

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

Thursday 5 November

9:00am–5:00pm AEDT

Government House
Sydney

In person,
by invitation

Live-streaming



Australian
Academy of Health and
Medical Sciences



Australian
Academy of the
Humanities



Australian
Academy of
Science



ACADEMY OF
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN AUSTRALIA



Australian Academy of
Technological Sciences
& Engineering
1979-2025



The Forum is held under the auspices of Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales. The Royal Society of New South Wales acknowledges the generous support of Her Excellency and the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer.

The Royal Society of New South Wales
& Learned Academies Forum 2026



Royal Society of
New South Wales
event information



Livestream
registration
& tickets

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

Thursday 5 November

9:00am–5:00pm AEDT

Government House
Sydney

In person,
by invitation

Live-stream



**“ We live during the hinge
of history... If we act
wisely in the next few
centuries, humanity
will survive its most
dangerous and decisive
period... What now
matters most is that
we avoid ending
human history.”**

Derek Parfitt
On What Matters, 2011 vol 2

HUMANITY MAY BE entering a period in which actions of a single generation shape the long term trajectory of civilisation. Climate instability, rapid technological transformation, geopolitical tension, and social fragmentation are converging in ways that may constitute a “hinge of history”.

The Royal Society of NSW and Learned Academies Forum brings together leading thinkers across science, medicine, technology, governance, economics and philosophy to examine whether we are indeed at such a hinge point—and what this means for Australia’s future prosperity, security, and resilience.



The Forum is held under the auspices of Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales. The Royal Society of New South Wales acknowledges the generous support of Her Excellency and the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer.



A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

OPENING

9:00am-9:20am

Official opening	Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC – Governor of New South Wales.
Welcome & acknowledgements	Emeritus Professor Christina Slade FRSN FRSA – President and Forum Chair, Royal Society of New South Wales.

KEYNOTE SESSION: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity

9:20am-10:00am

Chair	Emeritus Professor Huw Price FRSN FBA FAHA Emeritus Bertrand Russell Professor of Philosophy, Trinity College, Cambridge.
Keynote address	Dr Toby Ord – Senior Researcher, Oxford Martin AI Governance Initiative, Oxford University.

SESSION 1: When Technology Changes History: Who Shapes What Comes Next?

10:00am-11:15am

Chair	Professor Simon Ringer FRSN FIEAust FTSE – Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure), Professor of Materials Science & Engineering, University of Sydney.
Speakers	Mr Jason Collins – CEO, European Australian Business Council, and Honorary Consul, Consulate of Belgium in Sydney. Ms Patty Gilchrist – APAC Research Partnerships & Business Development Lead, Google. Mr David Thodey AO FTSE FAICD Chancellor, University of Sydney. Dr Jenny Tran – General Manager of Product, Xero.

MORNING TEA

11:15am-11:45am

SESSION 2: Climate Change: Risks, Responses and a World Under Pressure

11:45am-1:00pm

Chair	Scientia Professor Matthew England FAA FAGU FAMOS – Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for our Future Oceans, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science, UNSW Sydney.
Speakers	Scientia Associate Professor Negin Nazarian – Deputy Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, School of Built Environment, University of New South Wales. Professor Ollie Jay FACSM – Professor of Heat and Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney. Dr Megan Evans – Senior Lecturer, School of Business, UNSW Canberra. Dr Timothy Neal – Senior Scientia Fellow, Department of Economics and Institute for Climate Risk & Response (ICRR), UNSW Sydney.

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks



LUNCH

1:00pm-2:00pm

SESSION 3: Health, Medicine and Human Futures

2:00pm-3:00pm

Chair	Professor Catharine Coleborne FRSN FAHA FASSA SFHEA – Professor of History, School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences, College of Human and Social Futures, University of Newcastle.
Speakers	Professor Ainsley Newson FSRN – Professor of Bioethics, Sydney Health Ethics, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney. Professor Julie Leask AO – Professorial Research Fellow, Infectious Diseases Institute and School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney. Dr James Dunk – Director, St James Institute.

