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ROYAL  
SOCIETY  
NEW SOUTH WALES

## The Bulletin 498

### October 2025

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#### A message from the President

Dear <<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

On 1 September, I joined the visit to the Mount Annan Botanic Garden, organised by Debbie Perik and Emeritus Professor Robert Clancy. It was perfect weather for the start to what has been a rather mixed spring. Some 30 of us gathered for lunch in the gardens café before the director, Professor Brett Summerell, led a fascinating tour of the collection. The Australian Plant Bank and the National Herbarium are housed in a new and spectacular 'biourban' building, designed by McGregor Coxall, which celebrates sustainability, connectivity, and cultural restoration. We were also told of a new *Grevillea* cultivar, *Grevillea Hills Hoist* — a nod to South Australian culture!



On 3 September, our Treasurer, Emeritus Professor Peter Wells, spoke on '[Bringing Financial Reporting into the 21<sup>st</sup> century](#)' following the online 1334th OGM. Not a blatantly gripping theme, his talk was a fascinating take on the extent to which regulatory delays can have an impact on global productivity. His passion for the topic was infectious and attracted lively online debate. His presentation is now [available on YouTube](#), should you wish to catch up, and a [report](#) is included later in this newsletter.

Later that month, on 18 September, Professor Fred Watson addressed the Southern Highlands Branch on the topic '[Tomorrow's Universe: the discoveries that will change science](#).' A [report on this talk](#), provided by the Branch Chair, Anne Wood, is available later in this Bulletin.

We continue to have an active program of events as we come to the end of what has been a busy year. While these are listed below in this Bulletin, I draw your attention to the Annual RSNSW and Learned Academies Forum to be held at Government House, Sydney, on Thursday, 6 November. The Program Chair, Professor Sally Cripps, has brought together an outstanding program titled '[AI: The Hope and The Hype](#)', for which we express our sincere thanks. The uptake for the Forum has been outstanding, with all available face-to-face places taken up within 12 hours of the opening of registrations. If you missed out on a place, please note that the event will be [livestreamed](#) and recorded for subsequent availability on YouTube.

On 9 September, the Executive Committee held an extraordinary meeting. Sean Brawley, who chairs the Membership Engagement Working Group, led a discussion of possible new categories of members and fellows, and the ways we might engage and communicate with such groups. What is our value proposition? Can we attract fellows and members from outside academia and the public service? What do we offer? Do we address issues that matter with an evidence-based interdisciplinary approach? Can we claim to be a respected forum where knowledge, innovation, and leadership intersect? How can we collaborate with corporations and the broader society to reflect on and reshape society? These are ambitious targets and we need to be able to deliver on our promises.

Finally, I am delighted to announce that the Council has approved a new award, the Herbert Huppert Medal. Professor Herbert Huppert FRS is one of our most distinguished international fellows. He was born in Sydney in 1943, and he received his early education at Sydney Boys High School (1956–59). He graduated in applied mathematics from the University of Sydney with first-class honours, a University medal and the Barker Travelling Fellowship in 1964. He completed a PhD at the University of California, San Diego and then moved to Cambridge in 1968. He served on the Council of the Royal Society (2001–03) and was Chairman of a Royal Society Working Group on bioterrorism, which produced a Report entitled 'Making the UK Safer', on 21 April 2004. He was also chair of the European Academies Science Advisory Committee (EASAC) Working Group, which produced a report for the European Parliament and President on carbon capture and storage. He was awarded the 2011 Bakerian Lecture for his research into geological fluid dynamics, as well as a Royal Medal in 2020 and a global Australian award in 2022.

This award, the first for our Society to have an international focus, provides an opportunity for an Australian based in the UK to present a guest lecture electronically (or, if they are visiting Australia and scheduling can be achieved, a live lecture) to the Royal Society of NSW. As well as sharing important research with a general audience, the award will strengthen collaborative links and joint academic activities between Australia and the UK. The recipient will either be an Australian citizen or have worked or studied in Australia for several years, and will have recently produced research that is outstanding in quality, impact, and of general interest. Applicants who are early to mid-career, and who have retained active engagement with Australia, or who are planning to move back to Australia, are particularly invited to apply. The recipient will receive a medal from the Royal Society of NSW, and their lecture will be recorded and made available via the Society's webpage and YouTube channel.

Christina Slade FRSN

[President](#)

[Royal Society of New South Wales](#)

**For your diary**

The Society's annual events program is published in the online [Events Calendar](#), which is updated regularly.

- [1335th Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture](#) (Wednesday, 1 October 2025, 6.00–7.30 pm AEST, Michael Crouch Room, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW) *Have universities become too political?*, The Honourable Bill Shorten, Vice-Chancellor, University of Canberra, in conversation with Professor Merlin Crossley AM FRSN, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality), UNSW Sydney
- [Southern Highlands Branch Meeting 2025-9](#) (Thursday, 16 October 2025, 6.30–7.30 pm AEDT, RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room) *Peering at the Sky with Nature's Telescopes*, Professor Geraint Lewis FRSN FLSW, Sydney Institute of Astronomy, School of Physics, University of Sydney
- [Lunchtime series: Provocations and Inspirations – October 2025](#) (Tuesday, 21 October 2025, 12.30 – 2.00 pm AEDT, Union, University and Schools Club, 25 Bent Street, Sydney) *What role for innovation and design in solving Australia's housing crisis*, Professor Anthony Burke, Presenter of Restoration Australia & Grand Designs Australia, ABC TV, and Professor Architecture, University of Technology Sydney
- [New England North West Branch Meeting 2025-1](#) (Wednesday, 29 October 2025, 5.00–7.30 pm AEDT, NOVA, 122 Faulkner Street, Armidale NSW 2350) *Building resilient futures: Empowering rural youth and preventing crime*, Dr Kyle Mulrooney, School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, University of New England
- [RSNSW and Learned Academies Forum 2025](#) (Thursday, 6 November 2025, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm AEDT (followed by refreshments), Government House Sydney and live streaming, *AI: The Hope and The Hype*
- [1336th Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture](#) (Wednesday, 12 November 2025, 6.00–7.30 pm AEDT, Zoom webinar) *Arts-based Community Interventions for Youth Mental Health*, Professor Katherine Boydell FASSA, Professor of Mental Health and Director, Arts-based Knowledge Translation Lab, Black Dog Institute
- [Southern Highlands Branch Meeting 2025-10](#) (Thursday, 20 November 2025, 6.30–7.30 pm AEDT, RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room) *Laughing at other people's pain: Why we do it and is it ethical*, Dr Jessica Milner Davis FRSN, Honorary Research Associate, University of Sydney
- [1337th Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture](#) (Wednesday, 3 December 2025, 6.00–7.30 pm AEDT, Michael Crouch Room, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW) *AI and the transformation of the Australian labour market – the role of Jobs and Skills Australia*, Professor Barney Glover AO FRSN FTSE, Commissioner, Jobs and Skills Australia

