celebrates her Indonesian-Australian heritage and champions gender equality and representations of diversity.

## Story

*MY MIDWIFE*: When Aisha, an earnest but disempowered midwife, writes a scathing open letter calling for the decolonization of birth, she is forced out of an under-resourced hospital system. She decides to open a business as an independent midwife, in spite of the fact that she is a single mother to a teenage boy, has no clients and knows nothing about how to run a business. Aisha must also negotiate the bureaucratic red tape in a system designed by white men – one of whom is her powerful ex-husband.

## Project

*MY MIDWIFE* is an aspirational 8 x 1hr drama series that weaves my passions for birth advocacy, diverse cultural representation and healing storytelling.

Primary audience: Women between 20–40 years old who resonate with the birth and woman-centric stories embedded in *One Born Every Minute*, *My Maori Midwife*, *Call the Midwife* and *Love Child*.

Producer, Ana Tiwary (IndiVisual Films) and I are seeking development partners.





# Kim Ho (VIC)

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Kim is a playwright who is branching out into screen. His work takes a subversive approach to genre and form.

## Biography

Kim is a Naarm-based writer and performer who is interested in exploring cross-cultural storytelling, magic realism and genre subversion. Kim's short film *The Language of Love* screened at over 30 film festivals worldwide, including Sundance. His play *Mirror's Edge* won the 2018 Patrick White Playwrights Award, and his newest work *Buried Kingdom* received a reading at London's 2019 Typhoon Festival and was shortlisted for the 2019 Queensland Premier's Drama Award. Kim is a passionate advocate for the representation of marginalised voices.

## Story

*MELBOURNE VICE*: When Brunswick University replaces its security staff with volunteer student detectives, mismatched loners Natasha and Simon must work together to bust crime on campus. The biggest mystery they'll have to solve is how to get along with each other.

## Project

*Melbourne Vice* is an 8x15-20 crime-comedy web series which imagines university students as detectives. It aims to merge crime and coming-of-age genres to dramatise young adults exploring right from wrong.

I have a clear outline for the series, but I need a producer and enough support to flesh out my characters, plot the episodes in a writers' room and get it to production.



# Lata Periakarpan (WA)

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Creative with an affinity for chai tea and rom-coms.

## Biography

Lata Periakarpan is a Malaysian-Australian screenwriter. Upon completing her Film and Writing degree in 2018, she moved to Canada for a year to work as a set designer and film production assistant. Since returning to Australia, Lata has worked in various Western Australian writers' rooms as a notetaker and creative contributor. Her writing revolves around young, strong and diverse protagonists who are often grounded in a coming-of-age or dramedy story.

## Story

*MAKING GOOD*: Five years after being embroiled in a town scandal, a young woman returns home when she learns her father is sick.

## Project

*Making Good* is a 6x15 minute drama-comedy web series that has evolved from my State Talent Camp project. It centres on a young adult as she revisits past trauma in her hometown, exploring how it has affected her relationship with her family and the townspeople, especially being from a POC family. Currently there is a series outline for this project.



# Marissa McDowell (ACT)

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I am a First Nations, Wiradjuri storyteller sharing culture and stories through multimedia platforms.

## Biography

I have produced 14 short documentaries for NITV/SBS. I have worked for ABC Canberra in radio and television. I was an Audio-Visual Assistant and Camera Switcher for GIO Canberra Stadium. I am a published poet, exhibited photographer and multimedia storyteller.

## Story

*INTO THE RED:* A ruthless young property developer, KIRRA, discovers her Aboriginal heritage; she must choose between sealing the deal of a lifetime or saving her people's country.

## Project

This story is about stolen land from Indigenous people by mining corporations and connection to country. The intended audience is women 30+. It's a coming home story about redemption, finding yourself and falling in love. Early script development pitched to Indigenous Screen Australia.



# Martine Delaney (TAS)

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The Sex-Change Soccer Star Cyber-Tranny Granny, having an amazing time after stumbling into the industry!

## Biography

Most recently, I've been an LGBTQI advocate, comedian, briefly dead, ghost tour guide, book in a Human Library and a federal election candidate – all while raising a child abandoned at our home twelve years ago.

