



Royal Society of New South Wales

Sydney Programs Committee

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Context

The Royal Society of NSW (the Society, RSNSW) traces its origins to the Philosophical Society of Australasia, which was established on 27 June 1821. The Society received Royal Assent in 1866 and was incorporated by an Act of the NSW Parliament in 1881.

Today, the Society is an inclusive learned institution that aims to enrich lives through knowledge and inquiry. It encompasses a diverse group of people who are dedicated to ideas that matter, contributing to a just, secure, and sustainable society by:

- Mobilising the multidisciplinary expertise of Society members
- Providing authentic and authoritative information
- Addressing national and global challenges
- Recognising and promoting excellence.

1.2. Organisational Structure

The Council is responsible for delivering the initiatives of the 2025 Master Plan.

The organisational structure of the Society has been conceived as a collection of programs that are designed and implemented by the Council, and its Committees, and Working Groups. The Committees and Working Groups undertake the detailed work of the Society, providing reports and advice to Council on the present and future conduct of the programs.

This document sets out the roles and responsibilities of the RSNSW Sydney Program Committee, in accordance with the Society's Rules, Values, Strategic Plan, Policies, Programs, and Council Handbook.

2. Role and Responsibilities

2.1. Role

The Sydney Program Committee is responsible for designing, coordinating, and delivering the annual program of events held in Sydney, as described below.

The program of events held in Sydney which the Society either leads or co-sponsors comprises:

1. The face-to-face and online presentations at the Ordinary General Meetings (usually held on the first Wednesday of each month between February to December)
2. The visits program which comprises organised visits or excursions to significant sites around Sydney, of broad historical, geographical, scientific or cultural interest
3. The Annual Meeting of the Four Societies, a joint lecture of the Royal Society of NSW, Engineers Australia Sydney Division, the Australian Institute of Energy, and the Australian Nuclear Association, organised in a four-year rotation by one of these organisations

4. The Ideas@theHouse series of lectures, jointly hosted by our Patron, the Governor of NSW, and the Society and held — typically, three times a year at Government House Sydney
5. The lunchtime Provocations and Inspirations series of lectures held 4–5 times a year at the Union, University and Schools Club
6. The annual Royal Society of NSW and Learned Academies Forum which is a one-day event comprising lectures and panel sessions, hosted at Government House Sydney, typically in the first week of November each year.

In addition, there are lectures organised by other organisations with which the Society is a joint sponsor. These include the annual Frontiers of Science Forum (held in March and organised by the Teachers Guild of NSW) and the annual joint event of the Australian Institute of Physics, the Royal Australian Chemical Institute, ANSTO and the Society, usually organised by ANSTO and the AIP.

Of these six classes of events, the Sydney Program Committee is responsible for the OGMs (1), the visits program (2), and the Four Societies Annual Meeting (3) every four years.

The Ideas@theHouse, the Provocations and Inspiration lecture series, together with the Annual Forum are organised separately, although each are serviced by the Society's operations portfolio, which provides a common communications platform and event registration support.

2.2. Purpose

The main focus of the Sydney Program Committee is the design, coordination, and delivery of the lectures and presentations at the Ordinary General Meetings which are intended to be:

- Informative and interesting to a broad audience of Society members, guests, and a wide online audience, which is reached through our YouTube channel and promoted by social media
- Consistent with the Society's mission of providing Society members and the public with authentic and authoritative information
- Promote scholarship and research in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts, consistent with the Society's mission
- Reflective of the breadth and diversity of the NSW intellectual community
- Suitably balanced amongst the disciplines and fields in which the Society operates, and mindful of the expectation of Society's principal sponsor, the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer, of sufficient science/technology/engineering content
- Cognisant of our substantial online audience through YouTube in raising our outreach profile
- Operate efficiently and effectively within the available resources (which includes costs associated with the physical hosting of events and their recording)
- Support member engagement and public outreach.

2.3. Authority

The Committee is established by the Council and operates:

- In accordance with the Rules of the Society and Council policies and guidelines
- Within its allocated budget, unless additional resources are sought and granted
- Consistent with annual program priorities approved by the Council.

The Committee may make recommendations to Council but does not have authority to commit the Society to expenditure, contracts, or public statements without Council approval.

2.4. Policies and Guidelines

The Society has several documents that govern the workings of Council and each Committee. These are the:

- Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Future Fund Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Guidelines for Sponsorship and Donations

- Advocacy Guidelines
- Council Handbook.

These documents will be made available to the Committee by the Secretary of the Society.

3. Responsibilities

The Committee is responsible for the tasks outlined in the following sections.