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## News

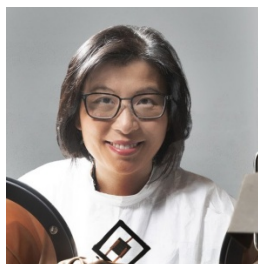
### Society Fellows and Award Recipients among 2025 Eureka Prizes winners

The Royal Society of New South Wales is delighted to learn that four of its Fellows and previous RSNSW award winners have been awarded Australian Museum Eureka Prizes for 2025 at a

ceremony held in Sydney on the evening of Wednesday, 3 September. They are **Professor Anita Ho-Baillie FRSN** and **Professor Thomas Maschmeyer AO FRSN FAA FTSE** of the University of Sydney, and **Distinguished Professor Ian Paulsen FRSN FAA** and **Associate Professor Noushin Nasiri** of Macquarie University.



**Professor Anita Ho-Baillie**, of the University of Sydney and winner of the RSNSW 2022 Warren Prize, has won the 2025 Eureka Prize for Sustainability Research. Driving efficiency of solar cell energy conversion from about 30 per cent to 40 per cent, Anita Ho-Baillie combines multiple semiconductor materials, such as metal halide perovskites, into one solar cell to better utilise the solar spectrum. She has solved thermal and moisture instability problems with perovskite solar cells, a major leap towards commercialisation.



**Professor Thomas Maschmeyer**, of the University of Sydney, has won the 2025 Eureka Prize for Societal Impact of Science. Thomas Maschmeyer has developed a scalable technology that converts biomass and mixed plastics into sustainable aviation fuels and chemicals for the circular economy. By turning pollution into a valuable resource, his process reduces emissions, keeps waste out of landfill and helps industry decarbonise. International adoption is accelerating societal impact.



**Distinguished Professor Ian Paulsen**, of Macquarie University, has won the 2025 Eureka Prize for Leadership in Science. Ian Paulsen has transformed synthetic biology from a niche science in Australia to a national strength. He leads the Australian Genome Foundry and the ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology, which has spun out nine start-up companies that have raised more than \$200 million in venture capital.



**Associate Professor Noushin Nasiri**, of Macquarie University and winner of the RSNSW 2021 Warren Prize, is the leader of the *Fission Chips Team* that has won the 2025 ANSTO Eureka Prize for Innovative Use of Technology. In a paradigm shift for nanosensor production, Noushin Nasiri and her Fission Chips Team developed a cheaper, more efficient sensor using non-toxic vinegar in a special low-temperature joining technique. The sensors have a myriad of applications in smart, wearable systems, such as monitoring skin cancer risk or pregnancies in cattle.



To read more about all Eureka Award winners for 2025, please browse [this link](#) on the Australian Museum website.

The Council of the Royal Society of New South Wales extends warm congratulations to each of the above finalists on this recognition of their achievements.

## Victoria Haskins traces travelling ayahs and amahs in Australia's past

The stories of South Asian and Chinese ayahs and amahs — nursemaids and domestic servants — reveal crucial details about women's domestic labour, race and class in Australia's settler colonial history.

In a recent article, titled '[Tracing the travelling ayahs & amahs in Australia's colonial past](#)', published on the Australian Academy of Humanities website, University of Newcastle historian, **Professor Victoria Haskins FRSN FAHA**, wonders: why such stories remain elusive?

In this ARC-funded research, Professor Haskins explores why these women's stories are largely undocumented and forgotten, despite their presence in Australia's colonial past, and their transcolonial movement across the British Empire.



## Fellow, James Renwick, appointed to the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia

The appointment of **Dr James Renwick AM CSC SC FRSN** as a Judge of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (Division 2) was announced by the Chief Justice of the Court, the Hon. William Alstergren AO, on 8 September 2025.

Prior to his appointment to the FCFCOA, Dr Renwick was a leading silk with 12 Wentworth Selborne Chambers, with a diverse appellate, administrative, public law, commercial, regulatory and inquiry practice.

He completed his undergraduate law studies at the University of Sydney and was admitted as an Australian legal practitioner in 1985. He signed the Bar Roll in NSW in 1996 and was later appointed as Senior Counsel in NSW in 2011.

Additionally, Dr Renwick serves as the Deputy Judge Advocate General—Navy in the Australian Defence Force and is a Commodore in the Royal Australian Navy.

Dr Renwick completed his doctorate in constitutional law at the Australian National University, and was elected as an Honorary Master of the Bench at Inner Temple, London and a Fellow at the Australian Academy of Law. He was inducted as a Member of the Order of Australia in 2023 for 'significant service to the law and to national security' and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW in 2022.



The Council of the Royal Society of NSW extends warm congratulations to Dr Renwick on his new appointment.

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## **Society welcomes new Members and Fellows: September 2025**

The Royal Society of New South Wales warmly welcomes 28 new members to the Society's ranks, effective from 17 September 2025.