Three years ago, frustrated by employers not wanting an outspoken transgender employee, I tried writing a feature film. Optioned, it's in slow development. This led to inclusion in Screen Australia's inaugural Develop the Developers initiative and subsequent work with Hobart's Roar Film on documentary, educational and drama projects.

## Story

*LEATHER AND LATEX PTY LTD*: Becoming dominatrices seemed an interesting way of getting out of debt – except latex is sweaty, clients die in awkward situations and crims probably won't like you.

## Project

The idea was born during Hobart's State Talent Camp, watching a *Good Girls* trailer. Later, my phone must've been listening to my conversation about an article on dominatrices – bang, my news feed featured a story on an accidental dominatrix! My brain asked: *what if?* And the project has been unfolding ever since.

It's currently a pitch document with an accompanying draft first episode. The show is aimed at a (primarily female) adult audience wanting drama with a funny side.



# Neilesh Verma (NSW)

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Rick Ross Starter Kit.

## Biography

Neilesh Verma is a Pakistani-Australian writer, director and former stand-up comedian. His award-winning short films and music videos have screened at both local and international film festivals and on television networks such as MTV (India), Triangle TV (New Zealand) and SBS (Australia). In the past, he has performed at both the Sydney Comedy and Sydney Fringe Festivals and has recently finished writing his first feature film – a horror-thriller entitled *Koan*.

## Story

*MACHANS*: An unflinching, darkly comic portrait of Sydney through the eyes of two brown guys: sheltered and whitewashed Rohan and his unsolicited cultural consultant, Ganesh.

## Project

Based on the real-life friendship between show creators Neilesh and Suren, *Machans* is *Atlanta* meets *Ramy*, with an Australian identity. Our goal is to carve a niche with an audience of first/second generation Australians who would otherwise seek overseas programming to see themselves reflected, whilst also presenting an authentic portrayal of Australian migrant life to mainstream audiences. As our protagonist escapes his middle-class bubble, his eyes (and the audience's) are opened to the struggles, joys, eccentricities and the seemingly foreign (yet ultimately relatable) realities of immigrant life.

At this stage, we have outlined a five-episode series and have written a pilot script.



# Nelya Valamanesh (SA)

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A jack of all trades, Nelya has done a lot and isn't stopping anytime soon.

## Biography

Nelya is an Adelaide-based narrative artist who has developed and produced works on a range of different platforms, including: radio programming, DJing, co-facilitating theatre workshops and freelancing in the film industry. She is currently in development on her new web series, which has received funding from the South Australian Film Corporation. Nelya is also workshopping a new idea for theatre with funding from the South Australian State Theatre.

Nelya's vision through all of her creative avenues is to speak her truth as a proud queer Persian/Australian woman and to be an ally to the many unspoken voices of colour in Australia's film and theatre industries.

## Story

*RULES TO BEING A FUCKGURL* is a 6 x 15-minute comedy/satire web series about the political and social struggles of being an independent woman in her late 20s.

## Project

This story came to be after my close friends and I discussed how sick we were of constantly being undermined when it came to our relationship status – along with the assumptions made about us as women of colour in the casual dating scene. I realised this wasn't just something I experienced and *Rules to being a Fuckgirl* was born.



# Ra Kyung Lee Chapman (VIC)

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Writer/actor/director marinating in the mess  
of being human.

## Biography

Ra is an alumnus of the Besen Writers Group (Malthouse Theatre) and was awarded the 2018 Hot Desk Fellowship (Wheeler Centre). Her play *K-BOX* will premiere on the MainStage at Malthouse in 2021, where she is currently an Artist in Residence. Ra was selected for StoryLab, a Cinespace/FilmVic program for diverse screenwriters and was the StoryLab 2.0 Program Coordinator.

## Story

*WHITE FEVER*: When Jane – an unsentimental 30-year-old Korean-Australian adoptee – is accused of being a ‘fake Asian’ and having ‘white fever’, she sets out on a mission determined to decolonise her love life, only to discover there may be more wrong with her than just her dating preferences.

## Project

Same-race vs interracial dating has been a hot topic of debate for centuries, and now fuelled by the current cultural climate, it has become more divisive and relevant than ever.

