ACADEMY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

Socium

SHOWCASING EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

EDITION 3 | NOVEMBER 2026





Paul Bourke Awards

for Early Career Researchers





Why Australia needs the social sciences now more than ever

PLUS... New Academy Fellows

Rechnitz Fund Grant recipients

Socium



Cover photo: *(Clockwise from top left)* Sarah Lawless, Jessica O'Leary, Luke Ney, Christopher Hoy.
Winners of The Academy's 2026 Paul Bourke Awards.

Socium magazine

Socium is a Latin word meaning partner, ally, or companion. It signifies a relationship of shared purpose and collaboration – a fitting title for a publication by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

Socium showcases the work of the Academy, and the more than 750 leading social science researchers and professionals that make up our Fellowship.

The breadth of the social sciences means that our elected Fellows are experts in diverse fields including economics, history, education and law, through to psychology, linguistics, anthropology and statistics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Australia. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay respect to the Elders of the Ngunnawal Nation both past and present, on whose ancestral lands our National Office stands and recognise any other Peoples and families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

ACADEMY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

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Socium Editorial Committee

- Professor Kate Darian-Smith
- Professor Nicholas Brown
- Professor Guay Lim
- Vanessa Barratt

WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome to this November 2026 edition of Socium.

It celebrates the impressive and sustained contributions to research excellence in the social sciences of the 43 new Fellows elected to the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. We are delighted that the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, joins the Academy as an Honorary Fellow in recognition of her contributions to leadership, social justice and public life.

In profiling the scholarship of the four recipients of the Academy's Paul Bourke Award, we recognise the innovative approaches of the next generation of social scientists. For the fourth year running, we are amplifying Indigenous scholarship through the Rechnitz Fund Grant Program, with this year's awardees undertaking some incredible work. And we are honoured to recognise the achievements of this year's three Jubilee Fellows, who have been with the Academy for the last forty years.

The past year has been one of significant activity for the Academy, as it has championed the vital contribution of the social sciences during a period of unprecedented reform and transformation across the research and higher education landscape.

The Academy's landmark *Social Sciences for Australia's Future* report was launched at Parliament House in August. Thank you to the Fellows, industry and sector representatives, and other stakeholders who gave input during the consultation process. The comprehensive Report demonstrates that social sciences are everywhere, shaping all aspects of our daily lives. For instance, one-third of the national workforce holds social science qualifications, and over half of all enrolments in both higher and vocational education are in the social sciences. I urge you to read the Report, which identifies opportunities and risks, and 31 priorities for action to ensure that our disciplines and knowledges have a robust future, and read about it on p.6.

Through multiple submissions to government and public inquiries, the convening of invited roundtables and forums, and the production of commissioned reports, the Academy draws upon the deep expertise of its Fellows to inform decision-makers and contribute to policy outcomes.

This year, we have brought social science perspectives to examinations of Australia's future higher education system and national priorities for research, development and infrastructure. It has foregrounded specialist knowledges on issues ranging from Indigenous Education policy to Australia's Asian capability. The Academy's submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion demonstrated that ongoing social science research is crucial to understand and address the complexities, inequities and fractures in Australian society.

Social Sciences Week, now a fixture in the Academy's calendar, brought a full program of public events and activities across the nation (see p.19) that reached wide and varied audiences. The Academy's flagship named public lectures — the Rechnitz Memorial, Keith Hancock and Fay Gale lectures – have also been highlights this year, honouring the contributions of distinguished social scientists to national conversations (p.17).

The Academy's Education team have continued to produce quality social science curriculum materials, support the development of school debating, and provide expertise to national discussions and actions on civics education. In its international work, the Academy has worked with government and partners to manage grant programs, and to more broadly support the development of social science networks and collaborations, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

As 2026 concludes, we look forward to advancing the social sciences next year in line with the strategic objectives of the Academy. I extend my thanks to the Academy's Board, its Committees and State Convenors, its many partners and supporters and the wider Fellowship. The Academy has been most fortunate to have Dr Jodie Trembath take up the role of CEO, and her skill and enthusiasm is already apparent in leading the National Office. Last, but certainly not least, I acknowledge the talent and dedication of the Academy's National Office staff, and thank them for supporting the Academy and its Fellows this year.



Professor Kate Darian-Smith FASSA, President



ACADEMY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

BOARD DIRECTORS



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President



Professor Richard Holden
Immediate Past President



Professor Stephen Taylor
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International Secretary



Professor Mark Western
Chair, Policy Committee



Professor Marian Baird AO
Chair, Grants & Awards Committee



Professor Lyn Yates
Chair, Education Committee



Professor Felicity Meakins
Chair, Panel A



Professor Beth Webster
Chair, Panel B



Professor Nicholas Brown
Chair, Panel C



Professor Don Byrne
Chair, Panel D

A WORD FROM THE CEO



It is a privilege to join the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia as Chief Executive Officer. The Academy brings together an extraordinary community of scholars, and I am looking forward to getting to know Fellows, learning more about your work and understanding how the National Office can best support you.