SESSION 4: Governance at the Hinge - Geopolitics, Economic Transformation and Societal Stability

3:00pm-4:00pm

Chair	Professor Sean Brawley FRSN PFHEA – Honorary Professor, University of Wollongong.
Speakers	Dr Aruna Sathanapally – Chief Executive Officer, Grattan Institute. Professor Helen Sullivan FASSA – Dean, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. Professor Michael Wesley – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global, Culture and Engagement), University of Melbourne.

CLOSING SESSION

4:00pm-4:30pm

Chair	Professor Merlin Crossley AM FRSN – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality), UNSW Sydney.
Speakers	Professor Sean Brawley FRSN PFHEA – Honorary Professor, University of Wollongong. Professor Catharine Coleborne FRSN FAHA FASSA SFHEA – Professor of History, School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences, College of Human and Social Futures, University of Newcastle. Scientia Professor Matthew England FAA FAGU FAMOS – Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for our Future Oceans, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science, UNSW Sydney. Professor Simon Ringer FRSN FIEAust FTSE – Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure), Professor of Materials Science & Engineering, University of Sydney.



A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

OFFICIAL OPENING

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC Governor of New South Wales



Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC is the 39th Governor of New South Wales, commencing her seven-year tenure of the role on 2 May 2019. Prior to her appointment, Her Excellency enjoyed a long and distinguished law career spanning 43 years, during which time she served as a role model for women in law at both the state and national level. Appointed Queen's Counsel in 1989, in 1993 she was made a judge of the Federal Court of Australia, the first woman to sit exclusively in that Court. In 1996, she achieved the distinction of being the first woman appointed to the New South Wales Court of Appeal and, subsequently, the first woman to be appointed as its President. She was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours List on 26 January 2020 for "eminent service to the people of New South Wales, particularly through leadership roles in the judiciary, and as a mentor of young women lawyers".

Christina Slade FRSN FRSA



Christina Slade has served as a senior academic and administrator in Australia, Europe, the US and Mexico. She was Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Bath Spa University, the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences at the City University London and Macquarie University's Dean of Humanities. She was Professor of Media Theory with the University of Utrecht and interim Rector of Charles Sturt University. Professor Slade serves on the UK based Board of QS rankings and the National Art School in NSW. While based in the UK she was Chair of University of Gibraltar's Academic Board, Trustee and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, Trustee of The Royal High School Bath and the Holburne Museum, Director and Chair of the Education, Heritage and Culture Sector Table with the Iraq Britain Business Council. She is life patron of the Society of Philosophy for the Young. Christina has a PhD in philosophy of language and logic from The Australian National University, a Diploma of Education from the University of New England and qualifications in Spanish, French and Arabic. She has led major European Union funded research grants, worked with policy in Westminster and Brussels and published widely. Christina has been President of the Royal Society of NSW since 2025.

KEYNOTE SESSION

CHAIR



Huw Price FRSN FBA FAHA

Huw Price is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and an Emeritus Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. From 2022-2024 he was Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Bonn. In Cambridge, he was Bertrand Russell Professor of Philosophy (2011-2020), Academic Director of the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence (2016-2021), and co-founder, with

Martin Rees and Jaan Tallinn, of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk. Before moving to Cambridge in 2011 he was Challis Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney, where he was founding Director of the Centre for Time. He now lives in Sydney.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Toby Ord

Toby Ord is a Senior Researcher at Oxford University's AI Governance Initiative. His work focuses on the big picture questions facing humanity. What are the most important issues of our time? How can we best address them? His book, *The Precipice*, explores these topics and concludes that safeguarding our future is among the most pressing

and neglected issues we face. Toby's earlier work explored the ethics of global health and global poverty, demonstrating that aid has been highly successful on average and has the potential to be even more successful if we were to improve our priority setting. This led him to create an international society called Giving What We Can, whose members from 100 different countries have donated over \$400 million to the most effective charities helping to improve the world. He also co-founded the wider effective altruism movement, encouraging thousands of people to use reason and evidence to help others as much as possible. Toby's earlier work explored the ethics of global health and global poverty, demonstrating that aid has been highly successful on average and has the potential to be even more successful if we were to improve our priority setting. This led him to create an international society called Giving What We Can, whose members from 100 different countries have donated over \$400 million to the most effective charities helping to improve the world. He also co-founded the wider effective altruism movement, encouraging thousands of people to use reason and evidence to help others as much as possible.

