

1335th ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 1 October 2025 at 6:00pm

**Michael Crouch Room, Level 1, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW,
(enter from the Shakespeare Place entrance)**

The 1329th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Society of NSW will take place at **6:00 pm on Wednesday 1 October 2025** in the **Michael Crouch Room, Level 1, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW, Shakespeare Place, Sydney**, followed by an open lecture. Registration and refreshments will be from 5:30 pm.

AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
President, Em Prof Christina Slade FRSN.
- 2. MINUTES**
Minutes of the 1334th Ordinary General Meeting will be reviewed.
- 3. CONFIRMATION OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP**
The Council has not met since the last OGM, so there are no candidates to be announced for Members' consideration at this meeting.
- 4. PRESENTATION OF FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATES**
The President will present certificates to new Members and Fellows whose nominations were tabled at the previous OGM or who were unable to attend previously and have notified the Secretariat of their attendance.
- 5. REPORT FROM COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL**
The President will update membership on the key activities underway for 2025.
- 6. OPEN LECTURE**

"Have universities become too political?"

The Honourable Bill Shorten

Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Canberra

in conversation with

Professor Merlin Crossley AM FRSN

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality), UNSW Sydney

Public and government support for universities remains strong in many countries in Asia, but there are concerns in some Western countries. In some places, governments are clashing with universities, while in others, the rising costs of education and research have triggered questions about whether students and the public are getting value for money. Faced with funding the rising costs of operation in a technologically complex, competitive, and globalised world, university leaders sometimes go beyond their traditional roles as experts in learning and teaching and make promises about solving the world's problems. Is this working, and if not, how should public good, not-for-profit education and research institutions best communicate their missions and needs?

The accomplished political leader and now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, the Hon. Bill Shorten, will explore what universities are for and what they can do to best fulfil their important public roles. With perspectives from his time in politics, his time as a student, his knowledge of what Australians value, Bill Shorten is ideally placed to provide

fresh insights into how we can ensure that Australian universities continue to be supported to deliver. In this event, Bill Shorten will converse with Merlin Crossley, an academic with decades of experience in leadership at Australian universities, as well as firsthand knowledge of teaching and research in the fast-moving field of molecular genetics.

About the speakers

Bill Shorten is well known in Australian public life for his leadership in politics, social reform, and now higher education. He served as the Leader of the Australian Labor Party and Opposition Leader from 2013 to 2019, contesting two federal elections. A key architect of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Bill Shorten held multiple ministerial roles across governments led by Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd, and Anthony Albanese, including portfolios in education, financial services, employment, government services, and the NDIS.

Before entering Parliament in 2007, Mr Shorten was the National Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union, where he led Australia's oldest union and served as a director of Australian Super. He holds degrees in arts and law from Monash University and an MBA from the University of Melbourne.

In January 2025, Bill Shorten transitioned from politics to academia, becoming Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Canberra (UC). His vision for UC centres on improving student experience, research impact, and community engagement to develop a modern Australian university that does not just react to society's demands but anticipates them. He believes that education is the most powerful force for equality and democratic resilience.

Merlin Crossley is Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality) at UNSW Sydney. His lab works on CRISPR gene editing to treat inherited blood diseases. He is known for characterising mutations that alter gene expression and cause Hemophilia B Leyden or the Hereditary Persistence of Fetal Hemoglobin, and for cloning new genes that modulate gene expression.

He has worked or studied at Melbourne, Monash, Oxford, Harvard, Sydney, and UNSW. He is an enthusiastic science communicator, Chair of the Editorial Board of *The Conversation*, Chair of UNSW Press, Deputy Director of the Australian Science Media Centre, an Honorary Associate of the Australian Museum, a member of the LifeBlood ethics committee, and a scientific advisor to Australian Sickle Cell Advocacy.

He has received multiple awards, including a Rhodes Scholarship, the 2020 NSW Premier's Award for Medical Biological Science, and, in 2021, a new species of iridescent butterfly bobtail squid was named in his honour – *Iridoteuthis merlini* – Merlin's bobtail squid.

7. VOTE OF THANKS

8. CLOSE

Em Prof Trevor Brown FRSN

Secretary