Tapping into universal themes of love, shame and the very human desire to find where you belong in the world, *WHITE FEVER* is a 6 x 10 min semi-autofiction comedy web series about a woman who is at war with herself and looking for belonging in all the wrong places.



# Rafeif Ismail (WA)

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“Once the imagination is unshackled,  
liberation is limitless.”

– ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN AND WALIDAH IMARISHA

## Biography

Rafeif Ismail is an award-winning emerging multilingual Western Australian writer. In her work, she explores the themes of home, belonging and 21st century Australian identity as a third culture youth of the Sudanese diaspora. Rafeif’s work has been published across Australia, and she is committed to creating diverse works and spaces.

## Story

*BRAVE AND STARTLING TRUTHS: We Survive.* Across countries and centuries, we continue to survive. To thrive.

Dana and Aziza try to build a life together. Maia and Haydur search for the reason they cannot seem to die. Sana navigates a strange world, while Amira takes on an unstoppable force. *BAST* follows these stories and more, exploring the interconnected lives of six young people across space and time.

## Project

*BAST* follows the adventures and misadventures of Afro-diasporic youths across space and time. This anthology was born from a passion for science and speculative fiction, and a desire to see more SSF with characters of colour on the screen. I have treatments for all of the Season One episodes.





# Rhianna Malezer (QLD)

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Weaving contemporary and diverse stories with humour, colour, hope and joy.

## Biography

Rhianna is a Butchulla/Kamilaroi woman who, after years of working within the art departments of the Australian and New Zealand film industries, began shifting gears into writing and directing in 2019. Driven to create narrative screen content that reflects her family and community, Rhianna combines humour and pathos while crafting engaging stories.

Rhianna is a writer on ABC's *Black Comedy*, Bunya Production's *Nice Shorts* and is currently engaged in writers' rooms for several productions.

## Story

*BITING DUST*: When her Nan suddenly passes and questions of the past are left unanswered, Tamika sets out on a quest to 'fill in the blanks' of her identity, uncovering deeply-buried family secrets – sometimes aided, but mostly hindered, by her colourful (and often hilarious) overactive imagination.

## Project

As an Indigenous woman from a stolen generation family, I am no stranger to complex family dynamics or gaping holes in family story, cultural identity and personal identity. *Biting Dust* explores these themes through a story that is both humorous and poignant. Appealing primarily to audiences ages 20–35, this series would suit platforms such as ABC or SBS. A draft pilot episode and series outline for this project currently exist.



# Suren Jayemanne (NSW)

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Industry darling adjacent.

## Biography

Suren Jayemanne is a Sri Lankan-Australian comedian and writer. Recognised as one of the best emerging comedians in the country, Suren has featured on *Comedy Up Late* (ABC) and written for *Tonightly* (ABC). In 2018, his debut TV hour special aired as part of the ABC's *Comedy Next Gen* series. His comedy, which explores race and class in contemporary Australia, has been praised as insightful, thought provoking and, most importantly, hilarious.

## Story

*MACHANS*: An unflinching, darkly comic portrait of Sydney through the eyes of two brown guys: sheltered and whitewashed Rohan and his unsolicited cultural consultant, Ganesh.

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At this stage, we have outlined a five-episode series and have written a pilot script.

# Facilitators, Tutors and Mentors

## AFTRS Facilitators

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**Gary  
Paramanathan**

Outreach Manager

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**Marissa  
Ciampi**

Outreach Coordinator

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A huge thank you to all of our National Talent Camp Tutors and Mentors:

## Tutors

Alli Parker  
Chris Corbett  
Mark O'Toole  
Melissa Lee Speyer  
Mithila Gupta  
Roanna Gonsalves  
Rosie Lourde

## Mentors

Blake Ayshford  
Brita McVeigh  
John Harvey  
Kali Reid  
Kodie Bedford  
Mark O'Toole  
Michelle Law  
Nicole Coventry  
Paddy Macrae  
Roanna Gonsalves  
Robyn Butler  
Sophie Miller  
Tim Ferguson Tony  
Ayres  
Vicki Madden

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