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks



SESSION 1

When Technology Changes History: Who Shapes What Comes Next?

CHAIR



Professor Simon Ringer FRSN FTSE FIEAust

Simon P. Ringer is Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) at the University of Sydney and a leading materials scientist specialising in process-microstructure-property relationships in advanced alloys and functional materials. His research integrates advanced microscopy, atom probe tomography, first-principles modelling, materials informatics, and advanced processing approaches, including additive manufacturing, to enable microstructural design of next-generation materials for energy, transport, and manufacturing applications. Professor Ringer has an extensive track record of leadership in establishing and directing major research centres and infrastructure, including founding roles in national facilities such as the Australian Microscopy and Microanalysis Research Facility and long-standing leadership of the University's Core Research Facilities. He has secured over \$80 million in research funding and leads large, multidisciplinary teams spanning academia and industry. Internationally recognised for his contributions to materials science and microscopy, he is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and has received numerous honours, including the TMS Cyril Stanley Smith Award and the Materials Australia Silver Medal.

PANELLISTS



Mr Jason Collins

Jason Collins has been Chief Executive Officer of the European Australian Business Council since 2007. He leads the delivery of the Council's business advocacy and engagement programmes, membership and institutional relations with government agencies, chambers, industry groups, and other stakeholders. He recently concluded a seven-year term as Chair of European Business Organisations Worldwide, a global association headquartered in Brussels representing European chambers of commerce and business councils in over fifty countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Indo-Pacific, and Europe. Beyond his leadership at the Council, Jason is the Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Belgium in Sydney and a regular media commentator on trade and investment. He holds several board and advisory roles, including non-executive director and committee chair at Business Events Sydney, Chair of the Australia Youth Trust, and advisory board member for the UTS Business School. He also advises various Australian and European government bodies and research centers. In 2023, he was appointed Commander of the Order of the Crown of Belgium for distinguished service to Belgium and Europe.



Ms Patty Gilchrist

Patty Gilchrist is Google's APAC Research Partnerships Lead for Core & Higher Education. Drawing on a rich background in strategic alliances, she drives impactful partnerships bridging industry, research, and academia across the APAC region. Her work focuses on scaling advanced technologies, including Google for Education and AI solutions, alongside key initiatives like expanding Security and Identity solutions (such as Cross Account Protection via 'Sign in with Google'). Dedicated to building an inclusive digital future, Patty championed Google's cybersecurity career pathways partnership with First Nations consultancy Baidam Solutions. She previously served as Google's Head of Business Development for AUNZ, Global Partnerships, leading Shopping, Google Assistant, and Local Verticals alliances. Patty brings extensive experience driving high-value, multi-stakeholder collaborations that foster regional innovation and build sustainable digital ecosystems across Asia-Pacific.



Mr David Thodey AO FTSE FAICD

David Thodey is a business leader focused on innovation, technology, digital transformation and corporate governance, with more than 40 years of experience. David is Chair of Ramsay Health Care, Xero Limited, Chancellor the University of Sydney, and co-Chair of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. He is also a non-executive member of the Reserve Bank of Australia Governance Board. David had an accomplished executive career, previously serving as CEO of Telstra (2009-2015), and CEO of IBM Australia and New Zealand (1999-2001). He is active in public service and public policy, including serving as Chair of CSIRO (2015 - 2021). David holds a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and English from Victoria University of Wellington and attended the Kellogg School of Management postgraduate General Management Program at Northwestern University in Chicago. He holds Honorary Doctorates from Deakin University, the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney. David is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. In 2017, he was awarded an Order of Australia for his service to business and the promotion of ethical leadership and workplace diversity.