### **Fellows**

Professor Lachlan Blackhall  
Professor Maria Byrne  
Professor David Carment  
Professor Elizelle Cilliers  
Professor Nicholas Davis  
Professor Md Zahidul Islam  
Professor Levon Khachigian  
Professor Jane McAdam  
Mr Bernard Ollis  
Dr Sarah Pearson  
Mr Christopher Puplick  
Professor Gangadhara Prusty  
Professor Antonio Tricoli

Biographical information about the new Fellows is now available on the [Fellows pages](#) of the website.

### **Members**

Professor Margaret Allman-Farinelli  
Professor Andy Hsu  
Associate Professor Gayathri Naidu  
Associate Professor Gustavo Machado  
Mr Andrew Whalan

### **Associate Member**

Dr Robert Gardiner-Garden  
Mr Robert Hamilton  
Mr Raoul Lambert  
Mr Raj Ramburuth

The Society hopes that all new Members and Fellows will benefit strongly from their membership and looks forward to their active participation in the activities and work of the Society.

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## Society Fellows, Kourosh Kalantar-Zadeh and Yansong Shen, elected as 2025 ATSE Fellows

The Royal Society of New South Wales was delighted to learn of the recognition of two of its Fellows in the recently announced list of new Fellows of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE), elected in October 2025.

They are the cutting-edge engineer and winner of the Society's Walter Burfitt Prize in 2019, **Professor Kourosh Kalantar-Zadeh FRSN FTSE** of the University of Sydney, and a distinguished researcher in computational reacting flows and winner of the Society's Edgeworth David Medal in 2024, **Professor Yansong Shen FRSN FTSE** of UNSW Sydney.



The Council of the Royal Society of New South Wales extends its warmest congratulations to both Professor Kalantar-Zadeh and Professor Shen on this latest recognition of their outstanding research achievements.

The Academy citation for **Professor Kalantar-Zadeh** notes that he is a multidisciplinary engineer and entrepreneur known for transformative contributions with real-world impact, including ingestible sensors, liquid metals, and atomically thin materials. His groundbreaking innovations span several industries, including transparent conductive glass used in mobile phones with his colleagues, smart electronic windows for aircraft, and globally deployed hazardous gas sensors. He co-founded several companies, led his team to the development of the world's first ingestible chemical sensors for medical diagnostics, and is also developing liquid metal-based greenhouse gas capture technologies.



Professor Kalantar-Zadeh's work extends beyond the lab with outreach, public engagement, and mentorship. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a Foreign Fellow of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. His achievements earned him the prestigious Robert Boyle Prize for Analytical Science in 2020 and a place in the 2019 LinkedIn Spotlight for Science and Engineering in Australia.

The Academy citation for **Professor Yansong Shen** describes him as a leading researcher in computational reacting flows and process metallurgy with an established record of industry partnership. For more than 25 years, he has specialised in low-cost green ironmaking, translating fundamental research into numerous technologies with industry benefits. His work has reshaped plant operations at some of the world's largest steel producers and has facilitated the continued export of Australia's iron ore and fuels. His dedication to advancing blast furnace modelling has revolutionised an area critical to global decarbonisation efforts.



Professor Shen has also pioneered highly efficient end-of-life solar panel recycling technology to recover valuable metals and materials, directing the ARC Research Hub for Photovoltaic Solar

Panel Recycling and Sustainability. He currently serves as president of the Australasian Particle Technology Society and has received many honours and awards.

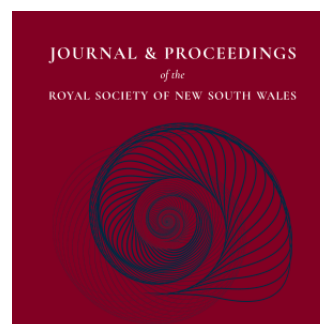
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## A new index of the 3,880 papers we have published since 1862

Has the Society ever published a paper about the poet, John Keats?

To answer this question (or any others about papers we have published since 1862), go to the new [online index](#) (alphabetical by first author) and search by author, title, or date. For almost all of the papers, there is a DOI, a digital object identifier, pointing at a permanent online location of the paper.



When I was working on making the papers published in the Journal & Proceedings since 1867 accessible to us at the Biodiversity Heritage Library, I hoped that one day a complete index of the pieces would appear. Davina Jackson's [RSNSW Bicentennial Bibliography](#) appeared earlier this year.

Since its appearance, BHL Australia has provided DOIs for almost all the papers we have published since 1862, which makes finding any paper very easy. The new index includes these DOIs. It includes the author's name, other authors (if any), year, title of the paper, journal title, volume number, pagination, and the DOI.

The paper on Keats can be found using its DOI, <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.361341>

Robert Marks

Editor, Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW

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## Events

### 1335th OGM and Open Lecture — 1 October 2025

#### Have universities become too political?

**The Honourable Bill Shorten (1)**

in conversation with

**Professor Merlin Crossley AM FRSN (2)**

(1) Vice-Chancellor, University of Canberra

(2) Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Quality, UNSW Sydney

**Date:** Wednesday, 1 October 2025,

**Time:** OGM: 6.00–7.30 pm AEST; Supper: 8.00–9.30 pm



**Venue:** Michael Crouch Room, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW, Shakespeare Place, Sydney

**Pre-meeting drinks:** A cash bar will operate from 5.30 pm

**Post-meeting supper:** An optional supper will be available from the Mordeo Bistro and Bar on Deutsche Bank Place (cnr Hunter and Philip Streets, Sydney) following the OGM

**Registration:** OGM: [Please register](#) before 2.00 pm AEST on Tuesday, 30 September

Supper: [Please register](#) before 5.00 pm AEST on Friday, 26 September

**Entry:** OGM: Members, \$20; Non-members, \$30; Students, \$0

Supper: \$88 per person (non-refundable) for a fixed menu meal

Enquiries: by [email to RSNSW Events](#)