My career has spanned teaching and research, university marketing and communications, and public policy and advocacy. Throughout that time, I have worked closely with academics, governments, businesses and community organisations, gaining experience in organisational leadership, stakeholder engagement and translating strategic priorities into practical outcomes.

I bring that experience to the Academy with a strong appreciation of the importance of its Fellowship, whose deep knowledge and expertise underpin the Academy's work. My focus is on ensuring we have the people, resources and organisational foundations to make the most of that expertise and support the Academy's work into the future.

As I settle into the role, I am taking time to understand the Academy's operations, its programs and partnerships, and the considerable work undertaken by the National Office and Fellows. I am particularly interested in how we can strengthen the systems, relationships and organisational capabilities that support this work, while making the best possible use of the resources available to us.

I see many opportunities to build on the Academy's existing partnerships and develop new relationships with governments, businesses and other organisations. My experience has taught me that the quality of research is only part of what determines whether it reaches and influences decisionmakers. Effective communication, strong relationships and an understanding of the audiences we hope to reach can make a considerable difference. Working with Fellows, I look forward to exploring how the Academy can support their research and expertise to inform public policy and contribute to national conversations, while respecting the independence and integrity of their scholarship.

I would like to thank President Professor Kate Darian-Smith and the Academy Board for their confidence and support, and my colleagues in the National Office for their professionalism, dedication and warm welcome during this period of organisational change.

I look forward to meeting many more Fellows in the coming months and welcome opportunities to hear about your research, ideas and aspirations for the Academy.



Dr Jodie Trembath, CEO

FEATURE STORY

Social sciences are crucial for Australia's future

In 2026, the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia published its flagship *Social Sciences for Australia's Future* report. Drawing on data analysis and extensive consultation across the higher education and research sectors, the Report explores how the social sciences are shaping Australia and why strengthening the nation's social science capability matters more than ever.

The Report was overseen by a Steering Committee of Academy Fellows, representatives from other Learned Academies, and other experts, and chaired by Academy President, Professor Kate Darian-Smith FASSA. A key finding in the Report was the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to our changing world, as social scientists increasingly collaborate with expertise in the humanities, technological studies and the sciences.

The Report published at a time of unprecedented reform within Australian higher education and research, with the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), and the release of *Ambitious Australia: Strategic Examination of Research and Development Final Report.*

This reform agenda is unfolding against the backdrop of geopolitical instability, economic pressures and increasing social fragmentation which is creating fresh anxieties and upending long-held beliefs.

It is in this context that Australia's wellbeing, prosperity and security will depend on the nation's ability to capitalise on new opportunities and work across boundaries to find innovative solutions to complex challenges — from the threats to democratic processes and institutions, to adapting to environmental change, to the future of work and placing people at the centre of technological transformation. The Report argued that as Australians navigate these changes, how we understand ourselves, our communities, and our social world is critical.

A contribution hidden in plain sight

The *Social Sciences for Australia's Future Report* explains why the social sciences matter now and for the future, setting out the scale and impact of the social sciences in tangible and positive ways to the lives of all Australians. Yet the contributions of social science to Australia's society and culture are not always fully understood or acknowledged — they are too often hidden in plain sight.

The Report examines in depth the scale and changes over time of the contribution of the social sciences to sector 'snapshots' of the school, vocational education and training, higher education and research sectors.

It found that around 50% of all university and vocational education and training enrolments are in the social sciences. These graduates are found in roles across all sectors of the economy, with 31% of the Australian workforce holding a post-secondary social science qualification.

From the foundation skills that underpin workforce participation to professional skills in law, accounting, management and more, every government, business, and non-profit organisation in Australia relies on the skills and knowledge that an education in the social sciences provides. Indeed, as the workforce is being transformed though technology and AI, it is these very 'socially-focussed' skills and modes of analysis that will ensure social science qualifications and graduates will continue to be in high demand.

Social science research is more important than ever to understanding how policy issues like housing inequality and poor health outcomes are based in our social systems. Social science disciplines provide the evidence and methodologies needed to design, deliver and evaluate just and effective public policy and programs that improve the lives of all Australians.

Business leaders and innovators rely on the social sciences through the analysis of demographic, economic, and behavioural trends that shape markets, supply chains, and consumer demand. These insights help inform decisions about future investments, workforce planning, and the development of new services and products.



Caption: (L to R): Professor Peter Shergold AC FASSA, Professor Cathy Foley AO PSM, Professor Kate Darian-Smith FASSA and Dr Carina Garland MP at the Social Sciences for Australia's Future report launch in August 2026

A growing gap between contribution and capability

Despite the scale of social science contributions and the world-class status of Australian social science research, analysis in the Report finds that there are significant pressure points emerging, including in the robustness of some disciplines.

The Report includes 31 priorities for action needed to safeguard Australia's social science capability now and into the future. This roadmap includes embedding Indigenous Knowledge System, genuine partnerships and culturally safe practices within the social sciences; strengthening research and public policy impact; and making the value of the social sciences visible to decision-makers and the wider community.

In higher education, the Job-ready Graduates Package needs to be replaced by a funding system for Commonwealth supported places that is equitable and sustainable, and supports social science programs and graduates. In the research sector, this means developing funding settings that support bold choices and investigator-led discovery research in social science, building the fundamental knowledge base for future innovation and interdisciplinary outcomes. It means recognising social scientists as partners in innovation, and ensuring that there is a strong pipeline for a future research workforce.