Dr Jenny Tran

Jenny Tran is currently General Manager of Product at Xero, where she oversees a product portfolio focusing on the growth of Xero into larger medium-sized businesses. Jenny has led a range of entrepreneurial endeavours focused on social impact. She is one of the founding CEOs of REACH, Australia's first student-run multidisciplinary health clinic, and a founding committee member for the Australian Society of Medical Entrepreneurs. Jenny has also been a part of the senior leadership team at the Paul Ramsay Foundation, working towards breaking cycles of disadvantage. She held a variety of roles including Head of Data, Head of Development, COVID-19 taskforce lead and Employment portfolio lead. Jenny originally trained as a medical doctor. She was awarded Honours for her BMedSci/MBBS at the University of Melbourne, and started training as an intensive care physician. Jenny completed a DPhil (PhD) and Masters in Global Health, having been awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to study at the University of Oxford. Her PhD focused on multimorbidity, subspecialising in applying machine learning models to electronic health records.

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

SESSION 2

Climate Change: Risks, Responses and a World Under Pressure

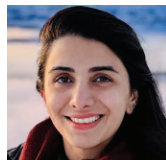
CHAIR



Scientia Professor Matthew England FAA FAGU FAMOS

Matthew England is Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Our Future Oceans and Scientia Professor at the University of New South Wales. England's work focuses on future ocean change, ocean dynamics, ocean modelling, and the role of the oceans in a changing climate. Over a career spanning more than 35 years, Professor England has held leadership roles in several major national research centres, including as Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Our Future Oceans and Deputy Director of the ARC Australian Centre for Excellence in Antarctic Science. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, the American Geophysical Union and the Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society. Professor England has received honours for his contributions to climate and ocean science, including the 2024 AGU Climate Communications Prize, the 2023 Jaeger Medal of the Australian Academy of Science, and the 2020 Morton Medal of the Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society. He is widely engaged in scientific advisory roles nationally and internationally and has contributed to major assessments of climate science, including those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

PANELLISTS



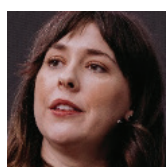
Scientia Associate Professor Negin Nazarian

Negin Nazarian is urban climatologist and Scientia Associate Professor at the School of Built Environment, UNSW Sydney, and Deputy Director of Science Partnerships at the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century. Her research addresses the two-way relationship between cities and climate: how urban form and design shape local wind, rainfall and heat, and how rapidly growing cities are exposed to escalating climate hazards. She leads work in both climate modelling and AI-based approaches in cities, and played a central role in the development of the Australian Urban Climate Research Infrastructure initiative. Negin is a Lead Author on the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities, due for release in 2027. She chairs the American Meteorological Society's Board on Urban Environment and contributes to several urban focused initiatives under the World Meteorological Organization. Her contributions have been recognised with the 2023 Timothy Oke Award for Original Research in Urban Climatology, the 2024 NSW Young Tall Poppy Award, and the 2025 AGU Global Environmental Change Early Career Award. She leads the Climate-Resilient Cities Research Hub at UNSW.



Professor Ollie Jay FACSM

Ollie Jay is Professor of Heat and Health and Director of the Heat and Health Research Centre and Thermal Ergonomics Laboratory in the Faculty of Medicine and Health at The University of Sydney. He also serves as Global Chair of Working Group 1 for the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change. His research focuses on understanding the physiological and physical factors that determine human heat strain and the risk of heat-related health problems during work, physical activity, and heatwave exposure. Ollie is a NHMRC Investigator Grant (Leadership Level 1) recipient for his research program, "Heat and Health: Building resilience to a warming planet across the human lifespan". He has led major projects that have informed international public health heatwave policies in the United States and Europe, as well as extreme heat policy development for Sports Medicine Australia, Tennis Australia (Australian Open), and Cricket Australia. Ollie has published over 220 peer reviewed papers in leading journals, including Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA, and Nature Communications. His achievements include multiple University of Sydney awards for research excellence, leadership, and mentoring.