**All are welcome**

**REGISTER NOW**

**For the OGM and Open Lecture  
before 2.00 pm AEST, Tuesday, 30 Sept.**

**REGISTER NOW**

**For the post-meeting supper  
before 5.00 pm AEST, Friday, 26 Sept.**

**OGM Agenda:** The [Agenda](#) for this meeting is now available on the [Meetings Page](#) of the website.

**Summary:** 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.

**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.

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## Southern Highlands Branch Meeting: 2025-9 — 16 October 2025

### Peerings at the Sky with Nature's Telescopes

**Professor Geraint Lewis FRSN FLSW**

Sydney Institute of Astronomy

School of Physics

University of Sydney



**Date:** Thursday, 16 October 2025, 6.30–7.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room

**Entry:** Members, \$5; Non-members, \$10 (cashless payments only please)

**All are welcome**

**ENQUIRIES**

**By email to the  
Southern Highlands Branch Chair**

**Summary:** Gravitational lensing, once a theoretical prediction of Einstein’s general relativity, has become one of astronomy’s most powerful observational tools. From Eddington’s 1919 eclipse expedition that first confirmed light bending around the Sun, to the discovery of Einstein rings and arcs revealing distant galaxies, nature’s own telescopes have allowed us to peer deeper into the universe than ever before. This talk traces the history of gravitational lensing and explores how the next generation of observatories—such as the James Webb Space Telescope and Vera C. Rubin Observatory —will sharpen our view through these cosmic lenses. With unprecedented resolution and sensitivity, these instruments promise to unveil the structure of dark matter, illuminate the early universe, and perhaps even shed light on the nature of dark energy, offering a glimpse into the future of cosmic discovery.

Born and raised in Old South Wales and passionate about astrophysics, **Geraint Lewis** spends his time unravelling the dark side of the universe, the dark matter and energy that dominate the cosmos. As a Professor of Astrophysics at the Sydney Institute of Astronomy, his research focuses on cosmology, gravitational lensing and galactic cannibalism, as well as exploring why our universe appears to be just right for complexity and life, publishing more than four hundred research articles. He also undertakes a broad array of award-winning science outreach, bringing the wonders of the cosmos to broad audiences through public speaking and writing, including publishing several world-renowned books on the mysteries of the cosmos.

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## Lunchtime series: Provocations & Inspirations — 21 October 2025

### After the Crisis: a new Australian Dream

#### Professor Anthony Burke

Professor of Architecture  
University of Technology Sydney



**Date:** Tuesday, 21 October 2025, 12.30–2.00 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Union University and Schools Club, 25 Bent Street, Sydney (corner of Bent and Philip Streets)

**Registration:** [Registration is required](#) before 2.00 pm AEDT on Thursday, 16 October 2025

**Cost:** \$75 (RSNSW and UUSC members), \$85 (non-members/guests). A warm meal and wine will be served.

**Dress:** Smart business casual (jacket preferred). [No denim](#)

**Flyer:** Downloadable from [this link](#)

**All Society members and their guests are welcome**

[REGISTER NOW](#)

[ENQUIRIES](#)

**Before 2.00 pm AEDT, Thurs. 16 Oct.**

**Summary:** The housing crisis in Australia has been well-reported. The impact of cost-of-living increases, interest rates, and mortgage stress, the growing wage-to-home price disparity, and, ultimately, homelessness are being felt across all demographics of an increasingly agitated electorate. Yet, while we all feel the growing instability and anxiety surrounding our most sacred

of institutions, the family home, the implications of the crisis for Australia remain spectacularly unclear, almost too difficult to consider.

While government and economists have distilled the issue down to simple and politically palatable issues of supply and demand, the cultural implications of our rapidly disappearing 'Australian Dream' and what might replace it, are much bigger than a balanced ledger and subsidised cheap builds on the green field peripheries of our major cities can fix.

Knowing that the solutions we implement today will have lasting implications for generations to come, this complex problem of how we will create homes for future generations of Australians and, indeed, what we will come to think of as a home in 2050 demands both careful and creative thinking. Arguably, this critical moment is nothing less than the biggest reshaping of our way of life in Australia since the Second World War.

So, a crisis, yes, but could this be an opportunity to rebalance our way of life with our Australian values? Join Professor Anthony Burke for this thought-provoking analysis of where we are, and where we're heading as Australia grapples with a reimagining of the Australian dream.

**Anthony Burke** is an internationally recognised academic and television presenter who bridges contemporary architectural practice, education and public media. Currently Professor of Architecture at the University of Technology Sydney, Burke brings infectious enthusiasm to exploring how architecture and design shape our daily lives.

Burke is widely known as the host of *Grand Designs Australia* and *Restoration Australia*, and co-host of *Grand Designs Transformations* on ABC. In 2025, he was part of producing *Culture by Design* with ABC Asia and now hosts *The Home Front* on ABC Radio National. His engaging presentation style has made architectural design accessible to mainstream Australian audiences, with *Grand Designs Australia* receiving an ACTAA award in 2025 and Logie nominations.

A graduate of Columbia University and UNSW, Burke served as Assistant Professor at the University of California, Berkeley from 2002 to 2007 before returning to Australia. At UTS, he held leadership roles including Head of Architecture and Associate Dean (International), and has held visiting professor positions at Beijing Institute of Technology and Institut Teknologi Bandung.

In 2012, Burke served as co-creative director for the Australian Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale and directed the architecture symposium celebrating the Sydney Opera House's 40th anniversary.

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## **New England North West Branch Meeting: 2025-1 — 29 October 2025**

### **Building resilient futures: Empowering rural youth and preventing crime**

**Dr Kyle Mulrooney**

School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences  
University of New England

**Date:** Wednesday, 29 October 2025, 5.00–7.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** NOVA, 122 Faulkner Street, Armidale NSW 2350

**Entry:** No charge



Registration: [Please register](#) before 2.00 pm AEDT on Tuesday, 28 October 2025

All are welcome

REGISTER NOW

ENQUIRIES

before 2.00 pm AEDT on Tues. 29 Oct.