Launching the Report at Parliament House

The *Social Sciences for Australia's Future* report was launched at Parliament House on August 2026, as more than 50 Academy Fellows, parliamentarians and leaders from government and other organisations considered the contribution of social science to Australia's future.

The launch occurred on Census night, when Australians took part in the nation's largest and longest-running data collection activity, underpinned by social sciences research and analysis.

The Census provides a detailed picture of Australian life: where we live and work, the languages we speak, the composition of our families and how our communities are changing. But collecting data is only the beginning. Understanding the meanings of the data, why patterns emerge and how they can inform decisions about housing, infrastructure, education and public services requires social science expertise.

As former Australian Statistician Mr David Kalisch FASSA explains, *"The Census reminds us that every person, household and community has a story, and every statistic represents our individual and collective human experience. Good policy requires both numbers and understanding. The social sciences help us to identify and respond to both".*

Steering Committee member Professor Peter Shergold AC FASSA, in opening remarks at the launch of the Report, observed that if Australia is to fully realise the benefits of social science expertise, we must invest in the people and institutions that generate it.

www.socialsciences.org.au/future

The reforms now underway offer an opportunity to put social science capability to work. The challenge is to ensure that social science is not just recognised for the contribution it already makes, but adequately supported to help shape what comes next.

As Academy President, Professor Kate Darian-Smith observed, "If Australia is serious about building a prosperous, resilient and inclusive future, the social sciences must be part of the national conversation, not at its margins but at its centre."

NEW FELLOWS

Shaping Australia's policy and future: Academy welcomes 43 new Fellows

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia has elected 43 outstanding social scientists as Fellows in 2026, recognising their exceptional contributions to research, policy, public life and the advancement of knowledge that benefits Australian society.

The newly elected Fellows represent a diverse range of disciplines, including law, economics, sociology, psychology and education. Collectively, their work has helped to deepen understanding of some of the most pressing challenges facing Australia and the world.

Each year, the Academy elects Fellows who have demonstrated excellence and distinction in the social sciences. Fellowship is one of the highest honours in the field, recognising scholars whose research and leadership have made a significant contribution to public understanding, policy development and social progress.

The Academy now comprises 792 Fellows, bringing together Australia's leading social science researchers and practitioners to advance evidence-based solutions to the challenges facing society.

The newly elected Fellows for 2026 are listed by Panel

Honorary Fellow of the Academy



Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC
Australia's 28th Governor-General

Panel A: People, Place, Culture & Communication



Professor Lisa Adkins
Sociology
University of Sydney



Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh
Political science and international relations
Deakin University



Professor Hannah Badland
Human geography
RMIT University



Professor Emma Baker
Human society
Adelaide University



Industry Laureate Professor Sarah Bekessy
Built environment and design
University of Melbourne



Professor Andy Bennett
Sociology
Griffith University



Professor Lynda Cheshire
Sociology
University of Queensland



Professor Evan Kidd
Linguistics
Australian National University



Professor Emma Lee OAM
Indigenous studies
Federation University Australia



Honorary Professor Hugh Mackay AO
Human society
Australian National University



Professor Celia McMichael
Human geography
University of Melbourne



Professor Michael Mintrom
Human society
Monash University



Professor Ihsan Yilmaz
Political Science
Deakin University

Panel B: Business & Economics



Professor Carole Comerton-Forde
Economics
University of Melbourne



John Curtin Distinguished Professor Alan Duncan
Economics
Curtin University



Dr Catherine de Fontenay
Economics
Productivity Commission



Professor David Johnston
Economics
Monash University



Emeritus Professor Jörgen Sandberg
Philosophy
University of Queensland



Professor Chris Wright
Human resources and industrial relations
University of Sydney



Professor Yuting Zhang
Economics
University of Melbourne

Panel C: History, Law and Philosophy



Professor Belinda Bennett
Law
University of Newcastle



Emeritus Professor Phillip Deery
History
Victoria University



Professor Gary Edmond
Law
UNSW



Professor Julia Horne
History
University of Sydney



Professor Neil Levy
Philosophy and psychology
Macquarie University



Professor Rosemary Lyster
Law
University of Sydney



Emeritus Professor John Murphy
History
University of Melbourne



Professor Theunis Roux
Constitutional studies
UNSW

Panel C: History, Law and Philosophy (continued)



Professor Anne Poelina
Indigenous law, Philosophy and Health science
University of Notre Dame



Professor Cameron Stewart
Law
University of Sydney



Professor Emerita Gillian Triggs
International law
University of Melbourne



Honorary Professor Stuart Ward
History
Australian National University



Distinguished Professor Ben White
Law
Queensland University of Technology



Distinguished Professor Andrea Witcomb
Heritage, archive and museum studies
Deakin University

Panel D: Education, Psychology & Public Health



Professor Mario Alvarez-Jimenez
Psychology
University of Melbourne



Professor Paula Brough
Psychology
Griffith University



Professor Tegan Cruwys
Psychology
Australian National University



Professor Jessica Grisham
Psychology
UNSW



Professor Eóin Killackey
Psychology
University of Melbourne



Professor Jill Newby
Psychology
UNSW



Distinguished Professor Anthony Okely
Health sciences
University of Wollongong



Professor Greig de Zubicaray
Psychology
Queensland University of Technology

Paul Bourke Award Winners

The Academy's annual Paul Bourke Awards recognise some of the nation's most exceptional early career researchers in the social sciences.