Dr Megan Evans

Megan Evans is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Business, UNSW Canberra, and Chief Investigator with the UNSW Institute for Climate Risk & Response. She is an interdisciplinary social scientist whose work aims to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of environmental laws, policies and tools. Megan's research has contributed significantly to environmental policy in Australia and internationally: key examples include her work on forest regeneration carbon offset integrity that triggered the Independent Review of Australian Carbon Credit Units (Chubb review), the development of the Australian government's biodiversity offset policy under federal environmental laws, and work on the economics of land-based carbon offsets that informed the establishment of the \$500 million Land Restoration Fund in Queensland. Her current research focuses on misinformation and climate obstruction via carbon markets, and improving the disclosure of the use of carbon credits within corporate financial reports. She is a frequent commentator in the media and sits on the editorial board of the journal Conservation Letters.



Dr Timothy Neal

Tim Neal is a Senior Scientia Fellow in the Department of Economics and the Institute for Climate Risk & Response (ICRR) at UNSW. In 2026, he was named Australia's leading researcher in probability and Research Magazine. In 2021, he received the statistics in The Australian's prestigious Paul Bourke Award for Early Career Research from the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. His main research interests are in climate change impacts and improving the tools researchers use to detect causation in real data. He has worked in many areas, including potential GDP impacts of future climate change scenarios, the effects on climate change on agricultural yield of staple crops, the effectiveness of policy interventions to curb deforestation of sensitive areas, and panic buying during the COVID pandemic. His future research agenda includes continuing to use economics to better understand where we are headed in a warmer and less stable world.

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks



SESSION 3

Health, Medicine and Human Futures

CHAIR



Professor Catharine Coleborne FRSN FAHA FASSA SFHEA

Catharine Coleborne is an experienced leader with a strong public profile in higher education, especially the arts, humanities, and social sciences. She is a past President of the Australia and New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine and is currently co-Director of the Centre for Society, Health and Care Research at the University of Newcastle (Australia). She currently leads two Australian Research Council Discovery Projects, one (with Dr Effie Karageorgos) on mental health aftercare, the other a history of Australia's experience and memory of poliomyelitis. She has held research fellowships at the National Library of Australia and the State Library of New South Wales, and at the University of Lancaster, and is a Visiting Professor at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research contributions to the social histories of health and medicine have defined new fields of inquiry and include challenging older concepts of institutional confinement and care.

PANELLISTS



Professor Ainsley Newson FRSN

Ainsley Newson is Professor of Bioethics at Sydney Health Ethics, The University of Sydney, where she leads a research program examining ethical challenges at the intersection of genomics, health systems and society. Holding degrees in bioethics, law and science, Ainsley has over 25 years' international experience in bioethics research, training and policy. Ainsley's research focuses on how genomic and reproductive technologies can be implemented responsibly in clinical and population settings, including her current work on genomic data governance and the incorporation of genomics into population screening programs. Professor Newson contributes extensively to national and international policy and advisory bodies, where her work is shaping public debate, clinical practice and governance in genomics. Ainsley is also a highly rated bioethics educator, including in the Master of Bioethics program at the University of Sydney, and has a strong track record of mentorship for early-mid career researchers in the field.



Professor Julie Leask AO

Julie Leask is Professor of Public Health in the Sydney School of Public Health and Sydney Infectious Diseases Institute where she co-leads the Social and Behavioural Insights in immunisation research group. Her research focuses the social aspects of vaccination, programs, policy, and risk communication for health emergencies. Professor Leask has qualifications in public health, nursing and midwifery. She has had advisory and committee roles with WHO, UNICEF, the NHMRC, Academies of Science and Health and Medical Sciences, and governments. She was appointed Officer of the Order of Australia in 2024 "for distinguished service to health and medical research, to policy advice, and to enhancing community understanding of immunisation."