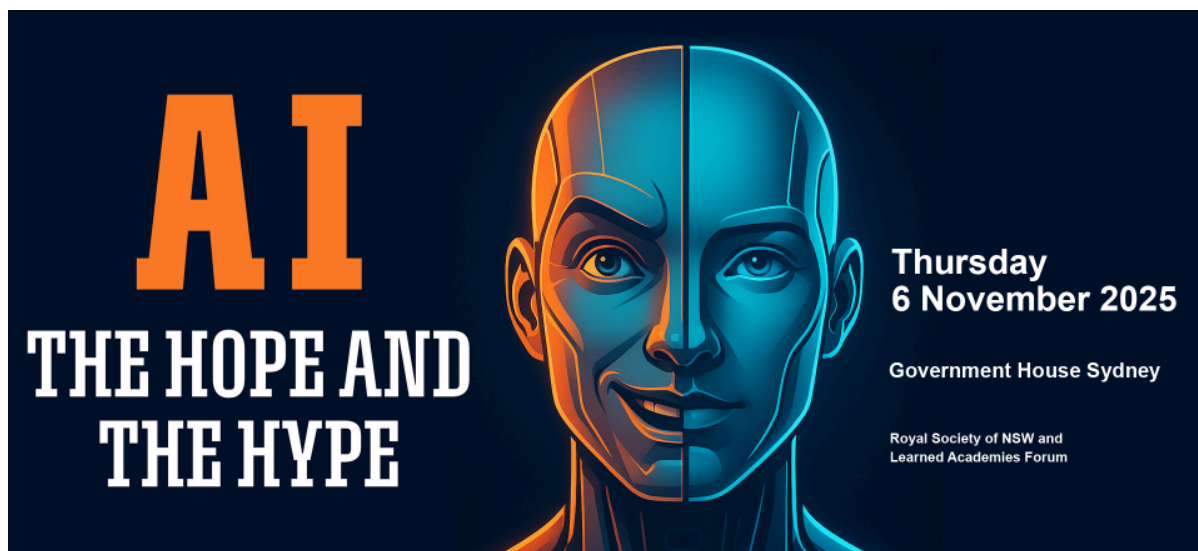
by email to the Branch Secretary

**Summary:** To follow

**Kyle Mulrooney** holds a Ph.D. in Cultural and Global Criminology from the University of Kent and Universität Hamburg, an MA in the Sociology of Law from the International Institute for the Sociology of Law and a BA (Honours) in Criminology and Justice from Ontario Tech University. Kyle has a particular interest in questions of how we as a society determine what is considered criminal, how we then respond to crime, and why we elect particular solutions to do so. Kyle's current research centres on rural criminology and explores how aspects of cultural geography and locational context impact upon the types, incidences and responses to crime and access to related services. He has published on issues ranging from crime prevention and policing to drug consumption and criminal justice. Kyle serves as the Co-Director of the Centre for Rural Criminology (UNE) and as the Vice President (elect) of the International Society for the Study of Rural Crime. He is a recognised international expert in rural criminology, with his research and work being utilised by policy-makers and industry in practice and called upon often in the media

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## RSNSW and Learned Academies Forum 2025 — 6 November 2025



### AI: THE HOPE AND THE HYPE

**Date:** Thursday, 14 November 2024, live streaming from 9.00 am–5.00 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Government House, Sydney: in person and [live streaming](#)

**Entry:** No charge

[READ MORE](#)[REGISTER NOW](#)

for the livestream through Humanitix

## Summary

Artificial intelligence today sits at the crossroads of grand hopes and rampant hype. Optimists point to extraordinary investments—tech giants like Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, and Alphabet pumping hundreds of billions of dollars into AI infrastructure—as catalysts for growth and efficiency. In the U.S., AI-driven capital expenditures in the second quarter of this year accounted for nearly half of that quarter’s 3% GDP gain. McKinsey forecasts an astonishing \$7 trillion in global AI investment over the next five years, fuelling narratives of transformative potential.

This wave of optimism has also reached Australia. Political leaders—including Treasurer Jim Chalmers—“We see AI as a huge opportunity for Australia, it’s a key part of our productivity agenda, an absolute game changer”, aligning with Productivity Commission projections of AU\$116 billion in gains over the next decade and a 4.3 percentage-point boost in labour productivity. This marks a significant shift from the earlier priority on safe, ethical deployment to one of economic opportunity.

This shift extends beyond Australia. In the United Kingdom, the new Labour government’s AI Opportunities Action Plan—backed by £14 billion in private-sector investment—marks a clear pivot from previous safety-centred messaging to one emphasising “opportunity and growth.” However, history offers a cautionary note—productivity gains are rarely distributed evenly. A recent Nature paper, Bridging the Digital Divide, examined data from 59 countries over 25 years and found that while technological innovation can enhance connectivity and efficiency, it has often exacerbated income inequality, especially in developed economies.

And then there is the question of whether these forecast productivity gains are realistic. Many economists urge caution. Torsten Sløk, Apollo’s chief economist, warns the AI bubble may rival the 1990s dot-com boom, while Nobel laureate Daron Acemoglu estimates AI may automate only 5% of jobs and contribute approximately 1% to global GDP this decade, a non-trivial but modest effect, and certainly much less than the revolutionary changes some are predicting. Emily M. Bender’s *The AI Con* also challenges techno-optimism by characterising many AI systems as “sophisticated illusions” that mimic understanding without genuine comprehension, underpinned by invisible labour and structural inequality.

A more balanced view is given by Narayanan and Kapoor, in *AI as Normal Technology*, urge us to understand AI as akin to electricity or the internet—transformative but gradual, institutionally mediated—not as a sudden rupture, tempering both utopian and apocalyptic visions.