The Paul Bourke Awards for Early Career Research are named in honour of the Academy's past president Paul Francis Bourke (1938–1999) who was a product of the History school at the University of Melbourne and went on to become one of the first Australian historians to obtain American style doctoral training.

Whilst at Flinders University, he served as Professor of American Studies and as Pro-Vice Chancellor. From Flinders University, he went on to become the Director of the Research School of Social Sciences the Australian National University and served as the President of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia from 1993 to 1997. The contribution Paul made to the field of performance measurement is invaluable to academic scholars.

The 2026 Paul Bourke Award recipients are:

Dr Luke Ney



Dr Luke Ney is redefining experimental and clinical psychology by demonstrating critical limitations in the dominant fear conditioning paradigm used to model PTSD. His research shows that intrusive memories (central to PTSD) are better explained by stimuli occurring during, rather than before trauma, challenging a foundational assumption underpinning decades of research.

PTSD is a treatment-resistant disorder with high relapse rates and substantial socio-economic burden. Progress in treatment efficacy has been constrained by reliance on incomplete experimental models. Dr Ney's research addresses this gap by demonstrating critical limitations in the fear conditioning paradigm underpinning exposure-based therapies, prompting a re-examination of how PTSD is conceptualised and treated.

Dr Ney is a Senior Research Fellow at Queensland University of Technology.

Dr Sarah Lawless



Working at the intersection of political ecology and environmental governance, Dr Sarah Lawless has reshaped how social justice principles are understood and operationalised across the institutions and policies governing social-ecological systems. With a particular focus on tropical coastal regions, she has developed practical frameworks to assist researchers, policymakers and practitioners to advance equity, rights and justice in fisheries, climate and conservation policy.

Dr Lawless is the first social scientist appointed by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) as an AIMS@JCU Research Fellow, a significant milestone for social science in a natural science dominated field. She is building social science capacity through mentoring emerging researchers and supervising AIMS-supported postgraduate students. She has also worked closely with the AIMS Indigenous Partnership team, where she led the development of research and policy guidance on blue carbon and marine tenure rights.

Dr Lawless' global advisory appointments include The Nature Conservancy, WorldFish, and CARE International, reflecting more than a decade of applied work in international development and marine governance.

Dr Lawless is an AIMS@JCU Research Fellow in Ocean Governance at James Cook University.

Dr Christoper Hoy



Dr Christopher Hoy has generated new and important evidence on people's preferences in relation to fiscal policy, fairness and redistribution in lower-income settings. Previous research had focused almost exclusively on higher income countries. Collectively, he has surveyed around 250,000 people in over 40 countries that are home to more than half of the world's population. His work has challenged the perceived wisdom in relation to people's preferences for fiscal policies, encouraging governments to be bolder in their reforms. This has resulted in the recent launch of the Policy Preferences Lab, which brings together researchers from across six continents who are interested in understanding people's attitudes to economic policies and how governments can design policies that are effective and publicly acceptable.

Dr Hoy's research has involved close collaborations with policymakers throughout the Indo-Pacific. He has partnered with the World Bank, ADB, DFAT, as well as government and private sector partners to produce important policy relevant research. This includes having conducted the first randomized control trial in Australia's closest neighbour, Papua New Guinea. Following the award of his PhD, Dr Hoy was recruited through the highly competitive World Bank Young Professionals Program – one of the most prestigious entry pathways in international policy. In 2025, he received the Sir Tony Atkinson Prize from the Society for the Study of Economic Inequality, and in 2026, he was awarded the World Bank ECA Research with Impact Award.

Dr Hoy is now the McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

Dr Jessica O'Leary



Dr Jessica O'Leary is a leading scholar of early modern global women's and gender history.

Since PhD conferral in 2021 Dr O'Leary has transformed early modern global history by establishing women as central agents in diplomacy, empire and cross-cultural knowledge production. Across two books and seventeen peer reviewed articles and chapters, including in Past & Present and The Historical Journal, she has challenged assumptions that global exchange and diplomacy were driven primarily by elite male institutions, demonstrating instead how women enabled the circulation of people, plants, knowledge and power across cultural, environmental and imperial boundaries.

Dr O'Leary has held prestigious fellowships in Australia, Germany and Brazil, including the Harold S. Williams Fellowship at the National Library of Australia, a Max Planck Visiting Fellowship in Frankfurt, and a Junior Fellowship at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America at the University of São Paulo. Her research has attracted competitive funding from Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Renaissance Society of America, Veski–DAAD, Australia–Germany Joint Research Cooperation, Japan Past & Present, and the Japanese Studies Association of Australia, and supports collaborations across Europe, Latin America and North America.

