

1338th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Society of NSW

Minutes

The 1338th Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Society of NSW took place at 6:00 pm on Wednesday 11 February 2026 in the Michael Crouch Room, Level 1, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW, Shakespeare Place, Sydney, followed by an open lecture.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The President, Em Prof Christina Slade FRSN welcomed members and guests to the first meeting of 2026 and acknowledged the traditional owners of the land.

2. MINUTES OF THE 1337th ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the 1337th Ordinary General Meeting were reviewed and approved. There were no matters arising.

3. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES OF CANDIDATES FOR FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP

The Council has not met since the last OGM, so there were no candidates announced for Members' consideration at this meeting.

4. PRESENTATION OF FELLOWSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATES

The President presented certificates to the following new Fellows who were present at the meeting:

FELLOWSHIP

Professor Dale Dominey-Howes

Laudation – Dale Dominey-Howes is a geoscientist who has made a significant contribution to disaster risk reduction

Professor Bamini Gopinath

Laudation – Bamini Gopinath has made an international contribution in the field of public health, notably in the area of sensory loss.

Jennifer Laffan

Laudation – Jennifer Laffan has made a substantial contribution to Australian agriculture.

MEMBERSHIP

Jerzy Maciejak

Dr Sebastian Sequoiah-Grayson

Dr Sophia Moscovis

Rebecca McCartney

5. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

The President reported that planning for the 2026 program is well advanced, with lecture programs for the Sydney Branch, Southern Highlands Branch and Western Branch largely filled. Members were encouraged to monitor the Society's website for updates on upcoming events.

She also highlighted the upcoming Annual Dinner and Awards Presentation, to be held on 27 February at the Strangers' Room in Parliament House, noting that the event remains one of the Society's major occasions. The guest speaker will be Professor Tony Haymet, Chief Scientist of Australia, and the evening will include the presentation of the Society's awards.

The President further reported on developments in the Society's awards program. A new Herbert Hoppert Award has been established to recognise an Australian or Australian-university student who has completed graduate work in the United Kingdom. The award commemorates physicist Herbert Huppert and aims to support early-career researchers and strengthen academic links between Australia and the UK. She also noted the introduction of a new Award in Computing and Computational Science, reflecting the importance of contemporary disciplines that were not represented in the Society's earlier nineteenth-century award classifications.

Finally, the President reiterated the Society's role in fostering reasoned, evidence-based and cross-disciplinary discussion on matters of public importance, introducing the evening's lecture on immigration policy as an example of the type of complex social issue the Society seeks to examine.

6. OPEN LECTURE

“How many Australians should there be?”

Dr Abul Rizvi PSM FRSN

Former Deputy Secretary, Department of Immigration

Australia lacks a formal population policy, relying instead on immigration policies without clear ministerial accountability for net migration outcomes. Political reluctance to discuss population targets has led to a policy vacuum, with recent surges in migration after COVID-19 sparking public debate and anti-immigration protests. The 2025 Federal Election saw immigration become a contested issue, with major parties offering vague or reactive commitments to migration levels but failing to explain the rationale or consequences of their targets.

Treasury forecasts Australia's population will grow from 27.6 million in 2024-25 to 31.6 million by 2035-36, driven by both natural increase and net migration. However, these projections are not backed by concrete government policy or ministerial responsibility, and there is little clarity on how targets will be met or what policy changes are needed. The absence of a comprehensive population plan has allowed extreme proposals, such as zero net migration or a pause in immigration, to gain traction, echoing trends in other countries facing similar debates.

A robust population plan would need to address demographic trends, economic impacts, labour force needs, infrastructure, housing, service delivery, family migration, social cohesion, humanitarian obligations, and environmental sustainability. Immigration is shown to benefit the economy and budget, especially when migrants are young, and is crucial for sectors like health and aged care. However, infrastructure and housing have lagged behind population growth, contributing to current crises. Social cohesion and public confidence are threatened by the lack of long-term planning and rising contestation over migration. Globally, many nations are experiencing population decline and ageing, making Australia's approach to population and immigration policy increasingly significant.

About the speaker

Abul Rizvi is an economics, accounting and public policy graduate from the ANU and holds a PhD in immigration and population policy from Melbourne University. From 1998, Rizvi managed major growth in overseas students, skilled temporary migration, visitors and working holiday makers, including the development of pathways to permanent migration. Between 1996 and 2006, Rizvi was Chair of the Commonwealth/State Working Party on State-Specific and Regional Migration which gave state/territory governments a much greater role in immigration to their jurisdictions.

He was responsible for commissioning research on the demographic, economic and budgetary impact of immigration that was extensively used in the development of the 2002 and 2007 Intergenerational Reports. He was Deputy Secretary responsible for all aspects of immigration, humanitarian, citizenship and settlement policy from 2005.

Rizvi was awarded the Public Service Medal and the Centenary Medal for services to the development and implementation of Australian immigration policy. Rizvi is a frequent media commentator on population, immigration and its impact on Australia's economic and budget

directions. He was invited to participate in the 2022 Jobs and Skill Summit and recently published a book in the 'In the National Interest' series titled 'Population Shock'. Rizvi recently presented on immigration policy in a televised address to the National Press Club.

7. VOTE OF THANKS

A vote of thanks was given by Em Prof Christina Slade FRSN.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

9. CLOSE

The President closed the meeting at 7:30 pm.

The minutes were recorded by the Secretary, Em Prof Trevor Brown FRSN.

Signed as a true record
Em Prof Christina Slade FRSN
President