This evolving discourse on AI’s impact is at the heart of the upcoming Royal Society of NSW Forum Day: “AI: The Hope and The Hype.” The event’s sessions, AI in Communities, AI for Health, AI and the Law, AI in Practice, and AI Research & Future Directions, offer a timely platform to explore how AI’s promise intersects with productivity, equity, governance, and societal impact.

At its core, the tension remains between hype — exuberance untethered from evidence, and hope — grounded optimism shaped by governance, ethics, and fairness. As we confront this new technology, a critical question emerges: Is AI truly different from previous transformative technologies—like electricity or the internet—or is it simply another innovation riding waves of hype?

*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*

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## 1336th OGM and Open Lecture — 12 November 2025

### Arts-based Community Interventions for Youth Mental Health”

#### Professor Katherine Boydell FASSA

Professor of Mental Health and  
Director, Arts-based Knowledge Translation Lab  
Black Dog Institute



**Date:** Wednesday, 12 November 2025, 6.00–7.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** [Zoom webinar](#)

**Enquiries:** by [email to RSNSW Events](#)

**Entry:** No charge

**All are welcome**

**LIVE STREAM**

**Please join the Zoom webinar at  
6.00 pm AEDT, Wed., 12 November**

**ENQUIRIES**

**By email to  
RSNSW Events**

**OGM Agenda:** The Agenda for this meeting will be available on the [Meetings Page](#) of the website.

**Summary:** The mental health of young people has decreased significantly in recent years, worsened by global challenges like COVID-19 and climate change. In Australia, approximately 40% of 16–24-year-olds are experiencing mental health conditions. One-half of mental disorders begin by age 14, and 75% by age 24. Young people with mental ill-health face increased risks of social exclusion, discrimination, educational challenges, and human rights violations.

Recent policy documents have advocated for a person-centred system that prioritises prevention and early intervention via ‘whole of community’ approaches. This requires diverse, age-appropriate, innovative solutions that extend beyond formal mental health services to include informal support networks and local context. In this vein, there is growing evidence to support community-based social interventions, particularly creative and arts activities. Research shows arts engagement positively impacts self-esteem, confidence, relationship building, and belonging —all linked to resilience and wellbeing. Arts-based interventions offer inclusive, non-stigmatising mental health support.

While traditionally studied in clinical settings, research increasingly demonstrates arts benefits in community contexts. Our arts-based knowledge translation Lab at the Black Dog Institute develops and evaluates creative, community-based responses to youth mental health crises. Art represents an effective research tool across project stages and a direct intervention for young

people to alleviate distress and enhance wellbeing through meaning-making, skill-building, and community connection. This presentation will describe, via three exemplars, the use of the arts in mental health research with young people.

**Katherine Boydell** is the founder and director of the world's first multidisciplinary Arts-based Knowledge Translation (AKT) Lab, based at the Black Dog Institute, UNSW Sydney, that uses art forms to produce and disseminate knowledge, evaluate its impact and make research accessible beyond academia. Her lab received the Tom Trauer Research and Evaluation award from The Mental Health Service (TheMHS) in 2024. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences Australia and the inaugural recipient of the Milner Interdisciplinary prize from the Royal Society of New South Wales. She is Executive Editor of the journal *Arts and Health*, Editor of *British Journal of Psychiatry Open*, and Associate Editor of *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, and has published more than 300 articles, book chapters and books.

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## Southern Highlands Branch Meeting: 2025-10 — 20 November 2025

### Laughing at other people's pain: Why do we do it, and is it ethical?

**Dr Jessica Milner Davis FRSN**

Honorary Research Associate  
University of Sydney



**Date:** Thursday, 20 November 2025, 6.30–7.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room

**Entry:** Members, \$5; Non-members, \$10 (cashless payments only please)

**All are welcome**

ENQUIRIES

by email to the Southern Highland Branch Chair

**Summary:** Comic pain can be appealingly funny. Think clowns and slapstick or Funniest Home Videos and cat memes online, as well as graphic formats such as cartoons and manga. Most TV and theatre comedies include some form of physical or cringing embarrassment for their comic heroes and heroines (think Mr Bean or Kath and Kim). Are we cruel and unethical to find this kind of humour amusing?

Farce is a particularly physical and violent form of comedy that manages to evoke riotous laughter yet still be considered harmless. Historically, it has been less subject to censorship than a form like satire, yet it gets away with humiliating its prim and proper victims shamelessly. A famous 19th-century French tragic actor once begged the great farce-writer, Georges Feydeau, to write a comedy starring him. Feydeau replied, "In my plays, there are only two kinds of stars: the one who delivers the kicks and the one who receives them. The most important is the one who receives them, and sadly, my dear friend, you cannot receive kicks."

What are the contexts and rules that allow ordinarily civilised and humane persons to enjoy farce and slapstick? Lessons drawn from live theatre form an intriguing parallel with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1975; 1979), which describes the human ability to consent under some conditions to acts which under other conditions would transgress an individual's own value systems and be regarded as immoral. What are these operant conditions, and do they mean we should be more discriminating in our laughter as well as our behaviour? How does modern cancel culture affect humour and laughter? The positive benefits of mirth provided by traditionally acceptable humour must now be weighed against the charge that these are not necessarily 'just jokes' nor safely innocent.

**Jessica Milner Davis PhD FRSN** is an honorary research associate at The University of Sydney and at the Centre for Comedy Studies Research at Brunel University, London. She is a member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, and has taught as a Visiting Fellow at many universities, including Bologna, Zurich, Stanford, Oxford, Hofstra and Bristol. Twice president of the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS), she coordinates the Australasian Humour Studies Network and, in 2018, received the ISHS Lifetime Achievement Award for her interdisciplinary research. Her many publications deal with farce, satire, theory of humour and, more recently, cross-cultural studies of humour in European and Asian cultures. Her latest book is *Humour in Asian Cultures* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2022).