Dr O'Leary currently works as a Senior Lecturer at Monash University.

RECHNITZ FUND GRANT RECIPIENTS

This year's Rechnitz Fund Grant recipients are Dr Samara Hand, Worimi/Biripi woman, born on Awabakal Country and raised on Bidjigal Country in South Sydney and Dr Shani Crumpen from the Torres Strait Islands.

Dr Hand's work focuses on community-controlled schooling and education sovereignty and Dr Crumpen will examine local storylines within Indo-Pacific trade routes. Both researchers will receive financial support and resources from the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia to facilitate their ongoing research projects and contribute to building a stronger foundation for their future careers.

The Wilhelm, Martha, and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund was established in 2022 to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in the social sciences. Grants of up to $20,000 enable innovative and meaningful research projects and help to establish the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars.

The Academy is grateful to the Estate of Dr Wilhelm Rechnitz for its generous support of this program, which helps nurture Indigenous research excellence and strengthen Australia's research future.

Dr Shani Crumpen, Torres Strait Islander



Mua (Moa) Island Histories: Local Storylines within Indo-Pacific Trade Routes

Dr Shani Crumpen is a First Nations researcher specialising in community-led, culturally-grounded research on Indigenous archives, heritage and wellbeing. Her work blends participatory and co-design approaches with Indigenous research methodologies to produce community-centred outcomes, accessible scholarly outputs and strengthened local research capability.

Dr Crumpen currently holds the Peeneeyt Thanampool MDHS Indigenous Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Melbourne. Her practice centres on ethical governance, Indigenous data sovereignty and culturally appropriate engagement with communities and partner organisations.

Dr Crumpen's PhD examined the impacts of Indigenous Led on Country collections on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. She designed a qualitative research protocol grounded in Indigenous methodologies and collected data using community protocols and yarning methods. This work consolidated skills in archival, cultural heritage and collections research, qualitative analysis and academic writing.

Dr Crumpen's Rechnitz Grant-funded project is a localised exploration and writing of the history of Mua (Moa) Island, led by Torres Strait Islander researchers in partnership with Moa Island communities. Grounded on Country in Kubin and across Moa, the project takes seriously the everyday experiences, memories and knowledge of Moa Islanders while situating these within the broader Indo-Pacific context. It will also examine Moa's close relationships with neighbouring islands such as Badu, Mabuiag and the Inner Island group, recognising that these connections are central to Mualgal history and identity.

The project aims to demonstrate how Moa has long been interwoven with regional trade routes that connect Cape York, the Torres Strait, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Indonesia and the Philippines. It will focus on documenting and writing Mua Island histories in ways that are owned, shaped and authorised by community. Rather than treating the Indo-Pacific as an abstract geopolitical term, the project shows how Moa Island is, and always has been, part of a living maritime world of kinship, trade, ritual and movement that includes Badu, Mabuiag and the Inner Islands.

The primary outcome will be a community-approved written history of Moa Island, complemented by supporting resources for community and regional use. These outputs will be grounded in yarning, oral histories and place-based knowledge, and will be contextualised with archival research into regional and Indo-Pacific trade routes and the movement of Torres Strait cultural materials.

Dr Samara Hand, Worimi/Biripi



Mapping the road to education sovereignty: a scoping study of community-controlled schooling.

Dr Samara Hand's research examines how law, policy and governance shape Indigenous peoples' educational futures. She completed a PhD in Law at UNSW in 2025 on the legacies of genocide in education, and is now a Lecturer in UNSW Law & Justice, where her teaching and research explores Indigenous rights, education, and justice.

Dr Hand is one of five co-founders of the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition, whose mission is to mobilise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to drive a self-determined education system for the future of our Nations. This work sprang from their shared experiences of a schooling system that was not designed for them or by them, and that continues to cause significant harm.

Between 2017 and 2019, she worked in the NSW Department of Education as a policy and project officer, overseeing the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Families as Teachers and Ninganah No More programs across early childhood education services in NSW. There she saw the transformative power of education when it was led by Indigenous people and grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, as well as the violence of the state bureaucratic architecture and how it can limit the possibilities and solutions that Indigenous people are seeking.

Dr Hand's PhD thesis was titled "Beyond Educational Genocide: The challenge of addressing legacies of genocide against Indigenous Peoples in education". Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO FASSA described the project as "a vital contribution to a growing body of work that challenges foundational myths and shifts the terms of educational discourse toward justice and truth" that "articulates a powerful framework for decolonising education systems."

Dr Hand's Rechnitz Grant-funded project is a trans Indigenous scoping study of the pathways towards education sovereignty, examining how Indigenous communities across Canada, the United States, and Aotearoa New Zealand have built and governed their own schooling systems as a practice of nation building. It responds directly to the M.K. Turner Report's call for a First Nations education system in Australia by addressing a key gap: while the Report sets out a powerful vision for such a system, there is little practical guidance on how to implement the vision.

Centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities of self-determination, the study will involve yarning style interviews with leaders, educators and community members from several Indigenous education authorities and governance bodies to identify the key steps to building a self-determined education system. Guided by Indigenous theories of education sovereignty and nation building, the study will identify common patterns, critical divergences and key enabling conditions across these sites, generating a practical roadmap to help guide the implementation of the Turner Report's vision in the Australian context.

