

Democracy Innovation Festival 2026

Festival Handbook

Monday, 17 to Tuesday, 18 August 2026

City West Campus, Adelaide University

Presented by School of Law, in partnership with democracy-focused organisations and networks.



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Acknowledgment of Country

Kurna Miyurna, Kurna yarta, ngadlurlu tampinhi. We acknowledge the Kurna people and their land.

The Kurna people are the Traditional Owners of the lands that are home to our Law School.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We also acknowledge other First Nations across Australia with which we conduct business, their Elders, ancestors, cultures, and laws.

We respect the sovereign authority of First Nations' systems of law, justice and responsibility, obligation and decision-making, and the ways these continue to shape relationships with Country, community and culture.

As a law school at Tirkangkaku, we seek to honour First Nations' laws, governance and justice, which have existed from time immemorial.

We reflect on what it means to study, teach and practice law on lands where sovereignty was never ceded.

We pay our respects to the owners and custodians of these laws, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples joining us today.

Ngadlu padninhi kumangka, we walk together.

Democracy Innovation Festival: Securing Healthy Societies Through Democratic Renewal

Festival Handbook

Adelaide University, in partnership with [Democracy 2036](#), invites you to be part of a bold and timely conversation about the future of democracy. The Democracy Innovation Festival brings together leading Australian and international thinkers, policymakers, researchers, students, civic leaders, and community advocates to explore how democratic systems can be renewed to support healthier, more resilient, and more inclusive societies.

At a time of declining trust in institutions, rising political polarisation, and rapid technological change, this two-day hybrid festival examines the foundations of democratic life - from civic participation and education to governance, artificial intelligence, and Indigenous sovereignty - and asks:

How can we strengthen democracy for the challenges ahead?

Grounded in Adelaide University's Personal and Societal Health Research Strategy, the Festival recognises that democratic institutions, civic trust, and political equality are essential to both societal wellbeing and national resilience.

Designed to be free, inclusive, participatory, and action-oriented, the Festival is not just a conversation - but the beginning of ongoing collaboration and democratic renewal in South Australia and beyond.

What to Expect:

- Across two dynamic days of in-person and online programming, attendees can engage with:
- Opening plenaries and keynote conversations from leading scholars and practitioners
- Expert panels and public discussions on democratic participation, education, leadership, and innovation
- Interactive workshops and Active Citizen Labs focused on real-world democratic challenges
- Hands-on skills labs to build practical civic capability (e.g. engaging parliament, writing submissions, understanding rights)
- Sessions exploring technology, AI, and collective intelligence in strengthening democracy
- Dedicated opportunities for students, early-career researchers, and young people
- A Schools Democracy Innovation Challenge showcasing student ideas and democratic visions
- A Citizen Pledge initiative inviting participants to commit to actions that support democratic renewal

The Festival will also feature the launch of Democracy 2036; a forward-looking initiative focused on long-term democratic reform and innovation.

Whether you are a student, researcher, policymaker, or engaged citizen, this Festival offers a unique opportunity to connect, learn, and contribute to the future of democracy.

Sarah Moulds

Associate Professor, School of Law, Adelaide University

Community Partnerships

The Democracy Innovation Festival's community reach was made possible by the generous support of the Broadley Trust, Mannifera, The Don Dunstan Foundation and The Wyatt Trust. Their support gave Democracy 2036 the opportunity to work alongside Adelaide University to engage more than 25 organisations — First Nations partners, youth, multicultural, human rights, arts, and other civil society networks — in shaping a truly community-connected Festival. Many of these organisations have long worked to strengthen people's voices, ensure fairness, and protect our democratic way of life. The Festival program brings that work into clear focus — celebrating what's already been achieved, and opening the door to collaboration on future reforms that can build a stronger, healthier, and more inclusive South Australian democracy.

None of this would have come together without the generosity of the individuals behind it. Our community partner representatives and Adelaide University staff have brought exceptional energy and care to this Festival, many going well beyond what was asked of them to help make this Festival possible. We're deeply grateful for their time, ideas, and commitment.

Matt Ryan

Executive Director, Democracy 2036



About Democracy 2036

Democracy 2036 (Dem36) is on a 10-year mission to renew South Australian democracy. Our goal is to work with the South Australian community to develop a *Charter for Democratic Renewal*, setting out South Australians' ideas for improving the way we do democracy in our state. Using the Charter, the Dem36 team will advocate for tangible reforms to our democratic systems—in particular, to inform and build momentum for a new state constitution in time for our state's bicentenary in 2036. **For more information, visit www.democracy2036.org.**