Dr James Dunk

Jamie Dunk was a researcher and sessional lecturer at the University of Sydney until late 2025, when he was appointed Director of the St James' Institute at St James' King Street. He won the NSW Premier's Australian History Prize in 2020 for his book *Bedlam at Botany Bay* (also shortlisted for the Ernest Scott Prize and Queensland Literary Awards) which seeks to understand colonial Sydney through the inner turmoil of those who were judged insane. He was postdoctoral fellow on a series of historical and interdisciplinary research projects on mental health, community health, and was most recently a major international ARC-funded project on the conceptual history of planetary health. At St James' Jamie is responsible for the church's public programme of lectures, seminars, and artistic events and for its professional and city partnerships.

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

SESSION 4

Governance at the Hinge - Geopolitics, Economic Transformation and Societal Stability

CHAIR



Professor Sean Brawley FRSN PFHEA

Sean Brawley is a Fellow and Councillor of the Royal Society of NSW. Recently retired from full-time academic life, Sean held leadership roles at UNSW, Macquarie and, most recently, the University of Wollongong where he held the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategy and Assurance). He still holds honorary professorships at these institutions and continues to serve in the RAAF as an officer in the History and Heritage Branch. A historian with research interests in the fields of foreign relations, immigration, sport and military

history, his 15th book was published in late 2025. He continues to contribute opinion pieces for *Future Campus* and recently completed a series on the history of university governance.

PANELLISTS



Dr Aruna Sathanapally

Aruna Sathanapally joined Grattan Institute as CEO in February 2024. She leads the Institute's work on economic growth, budgets and institutional reform, and is a prominent expert on public policy in Australia. A former barrister and senior public servant, Aruna has worked on the design of public institutions, economic policy, and evidence-based public policy and regulation for more than twenty years. Before joining Grattan Institute, Dr Sathanapally was a senior executive at NSW Treasury for over five years, leading divisions responsible for revenue and federal financial relations, macroeconomics and state-owned corporations. Prior to this, she practised as a senior lawyer in litigation at the Australian Government Solicitor, and as a barrister at the New South Wales Bar. She worked as an Associate at McKinsey & Company in London from 2010 to 2012, having completed two masters in law and a doctorate at the University of Oxford.



Professor Helen Sullivan FASSA

Helen Sullivan is a distinguished public policy scholar, educator, advisor, and senior university leader, currently serving as Dean of the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. Internationally recognised for her contributions to political science and public policy, her research has significantly advanced understanding of changing state-society relations. Helen has authored or edited ten books and published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and policy reports. Her most recent book, *Collaboration and Public Policy: Agency in the Pursuit of Public Purpose* (2022), was shortlisted for the prestigious WJM Mackenzie Book Prize, and in 2024 she was elected to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia in recognition of her scholarly contribution. Throughout her career, Helen has combined academic excellence with practical impact, working closely with governments, public service organisations, and community partners to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and public sector reform. In 2017 she was made a National Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia in recognition of her outstanding contribution to public policy practice. Her enduring commitment to bridging research and practice has made her one of Australia's most respected voices in public policy and governance..



Professor Michael Wesley

As Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global, Culture and Engagement at the University of Melbourne, Professor Wesley provides leadership across the University, with overall responsibility for strategic guidance on external and global engagement. He is also Professor of Politics at the University of Melbourne. His research and writing focuses on Australian foreign policy and the international affairs of Asia and the Pacific. His 2011 book, *There Goes the Neighbourhood: Australia and the Rise of Asia* won the John Button Prize for best writing on Australian politics and policy, and was shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards. His most recent books are *Helpem Fren: Australia and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands* and *Mind of the Nation: Universities in Australian Life*. Before joining the University of Melbourne, he was Dean of the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. He has also held positions as the Executive Director of the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Director of the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith University, and Assistant Director-General for Transnational Issues at the Office of National Assessments. He has a PhD in International Relations from the University of St Andrews and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the University of Queensland..