Jubilee Fellows

Since its inception, the Academy has been privileged to count Australia's most distinguished social scientists among its Fellows. In 2026, these three Fellows have been awarded Jubilee Fellowship, recognising 40 years or more as Fellows of the Academy. Congratulations to Emeritus Professor Leslie Roy Webb AO FASSA (Roy), Professor Mervyn Lewis FASSA and Professor Adrian Pagan AO FASSA.



Professor Mervyn Lewis FASSA

Elected to The Academy in 1986

Professor Mervyn Lewis is Professor of Banking and Finance, School of International Business, at the University of South Australia. His areas of speciality are monetary economics, international finance and financial systems, and until 1996 he was Midland Bank Professor at the University of Nottingham, UK.



Professor Adrian Pagan AO FASSA

Elected to The Academy in 1986

Professor Adrian Pagan is Emeritus Professor of Economics in the School of Economics at the University of Sydney and an Honorary Professorial Fellow at the Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis at the Australian National University. He has published many papers in the area of theoretical and applied econometrics.



Reflection from

Emeritus Professor Leslie Roy Webb AO FASSA (Roy)

BCom (Melbourne), PhD (London), Hon DUniv (Griffith), Hon DUniv (QUT), Hon.D.Litt (USQ), OMRI

Elected to The Academy in 1986

"I am delighted and honoured to become a Jubilee Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia.

I was elected to the Academy forty years ago, at which time I was about to leave the positions of Truby Williams Professor of Economics and Pro Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of the Academic Board at the University of Melbourne to become Vice-Chancellor of Griffith University in Queensland.

My forty years as a Fellow has given me much professional and personal satisfaction. My many friends and colleagues in the Academy have included Emeritus Professor Sue Richardson AM, President of the Academy from 2003 to 2006, and whose PhD I supervised at LaTrobe University many years ago, and Emeritus Professor Ian Macdonald, whom I appointed to the Faculty of Economics at the University of Melbourne in 1974. I have been delighted to see how their careers have progressed. I owe perhaps my greatest debt to another Fellow of the Academy, the late Professor Joseph Isaac AO, who as a friend and mentor supported me throughout my career and whom I, along with so many others, greatly miss."

ACADEMY PUBLIC LECTURES

Rechnitz Memorial Lecture

Professor Marcia Langton AO FASSA presented the inaugural Rechnitz Memorial Lecture to a full house at the University of Melbourne in July.

Professor Langton is an anthropologist and geographer, and since 2000 has held the Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. She has produced a large body of knowledge in the areas of political and legal anthropology, Indigenous agreements and engagement with the minerals industry, and Indigenous culture and art.

In her lecture, Professor Langton reflected on her experiences of *"Being and Knowing"* as an Indigenous woman and anthropologist entangled in Australian life and scholarship.

Special guests included host Professor Leon Mann FASSA and 2026 Rechnitz Fund Grant recipient Dr Shani Crumpen and her sister and fellow researcher Dr Tui Crumpen.



Caption (L to R): Professor Leon Mann FASSA, Professor Kate Darian-Smith FASSA, Professor Marcia Langton AO FASSA, Dr Shani Crumpen, Dr Tui Crumpen, Professor Greg Bamber FASSA.

Keith Hancock Lecture





Caption above: Professor Rae Cooper AO FASSA, Dr Jodie Trembath. **Caption below (L to R):** Professor Richard Holden FES FRSN FASSA, Professor Rae Cooper AO FASSA, Emeritus Professor Russell Lansbury FASSA.

The 2026 Keith Hancock lecture was held on 1 October at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, with Professor Rae Cooper AO FASSA exploring the topic: *Let's Talk About Flex: How 'Good Flex' Builds Sustainable Careers and Better Workplaces*. Professor Cooper spoke about the ways that thoughtfully designed workplace flexibility can help advance gender equality while improving outcomes for workers, organisations and the broader economy. A recording of the lecture is available by scanning the QR code.



ACADEMY PUBLIC LECTURES

Fay Gale Lecture

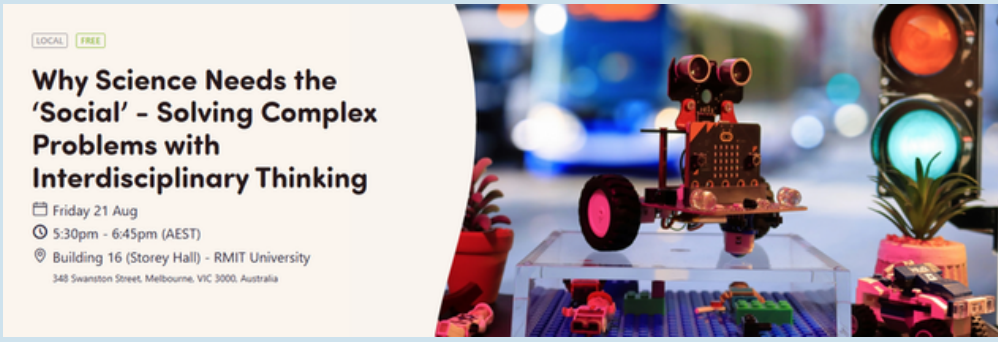


Caption (L to R): Associate Professor Daniel Marshall, Associate Professor Lauren Gurrieri, Professor Kate Darian-Smith FASSA, and Associate Professor Pam Papadelos