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## 1337th OGM and Open Lecture – 3 December 2025

### **AI and the transformation of the Australian labour market: The role of Jobs and Skills Australia**

#### **Professor Barney Glover**

Commissioner  
Jobs and Skills Australia

**Date:** Wednesday, 3 December 2025,

**Time:** OGM: 6.00–7.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Michael Crouch Room, Mitchell Building, State Library of NSW, Shakespeare Place, Sydney

**Pre-meeting drinks:** A cash bar will operate from 5.30 pm

**Registration:** Information on how to register will be provided closer to the event

**Entry:** OGM: Members, \$20; Non-members, \$30; Students, \$0

Enquiries: by [email to RSNSW Events](#)

**All are welcome**



#### **Business of the Meeting**

The Agenda for the Ordinary General Meeting will be made available on the [Meetings](#) page of the website.

**Summary:** Professor Glover will discuss the implications of generative AI, and AI more broadly, on the Australian labour market, based on the findings of Jobs and Skills Australia's Generative

AI Capacity Study.

**Professor Barney Glover AO** began his five-year term as Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia in 2024.

Professor Glover is a distinguished academic leader, an accomplished mathematician, and a mathematics educator with significant experience in developing strong relationships with the vocational education sector. He is well respected for his engagement with First Nations Australians and disadvantaged communities.

He was Vice-Chancellor and President of Western Sydney University for ten years, from 2014–2024, and in 2019 was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to tertiary education, professional associations and cultural organisations. In 2015, Professor Glover was awarded the title of Emeritus Professor for his outstanding leadership whilst Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin University from 2009 to 2013. Professor Glover was awarded the title of Emeritus Professor and an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Western Sydney University in 2024 in recognition of his decade of leadership.

Professor Glover has served on the boards of a diverse range of corporate organisations and several state and national centres covering areas such as health and medical research, energy, mineral exploration, and telecommunications.

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## Branch and Program Reports

### Report from the Activities with Impact Program

The Society provides an active program of events in Sydney and through its Hunter, New England North West, Southern Highlands, and Western NSW branches. With events planned and held recently by the branches reported separately in this Bulletin, this section focuses on the Master Plan's *Activities with Impact* program and events held in Sydney.



### Visit Program Report: 1 September 2025

#### Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan

The first day of spring was warm and sunny for our visit to the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan. We were a group of twenty-nine and were delighted that four friends from the Southern Highlands Branch joined us.

Our host, Professor Brett Summerell AM, Chief Scientist and Director of Science, Education and Conservation, generously provided insights into the origins of botanic research in Australia, the development and current work at this Botanic Garden facility, and the challenges for the future of our environment.

At the National Herbarium of NSW, we were intrigued by cases displaying historical approaches to plant specimen collection and their



examination for classification. It was interesting to see staff and volunteers preparing specimens for their path through the many stages of study and preservation. We also noted the collaboration with scientists and botanic institutions worldwide, as evidenced by the many red plastic boxes ready for outgoing exchange. In the PlantBank, we learned about the treatment of seeds for preservation, including their progress from drying to reduce water content to cold storage in seed vaults at 4°C, and long-term storage at -18°C.



Outside, in the nurseries, we saw work in progress on the critically endangered Native Guava, once common along the east coast of NSW and susceptible to Myrtle Rust fungus. It is an example of the importance of conservation genomic research to create a living insurance collection before a plant becomes extinct in the wild. We also saw numerous examples of Wollemi Pines. Professor Summerell updated us on its survival story and how establishing this genetically diverse living collection of Wollemi Pine contributes to overall conservation efforts.



It was an enlightening visit, showcasing the beauty of the landscape with sympathetic architecture, diverse external textures, and scientific elements integrated into the design.

We departed with a new appreciation for the efforts and advances our Botanic Gardens make towards the care for, and the preservation of our environment.

Debbie Perik MRSN  
Secretary, RSNSW Activities with Impact Working Group

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## 1334th OGM and Open Lecture: Presentation Report — August 2025

### Bringing Financial Reporting into the 21st Century

**Emeritus Professor Peter Wells FRSN**

UTS Business School

University of Technology Sydney

Peter Wells, an accounting academic at the University of Technology Sydney and Treasurer of the Royal Society of NSW, has dedicated over 30 years to studying financial reporting and its role in financial markets. His career began in a major accounting firm and the finance sector, and he has since contributed extensively to the advancement of Digital Financial Reporting. A Fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, Peter served on the NSW Regional

Council, including a term as Chair. He has authored reports and made parliamentary submissions on financial reporting practices and currently serves as Treasurer of the Royal Society of NSW. His work highlights the urgent need for reform and raises critical questions about responsibility, risk, and the future direction of financial reporting in Australia.



Peter spoke about the issues of Digital Financial Reporting to the Society at the 3 September [OGM and Open Lecture](#), outlining the history. Traditional financial reporting formats have remained largely unchanged for over 150 years, despite refinements in accounting processes. However, the growing complexity and volume of corporate information—especially with the inclusion of climate and sustainability data—have rendered these formats outdated. He described Digital Financial Reporting models that have been adopted by major global capital markets. He assured us that the use of these models allows efficient, accurate access and computer-based analysis of vast datasets, including through the use of AI. He further assured us that the new models were not too complex, although not entirely convincingly. Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have not adopted Digital Financial Reporting. We thus lag behind major global capital markets with a loss of competitiveness. He argued that our companies cannot attract global investment because their accounts are not up to speed.

He offered a fascinating insight into how failure to update regulatory models can have a long-term impact on productivity. A roller coaster of financial fun that is now [available on our YouTube channel](#).

Christina Slade FRSN  
President, RSNSW

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## Southern Highlands Branch Report

### Presentation Report— 18 September 2025

#### Tomorrow's University:

##### **The Discoveries that will change Science**

#### **Professor Fred Watson AM**

Honorary Professor

School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences

Macquarie University



Professor Watson began his lecture with the request that the main lighting in the grand Carrington Room be turned very low. Immediately in the semi-darkness, his opening depictions of the Milky Way showed a good deal of bright pink colouration, the pink clouds being caused by glowing hydrogen. He emphasised that images such as this are not yet possible from conventional photography. The scientific photographs of the Milky Way that followed clearly showed the Dark Emu and the 'Coal



Sack', made up of swirling clouds of gas and dust. Fred reminded us that our Sun is just one of 400 billion similar bodies in our galaxy.

