

What are the aims of the program?

The aim of the program is to foster supportive professional relationships in a manner that helps sustain quality journalism in Victoria through an era of rapid change.

Who can apply?

The mentoring program is open to working journalists in Victoria with up to seven years' experience. Journalists must be employed by a media organisation in Victoria or be actively freelancing in order to participate in the program.

The Melbourne Press Club is committed to fostering a more diverse and inclusive Victorian media industry. We encourage applications from journalists who identify as having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage as well as journalists from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

We encourage applications from early-career journalists working in regional Victoria.

What are the key dates?

Applications for the fifth round of the mentoring program are open from 23 July 2020 to COB 28 August 2020.

Successful applicants will be introduced to their mentors in late 2020 and the program will formally close in late 2021.

How do I apply?

Early career journalists can apply using the online form above. We encourage applicants to give as much detail in their responses as possible. This helps us match you with appropriate mentors.

Applications close COB 28 August 2020.

How does the program work?

The MPC mentoring program runs for approximately one year.

At the end of each application round, representatives from the club board and other senior industry professionals consider pairings and facilitate connections between applicants and senior journalists (with the help of the MPC secretariat). Our approach is to connect mentees and mentors *across* media organisations. This increases the likelihood that pairs will feel confident to engage in frank exchanges, as discussions will not be clouded by workplace politics. To facilitate this sense of trust, it is imperative that mentors and mentees respect the privacy of their partners.

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The secretariat will offer some guidelines for structuring the relationship at the start of the program and check in on pairs throughout the year, however it is the responsibility of mentors and mentees to manage their own trajectory through the life of the program.

Has COVID-19 affected the program?

In light of ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions, there is a strong likelihood that pairs will need to avoid face-to-face contact and maintain discussion digitally or by phone. The club will provide technical and other kinds of support for participants upon request.

What are the benefits of mentoring?

For **mentees**, the program offers an opportunity to form a connection with a senior industry professional who can provide support, guidance and insight gleaned from their time in journalism.

The program offers **mentors** an opportunity to give something back to the industry and to engage with early-career colleagues as they progress and develop in their careers. Mentors are frequently exposed to different and fresh ways of thinking about journalism practice and the industry at large.

Resolving issues and providing feedback

The Melbourne Press Club's role is to facilitate connections and oversee the program. In general, the club will not be directly involved in individual relationships. However the secretariat and representatives will liaise with mentors and mentees at particular points throughout the year to request feedback and ensure all parties are benefiting.

We strongly encourage both mentors and mentees to contact us at mentoring@melbournepressclub.com or 03 9614 2779 if any issues arise. All communications will be treated with confidentiality.

What does being a mentee involve?

It is the mentee's responsibility to set meetings and drive the relationship. Mentees need to be realistic about expectations on their mentor's time. Given this, it is best to openly discuss the terms of the relationship (frequency and nature of contact, goals) early in the piece.

Mentoring may unfold over coffee (COVID-19 restrictions permitting), or over the phone, by Zoom, Skype or email. The fundamental goal is to establish a partnership that allows you to share information in a confidential and supportive way.

The most successful mentoring pairs recognise there is a need to balance the everyday with the strategic (where you want to be in ten or twenty years). You might like to pull apart recent work with your mentor and discuss the skills that need developing to help you achieve your long-term goals. It is your responsibility to be honest about your blind spots in these conversations, but you are doing so in a supportive and trusting space.

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Importantly, there are limits to what you should expect from a mentor. They are not there to open career doors for you. Good mentors are on your side, but you can also expect some tough questioning! In discussing newsroom dynamics and professional dilemmas, it is not their role to agree with you, and a good mentor may call out your behaviour if they think it appropriate to do so.

Mentees ultimately need to be able to ask the “stupid” questions, to recognise what they don’t know and to work through their professional doubts and dilemmas with their partners.

What does being a mentor involve?

Your aim is to offer support, guidance and insight to an early career journalist. It is about bringing the skills of good journalism to the table – listening, asking hard questions and respecting confidences.

Many journalists have had generous colleagues help them through throughout their working lives, and one way to think about the qualities of a good mentor is to reflect on those individuals that have shaped your *own* career development.

Throughout the program, confidentiality is important. Trust is a requirement of a successful pairing, and the mentee will need to know your interest is sincere.

You will also need to consider the best way to guide your mentee. Sometimes the questions will be very practical. A mentee may want to discuss strategies for dealing with a press secretary who is causing them grief. Other issues may be more nuanced, such as managing rivalries amongst colleagues.

The most successful pairs, however, also know how to keep one eye on the horizon, talking through how their current work and skills development relate to longer-term career aspirations. In that sense, it is important to work towards a common understanding of your mentee’s goals early in the piece.

For mentors, the program is a chance to support and guide the journalists of tomorrow. It is also an opportunity to reflect on your own practices and advice in the context of a changing industry. Perhaps an approach you would once have employed to tackle a problem has become less appropriate over time. Reflecting on this provides an opportunity to open discussion about alternatives.

Oh, and mentoring is not about providing legal advice. Best leave that to legal counsel!