The Academy partnered with the Fay Gale Centre for Research on Gender to present the Fay Gale Lecture at Adelaide University on 29 October. Associate Professor Lauren Gurrieri spoke about *Representational Harm: Advertising and the Gendered Drivers of Violence Against Women.* Associate Professor Gurrieri made the case for treating advertising as a setting for primary prevention, given its powerful cultural role in sustaining the underlying social conditions that drive violence against women. A recording of the lecture is available by scanning the QR code above.

ACADEMY EVENTS

National Science Week



The Academy hosted a popular National Science Week panel event in Melbourne in August in partnership with RMIT University - *Why science needs the 'social': Solving complex problems with interdisciplinary thinking.* Panel members Distinguished Professor Lisa M. Given FASSA, FASIST (RMIT University), Professor Xavier Mulet (RMIT University), Dr Amanda Caples PhD GAICD (Victoria's Lead Scientist), and Professor Rob Raven FASSA (Monash University) and moderator Dr Shane Huntington OAM shared ideas and case studies to demonstrate how many of Australia's biggest challenges are not just technical, but deeply social.

The Great Student Debate



The third annual Great Student Debate brought together students from Lakeland Senior High School in Western Australia and Hurlstone Agricultural High School in New South Wales to debate the proposition that "Australian politics is alive and well" in advance of Australia's leading social scientists taking to the stage for the Great Debate on the same topic later that evening. Supported by the Academy, in collaboration with the National Library of Australia and University of Canberra, students spent months preparing for the event, developing their research, critical thinking, public speaking and teamwork skills. Their efforts culminated in a thoughtful debate that impressed audience members and highlighted the importance of fostering informed and engaged citizenship among young Australians.

Social Sciences Week



Thousands of attendees took part in more than 70 events across Australia between 10 and 20 September as part of Social Sciences Week 2026, including talks, film screenings, panels, debates and workshops.

Highlight events included Social Sciences Week launch event *The First Inventors* featuring Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO FASSA (pictured below right) at Melbourne's Capitol Theatre, *AI Data Centres* panel (pictured below left) at RMIT University, the *Great Debate* and the *Great Student Debate* at the National Library of Australia, the University of Sydney's *Climates of Uncertainty* lecture, Macquarie University's screening of *SOLD! Who Broke the Australian Dream?*, Western Sydney University's *Social Cohesion Symposium* and the *WA Migration Update Spotlight Forum* at Edith Cowan University.

All Federal Parliamentarians were sent an "I support the social sciences" or "Proud social scientist" pin along with an abridged copy of the Academy's newly released *Social Sciences for Australia's Future* report.

Thanks to principal sponsor RMIT University and bronze sponsors The University of Sydney, Macquarie University and Western Sydney University, eight new events were funded through the Social Sciences Week Spark Grants program.

Principal sponsor:

RMIT UNIVERSITY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

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The 2026 Great Debate: Are Australian Politics Alive and Well?







The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia's 2026 Great Debate proved once again to be a highlight of Social Sciences Week, attracting nearly 200 attendees to the National Library of Australia for an evening of lively discussion, humour and intellectual sparring.

The debate tackled the provocative topic: "That Australian politics are alive and well". Bringing together six of Australia's leading experts in politics, law, citizenship and public life, the event explored the strengths and challenges of Australian democracy from contrasting perspectives.

Arguing for the affirmative were Professor Anika Gauja FASSA, Thomas Mayo and Professor Graeme Orr FASSA, while Professor Kim Rubenstein FASSA, Professor Andrea Carson and Professor Lyria Bennett Moses FASSA made the case for the negative. The debate was adjudicated by Professor the Hon. Bill Shorten, Professor Richard Holden FASSA and Michelle Grattan AO FASSA.

While the audience's popular vote embraced the affirmative team's arguments, the judges awarded the debate to the negative team.

Hosted in partnership with the National Library of Australia, the debate showcased the Academy's commitment to fostering thoughtful public discussion about contemporary social and political issues. Recorded by ABC Radio National's Big Ideas program, the event reached beyond those in attendance to contribute to national conversations about democracy, participation and civic life.

As one audience member reflected, it was "an entertaining and passionate debate, from an excellent line-up of speakers", capturing the spirit of an evening that challenged assumptions, inspired reflection and demonstrated the enduring value of informed public debate.







ACADEMY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

Policy Impact Highlights

HOW WE HAVE ELEVATED THE SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR THE BENEFIT OF AUSTRALIA:

We made a substantial contribution to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, setting out multidisciplinary research evidence on social cohesion and turning it into actionable recommendations. The submission was listed as exhibit for Hearing Block 9.

We helped advance the national conversation on Asia capability, contributing submissions, supplemental papers and expert evidence to a parliamentary inquiry that recommended a ten-year National Asia Capability Strategy, alongside 34 recommendations. The inquiry's final report noted the importance of Asia-related skills and knowledge to Australia's future security and economic prosperity.