Professor Watson says astronomy is in a golden age, with advanced telescopes letting us explore further back in space and time. As we observe more distant regions, structures get younger until stars disappear, replaced by a microwave glow. Looking back even further, we reach a point when the Earth was radiant after the Big Bang, and beyond that, a wall of primordial radiation marks the observable edge of the universe, created about 13.8 billion years ago. This is the oldest thing that man can see at present.

Fred Watson drew a vivid comparison between the wall of radiation resulting from the Big Bang and the view we see when looking out to sea at the horizon on Earth. Swimmers know that they can see no further than the horizon, but also know there is probably much more to be seen over it, nevertheless. Scientists now know that the wall of radiation is characterised by a series of extraordinary 'lumps and bumps'. These features have resulted from sound waves in the expanding plasma of brightly glowing gas from the bang of the Big Bang. Scientists have termed these remarkable features Baryonic Acoustic Oscillations.

This was a remarkable lecture by a scientist and astronomer who has recently held unique positions in Australia. Fred worked at both of Britain's Royal Observatories before joining the Australian Astronomical Observatory as Astronomer-in-Charge in 1995, followed by his appointment as Astronomer-at-Large from 2018 to 2024. Today, he and his wife spend much of their time conducting world astronomy tours for appreciative travellers. Fred suggested that he may perhaps now be dubbed as 'Astronomer on the Loose'!

Anne Wood FRSN  
Chair, RSNSW Southern Highlands Branch

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## **The Society and Social Media**

The Society's presence on our social media channels—[Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X/Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#)—is engaging an increasing following, and we continue to build our repository of events on YouTube.

The YouTube channel now has almost 1,520 subscribers, while the 208 full-length videos and 'shorts' that are online have received over 178,000 views.

The social media icons at the end of this newsletter will take the reader to our pages on these platforms, from where you can follow, subscribe, and be notified of new content.

*As a Society member, please consider subscribing to our social media channels to support the Society's outreach and encourage your friends, colleagues and members of your networks to do so.*

## **YouTube recordings of recent events**

All online presentations and all face-to-face presentations held in Sydney and by the Hunter, New England North West, and Western NSW Branches are recorded and uploaded to the

Society's YouTube channel. These can be accessed directly from our [YouTube channel](#) or the [Presentations](#) page of the RSNSW website.

For convenience, the video links below provide access to current recordings and recent popular recordings. We hope that these will be of interest to members.



YouTube recording of the presentation from the 1334th Ordinary General Meeting (3 September 2025) on *Bringing Financial Reporting into the 21st Century*, delivered by Emeritus Professor Peter Wells FRSN of the University of Technology Sydney Business School. A summary of the lecture and a brief biography of the presenter are available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation from the 28 August 2025 Ideas@theHouse titled *Busting Myths, Bridging Gaps: Public Health Approaches to Hearing Loss in Adults*, delivered by Professor Bamini Gopinath, the Cochlear Chair in Hearing and Health at Macquarie University. The [online event notice](#) provides a summary of the lecture and the presenter's biography.



YouTube recording of the presentation from the Western NSW Branch Meeting 2025-3 (20 August 2025) on *Nature-based solutions for future farming* delivered by Distinguished Professor Geoff Gurr, Professor of Applied Ecology in the Gulbali Institute at Charles Sturt University. A summary of the lecture and a brief biography of the presenter are available in the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation from the Hunter Branch Meeting 2025-3 of the Royal Society of NSW (15 May 2025) on *An elegant solution to enduring problems in education*, delivered by Laureate Professor Jennifer Gore AM FASSA of the University of Newcastle School of Education. A summary of the talk and a brief biography of the presenter are available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation from the fourth meeting of the Society's Provocations and Inspirations lunchtime series held at the Union, University, and Schools Club in Sydney (19 August 2025) at which Ross Gittins AM FRSN FASSA, Economics Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald, spoke on *Solving Australia's Productivity Crisis*. A summary of the presentation and a brief biography of the presenter are available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the 2 July 2025 presentation of the 2024 RSNSW Poggendorff Lecture titled *Agriculture over the Horizon* delivered by Professor Alex McBratney AM FAA, Professor of Digital Agriculture and Soil Science and an ARC Laureate Fellow in the Sydney Institute of Agriculture and School of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Sydney. The [online event notice](#) provides a summary of the lecture and the presenter's biography.



YouTube recording of the presentation from the 26 June 2025 Ideas@theHouse titled *Extreme wildfires in a warming world: insights and challenges* and delivered by Professor Jason Sharples FRSN FTSE, Professor of Bushfire Dynamics and Foundation Director of UNSW Bushfire at UNSW Canberra. The [online event notice](#) provides a summary of the lecture and the presenter's biography.



YouTube recording of the presentation from the third meeting of the Society's Provocations and Inspirations lunchtime series held at the Union, University, and Schools Club in Sydney (23 June 2025) at which Dr Cathy Foley AO PSM DistFRSN FAA FTSE, Australia's former Chief Scientist from 2021–2024, spoke on *The Productivity Challenge: the role of innovations and R&D in Australian business*. A summary of the presentation and a brief biography of the presenter are available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation from the 1332nd Ordinary General Meeting (4 June 2025) on *AI: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, delivered by Professor Michael Blumenstein and Professor Nicholas Davis of the University of Technology Sydney. A summary of the presentation and brief biographies of the presenters are available from the [online event notice](#).



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Edited by: [Lindsay Botten](#) FRSN, Vice-President, Royal Society of New South Wales

Disclaimer: Positions expressed in this publication by the authors of articles and event presenters do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.

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