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks



CLOSING SESSION

CHAIR



Professor Merlin Crossley AM FRSN

Merlin Crossley is Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality at UNSW Sydney. His lab works on CRISPR gene editing to treat inherited blood diseases. He has worked or studied at Melbourne, Monash, Oxford, Harvard, Sydney, and UNSW. He is an enthusiastic science communicator, Chair of the 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.

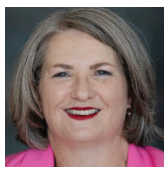
PANELLISTS



Professor Sean Brawley FRSN PFHEA

Sean Brawley is a Fellow and Councillor of the Royal Society of NSW. Recently retired from full-time academic life, Sean held leadership roles at UNSW, Macquarie and, most recently, the University of Wollongong where he held the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategy and Assurance). He still holds honorary professorships at these institutions and continues to serve in the RAAF as an officer in the History and Heritage Branch. A historian with research interests in the fields of foreign relations, immigration, sport and military history, his 15th book was published

in late 2025. He continues to contribute opinion pieces for *Future Campus* and recently completed a series on the history of university governance.



Professor Catharine Coleborne FRSN FAHA FASSA SFHEA

Catharine Coleborne is an experienced leader with a strong public profile in higher education, especially the arts, humanities, and social sciences. She is a past President of the Australia and New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine and is currently co-Director of the Centre for Society, Health and Care Research at the University of Newcastle (Australia). She currently leads two Australian Research Council Discovery Projects, one (with Dr Effie Karageorgos) on mental health aftercare, the other a history of Australia's experience and memory of poliomyelitis. She

has held research fellowships at the National Library of Australia and the State Library of New South Wales, and at the University of Lancaster, and is a Visiting Professor at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research contributions to the social histories of health and medicine have defined new fields of inquiry and include challenging older concepts of institutional confinement and care.



Scientia Professor Matthew England FAA FAGU FAMOS

Matthew England is Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Our Future Oceans and Scientia Professor at the University of New South Wales. England's work focuses on future ocean change, ocean dynamics, ocean modelling, and the role of the oceans in a changing climate. Over a career spanning more than 35 years, Professor England has held leadership roles in several major national research centres, including as Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Our Future Oceans and Deputy Director of the ARC Australian Centre for

Excellence in Antarctic Science. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, the American Geophysical Union and the Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society. Professor England has received honours for his contributions to climate and ocean science, including the 2024 AGU Climate Communications Prize, the 2023 Jaeger Medal of the Australian Academy of Science, and the 2020 Morton Medal of the Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society. He is widely engaged in scientific advisory roles nationally and internationally and has contributed to major assessments of climate science, including those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.



Professor Simon Ringer FRSN FTSE FIEAust

Simon P. Ringer is Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) at the University of Sydney and a leading materials scientist specialising in process-microstructure-property relationships in advanced alloys and functional materials. His research integrates advanced microscopy, atom probe tomography, first-principles modelling, materials informatics, and advanced processing approaches, including additive manufacturing, to enable microstructural design of next-generation materials for energy, transport, and manufacturing applications. Professor Ringer has

an extensive track record of leadership in establishing and directing major research centres and infrastructure, including founding roles in national facilities such as the Australian Microscopy and Microanalysis Research Facility and long-standing leadership of the University's Core Research Facilities. He has secured over \$80 million in research funding and leads large, multidisciplinary teams spanning academia and industry. Internationally recognised for his contributions to materials science and microscopy, he is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and has received numerous honours, including the TMS Cyril Stanley Smith Award and the Materials Australia Silver Medal.

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

With gratitude

The Royal Society of NSW expresses its gratitude to all members of the 2026 Forum Planning Committee.