We convened two roundtables between First Nations scholars and the Department of Education, creating a direct pathway for Indigenous-led research evidence to shape the development of the new First Nations Education Policy.

Our deep project work continues to be a catalyst for enhancing Australian social science research infrastructure. *The Decadal Plan for Social Science Research Infrastructure 2024-33* underpinned significant initiatives outside of the Academy including the *Social Science Research Infrastructure Network* and the *Open Science at the ABS* program.

Find out more about the Academy's Policy work here:
https://socialsciences.org.au/our-work/policy/

BY THE NUMBERS



3
Landmark reports and commissioned policy projects



4
Roundtables and Forums to inform government and policy-makers



11
Submissions to government and public inquiries



more than
100
Fellows engaged in policy activities

EDUCATION PROGRAM

Empowering young democratic citizens

More than 50 students from Years 7 to 11 at Epping Secondary School developed their research, critical thinking, public speaking and debating skills through a two-day education program delivered by the Academy in partnership with State Library Victoria and RMIT University.

Students participated in workshops and mentoring sessions before putting their new skills into practice across six debates, supported by teachers, RMIT staff, preservice teachers and Academy representatives.

Professor Lyn Yates FASSA praised the program, noting that "the preparation by students and teachers in association with Academy mentors was excellent" and that students demonstrated "a high level of both debating skills and substantive research-based arguments".

Held during Social Sciences Week 2026, the program demonstrated the value of collaboration between schools, universities and Learned Academies in developing students' skills and inspiring the next generation of informed citizens.







Strengthening civic understanding

The Academy recently contributed to national discussions on civics education and social cohesion through participation in a high-level roundtable hosted by the Governor-General and convened by the Hon Robert French AC FASSA, Chair of the Constitution Education Fund Australia (CEFA).



The Civics Education and Social Cohesion Roundtable gathered 55 representatives from 30 organisations involved in civics education, democratic participation, citizenship and social cohesion. Professor Lyn Yates FASSA and Chair of the Academy's Education Committee, and Academy staff member Cindy Bin Tahal represented the Academy at the event.



Participants were invited to share statements outlining their organisations' current activities, identify gaps in civics education, and propose priorities for strengthening civic literacy across Australia. These contributions revealed a strong consensus that civic knowledge, democratic participation and social cohesion require renewed attention, both within schools and across the broader community.

Following the Roundtable, an implementation group led by Justice Robert French (and with the Academy represented by Professor Lyn Yates) was set up to incorporate a Council for Civics and Citizenship Education in Australia which is now underway, with support from CEFA.

These initiatives to strengthen civics and citizenship education in Australia are broad ones, not just confined to the school curriculum, and will provide opportunities for future participation from Fellows once the Council is established.

Building strong relationships in the region

The Academy's international programs continue to strengthen social science capability, collaboration and policy engagement across the Indo-Pacific.

Boosting Social Sciences and their Contribution to Better Lives Across the Indo-Pacific

A major focus this year has been the final research activities under the *Boosting Social Sciences and their Contribution to Better Lives Across the Indo-Pacific* program. Made possible through a CA$1.2 million investment over the last three years from Canada's **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)**, the initiative has been managed by the Academy on behalf of the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC) in partnership with the Global Development Network (GDN).

Since 2023, the program has supported regional research grants, mentoring activities, policy papers and collaborative networks, with a particular emphasis on empowering women, early and mid-career researchers, and scholars from developing countries. The program concludes at the close of 2026.

Australia-France Indo-Pacific Studies Program

The Academy has also continued to administer the *Australia-France Indo-Pacific Studies Program*, supported by the **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)**. With support from grants provided by the Academy through this program, grant recipients and visiting fellows have undertaken work contributing to stronger Australia-France strategic engagement and deeper connections between Australian, French and Indo-Pacific researchers and policymakers. Their projects address issues of regional significance, including climate change, environmental sustainability and evolving geopolitical trends.

Australia-France Social Science Collaborative Workshops

International collaboration has also been advanced through the 2026 *Australia-France Social Science Collaborative Workshops* grants, delivered in partnership with the **Embassy of France in Australia**. Two workshops were supported this year: Dependencies, Disruptions, and Futures: Building an Australia-France Alliance on the Social Science of Antibiotics and Antimicrobial Resistance and Connecting the Sea of Islands: Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity for Ecosystem-based Adaptation for Climate Resilience. Together, these initiatives are fostering new research partnerships and generating social science knowledge to address shared regional and global challenges. We look forward to continuing our MOU with the Embassy of France in Australia into 2027.



FELLOWSHIP STATE EVENTS: *State Convenors*

New South Wales



Professor Marian Baird



Professor Michele Ford

Victoria / Tasmania



Professor Greg Bamber



Professor Jenny Lewis

Australian Capital Territory



Professor Linda Botterill

South Australia



Professor Andrew Goldsmith



Professor Tracey Wade

Queensland



Professor Neal Ashkanasy

Western Australia



Professor Loretta Baldassar



Professor Kanishka Jayasuriya



Professor Garry Rodan

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