3.1. Program Planning

In alignment with the Society's strategic priorities, this comprises the development of a balanced annual program of events (for approval by the Council) that covers the scheduled 11 Ordinary General Meetings (both face-to-face in the State Library and online), visits, and various events held in partnership with other societies or universities.

- Such lectures or presentations may:
 - Be developed around contemporary themes, as prioritised by the committee, where a coherent set of presentations may be planned
 - Include talks from Society awards winners from the previous year, or recent years, where such award winners are well positioned to deliver interesting and engaging talks tailored to a broad audience (both in person and subsequently online)
 - Take advantage of opportunities to include high-profile speakers who may be visiting Sydney or universities in Sydney
- The Sydney Program committee will:
 - identify themes, potential speakers and panels of speakers (as appropriate), as well as opportunities for collaboration
 - Ensure diversity of speakers and panellists from a variety of backgrounds, age groups, genders, and cultures.

3.2. Events Delivery

The delivery of events is a collaboration between the Sydney Program Committee and the Society's Operations Portfolio.

The Program Committee is responsible for:

- Arrangements for each event (i.e., bookings, logistics) with the host venue, i.e., the State Library of NSW for face-to-face OGMs, and liaison with staff at partner organisations if the logistics are being handled by the partner host
 - Liaison with staff of the State Library entails confirmation of the format (e.g., distinct requirements for lectures and panel discussions), arrangements for a cash bar prior to the meeting, and provision of a registration table
 - The Program Committee ensures that a concierge service is provided for all events, ensuring that members and guests are registered and welcomed, particularly new members who may not know other attendees
 - Potentially, also responsibility for arrangements of post-meeting hospitality (such as suppers)
- All liaison with the speaker(s), including:
 - Capture of information for initial publicity material (i.e., talk title, brief summary, brief biographical information, image(s) of the speaker(s) of sufficiently high-resolution to provide a square head-and-shoulders crop)
 - Ensuring that speakers are briefed and supported
 - Liaison prior to the event to confirm the format (e.g., lecture or panel), acquire presentation slides, making these available to the operations portfolio at least two days before the event
- Preparation of post-event summaries (~200–300 words) for inclusion in The Bulletin and on the gallery pages of the website. Typically, these are generated by AI tools from transcriptions taken from YouTube recordings
- Monitoring of event quality and the audience experience

The Operations Portfolio is responsible for:

- Event communications and publicity through website notices, email notices (including publicity through The Bulletin and the Subscriber Newsletter), and social media
- Establishment of a:
 - Members event registration site for events that require paid registrations
 - Zoom webinar for events held online
- Arrangements for any audio-visual services such as professional videography if the event is being recorded, and professional photography (as may be required, although this is typically reserved for high-profile events such as Ideas@theHouse, the Annual Forum, and the Annual Dinner)
- Editing and posting of recordings on our YouTube channel and the establishment of website gallery posts for photography; updates to the website presentations page; inclusion of post-meeting reports in the Bulletin
- Provision of outreach and uptake data including meeting and online attendance, YouTube viewing data, etc.

3.3. Evaluation and Reporting

This includes:

- Reviewing event outcomes and attendance
- Reporting to Council as required
- Recommending improvements for future programs.

4. Committee

4.1. Membership

- Chair, appointed by Council
- Secretary
- 4–8 members drawn from Fellows and Members, willing to contribute to the work of organising and hosting an annual program of events, bringing expertise and experience to the selection speakers/panels
- Representation from the Operations Portfolio
- The President and Secretary are ex officio members (but not required to attend all meetings)
- Additional advisors may be invited for specific topics.

4.2. Skills and Experience

Members should collectively:

- Bring expertise in the sciences, technology/engineering, social sciences, humanities, and the creative arts
- Bring diverse perspectives and backgrounds to the required role
- Have experience in event design and public engagement.

5. Delegations and Boundaries

In line with the strategic intent and direction from Council, the Committee:

Will/may

- Develop a program of events and commission speakers/panels
- Develop publicity material for events, mindful of the Society's advocacy policy
- Recommend potential organisation with which to partner
- Oversee event planning and implementation, liaising as required with the operations portfolio
- Provide advice to Council on current and future program strategy

May not

- Commit the Society to expenditure that is not budgeted — including payment of speakers and/or travel arrangements for speakers

- Enter into agreements with partner organisations
- Issue public statements, other than relating to the publicity of events
- Direct staff or volunteers outside of agreed workflows — particularly in the operations portfolio

6. Reporting

The Committee reports to the Council, providing:

- Recommendations that may require Council approval
- A written annual report, for inclusion, either directly or in an edited form, in the Council Annual Report, summarising the annual program, its outcomes, and statistics (through the Operations Portfolio) on attendance and online impact

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