FORUM CHAIR



Christina Slade FRSN FRSA

Christina Slade has served as a senior academic and administrator in Australia, Europe, the US and Mexico. She was Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Bath Spa University, the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences at the City University London and Macquarie University's Dean of Humanities. She was Professor of Media Theory with the University of Utrecht and interim Rector of Charles Sturt University. Professor Slade serves on the UK based Board of QS rankings and the National Art School in NSW. While based in the UK she was Chair of University of Gibraltar's Academic Board, Trustee and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, Trustee of The Royal High School Bath and the Holburne Museum, Director and Chair of the Education, Heritage and Culture Sector Table with the Iraq Britain Business Council. She is life patron of the Society of Philosophy for the Young. Christina has a PhD in philosophy of language and logic from The Australian National University, a Diploma of Education from the University of New England and qualifications in Spanish, French and Arabic. She has led major European Union funded research grants, worked with policy in Westminster and Brussels and published widely.

SECRETARY



Elizabeth Deane FRSN

Elizabeth Deane has had over 30 years' experience in the higher education sector. Her experience spans roles in teaching, research and senior management positions including Foundation Head of a department; Head of School; Dean of Faculty and Pro-Vice Chancellor Education and Students. Elizabeth holds a PhD from the University of Sydney and was until her progression into senior management, an active, funded researcher and postgraduate student supervisor in the area of developmental immunology and disease. Since retiring in 2015 Elizabeth has continued her active engagement with the sector. She has undertaken a number of institutional reviews addressing such diverse areas as students support services; governance and IT provision as well as reviews for new applicant higher education private providers. She continues to be an international reviewer for higher education quality assurance agencies. Elizabeth is actively engaged in supporting higher education private providers and is a member or chair of a number of academic and governance boards of existing and aspiring providers.

COMMITTEE MEMBER



Lindsay Botten FRSN FOSA FAIP FAustMS

Lindsay Botten an Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University (ANU) and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), and presently serves on the Council of the Royal Society of NSW (RSNSW) and as its Vice-President. He was the foundation Director of National Computational Infrastructure (NCI) at ANU (2008-17) where he led the development of the Australia's highest performance and most highly integrated research supercomputing and data service, positioning NCI at the vanguard of international advanced computing. Previously, he was Professor of Applied Mathematics at UTS, where he established a reputation as an international authority in theoretical optics and photonics and led the computational modelling team of the ARC Centre of Excellence, CUDOS. He is active as a consultant in high-performance computing nationally, and in RSNSW where he leads the development of its information technology, audio-visual, and social media modernisation. He is a Fellow of the Optical Society of America, the Australian Institute of Physics, the Australian Mathematical Society, and the Royal Society of NSW. Lindsay has been Vice-President of the Royal Society of New South Wales since 2025.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

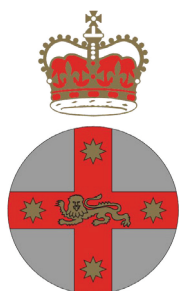
Graham Town FRSN CPEng SMIEE HonFIEAust



Graham Town is an electrical engineer with 8 years experience in the Australian electronics industry (AWA Pty. Ltd.), and a distinguished track record of over 30 years contributing to Australian engineering education and research. His primary professional achievements were establishment of Macquarie University's Bachelor of Engineering program, influential contributions to engineering education in Australia, and leadership of many competitively funded and industry sponsored research projects across diverse areas, including biomedical engineering, guided-wave optics and photonics, engineering education, waste-to-energy conversion, power electronics, and transport electrification. Graham is an Emeritus Professor at Macquarie University, a Chartered Professional Engineer (Telecommunications, Electrical, Leadership), a Senior Member of the IEEE, an Honorary Fellow of the Institution of Engineers Australia, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW. Graham has been a RSNSW Council Member and Assistant Webmaster since 2025.

A HINGE OF HISTORY

Tipping Points & Existential Risks

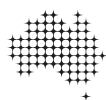


Royal Society of
New South Wales
event information

The Forum is held under the auspices of Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales. The Royal Society of New South Wales acknowledges the generous support of Her Excellency and the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer.



Livestream
registration
& tickets



Australian
Academy of Health and
Medical Sciences



Australian
Academy of the
Humanities



Australian Academy of
Technological Sciences
& Engineering
1975-2025