Program Overview

Monday, 17 August 2026

Time	Session Title	Location	Summary
9:30am – 10:00am	Festival Welcome	Pridham Hall	Official opening of the Festival with a Welcome to Country and introduction to the two-day program.
10:00am – 10:40am	Coloniality, the possibility and impossibility of Democracy	Pridham Hall	Opening Keynote address by Distinguished Professor Irene Watson. Sets the intellectual and cultural framing of the Festival.
10:45am – 11:30am	Reimagining Constitutional Foundations and Democracy 2036 Launch	Pridham Hall	Expert panel launching Democracy 2036 and discussing long-term democratic renewal and constitutional reform.
11:30am – 12:45pm	Aboriginal Governance from an Elders' Perspective	Pridham Hall	Aboriginal Elders share perspectives on governance, leadership, culture and community through conversation.
1:00pm – 2:15pm	Putting People Back in Our Democracy	Pridham Hall	Interactive workshop exploring practical ways citizens can become more involved in democratic decision-making.
2:00pm – 3:00pm	Your Gov Relations Plan: FORE Good's Policy Model	Externally Hosted	Practical, hands-on workshop on engaging with MPs and making your voice heard.
2:30pm – 3:30pm	Civic Capability and Participatory Practice	Pridham Hall	Practical workshop introducing participatory budgeting and democratic engagement tools.
4:00pm – 5:00pm	Active Citizen Lab #1: Engaging with Parliament	Online	Collaborative workshop examining how Parliament engages with citizens and identifying opportunities for reform.
4:00pm – 6:00pm	Active Citizen Lab #2: Youth Democracy Lab	Pridham Hall	Interactive youth-focused workshop developing civic knowledge, leadership and democratic participation skills.
5:00pm – 6:15pm	Civic Capability and Civics Education	Bradley Forum	Two expert panels exploring democratic literacy, civics education and young people's attitudes towards democracy.
6:30pm – 8:30pm	ARDN/Dem36 Reboot: AI and Democracy Salon	West Oak Hotel	Discussion on Beth Noveck's new book exploring how AI can strengthen democratic institutions and citizen participation.
7:30pm – 8:30pm	Teacher and Community Leaders Training	Online	Professional development session providing practical tools for teaching civics and supporting democratic participation.

Tuesday, 18 August 2026

Time	Session Title	Location	Summary
9:30am – 11:00am	ECR/HDR Democracy Innovation Challenge (EOI)	Online	Research-focused session examining evidence-based approaches to improving public trust and accountability.
10:30am – 11:30am	Active Citizen Lab #3	Pridham Hall and Online	Practical training on using human rights approaches to influence laws, policy and democratic decision-making.
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Giving Voice: How Do Arts and Culture Support Democracy?	Pridham Hall	Panel discussion exploring how arts and culture strengthen civic participation, dialogue and democratic expression.
1:00pm – 2:00pm	Active Citizen Lab #4: Participating When Life Is Hard	Yungondi Y1-70 Enterprise Suite	Workshop exploring how democratic participation can be made more inclusive and accessible for everyone.
2:30pm – 4:00pm	Technology, Trust & Collective Intelligence	Pridham Hall	Public workshop examining how technology and AI can improve democratic engagement and rebuild trust.
5:00pm – 6:00pm	Walking the Talk on Democracy – Panel 1	Bradley Forum	Panel discussing public perceptions of democracy, democratic challenges and opportunities for reform in Australia.
6:15pm – 7:30pm	Walking the Talk on Democracy – Expert Panel	Bradley Forum	Discussion on political leadership, integrity, public trust and strengthening democratic institutions, followed by the Citizen Pledge Initiative.

Wednesday, 19 August 2026

Time	Session Title	Location	Summary
9:00am – 11:00am	How We Can Use AI to Redesign Government From the Inside Out (IPAA SA Event)	Adelaide Convention Centre, North Terrace	Special event with Beth Noveck exploring how governments can use AI to improve decision-making, public services and democratic governance.

Festival Activities (Running Throughout the Festival)

Activity	Location	Summary
Untangled Interactive Art Installation (14–20 August)	Nexus 10 Building, City East Campus	Interactive public art installation inviting participants to reflect on systems change and democratic renewal.
Schools Democracy Innovation Challenge	Gallery Walk, Pridham Hall	Student showcase featuring ideas for a South Australian Charter of Citizens' Rights and Responsibilities.
Walking the Talk on Democracy – Citizen Pledge Initiative	Online	Public commitments to democratic action and engagement.

Full Program – Monday, 17 August 2026

9:30am to 10:00am – Festival Welcome

Join us for a Welcome to Country and Welcome to the Festival – learn about what to expect in our exciting two days together!

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:



Robert Taylor

Robert Taylor, a Senior Kurna, Ngarrindjeri, Narungga, and Nganguraku man, has spent his life deeply engaged in the preservation and sharing of his cultural heritage. Beginning his journey at the age of 8 by learning the didgeridoo, Robert expanded his cultural practice to dance by age 11 and has since become a prominent cultural ambassador. His work spans over 15 years across three communities, with performances both nationally and internationally, including notable events for Prince William, Kate Middleton, and the Dalai Lama, as well as for South Australian leadership. Robert's deep connection to his ancestral lands, from the Adelaide Plains to the Yorke Peninsula, and the Murray and Coorong regions, has shaped his mission. He aims to honor the footsteps of his ancestors through a spiritual and physical connection to the land, inspiring future generations to protect and understand their cultural heritage. By carrying and sharing knowledge through music, dance, and education, Robert continues to bridge the past with the future, fostering a greater appreciation for Indigenous culture.



Matt Ryan, Executive Director, Democracy 2036

Matt Ryan is a researcher and advocate for democratic innovation, citizen participation and evidence-based policy making, with a track record of impactful contributions across local and global spheres. His research has earned recognition that includes a Chancellor's Letter of Commendation, The Bill Brugger Prize and a first-class Honours degree from Flinders University and a PhD Research Impact Award at the University of South Australia. As Deputy Chief of Staff to a South Australian Premier, Matt led a pioneering program of democratic innovation experiments, including major citizens' juries and participatory budgeting projects, which garnered international acclaim. In his role as Senior Fellow at The Governance Lab (USA), Matt has prepared international reports and developed courses that support public servants worldwide to adopt innovative and participatory problem-solving techniques. Beyond his academic and professional endeavours, Matt is actively engaged in community activities, fostering

	collaborations and driving democratic movements in Australia and beyond.
	Associate Professor Dr Sarah Moulds, School of Law Sarah Moulds is an Associate Professor in Law Adelaide University and co-founder of the Rights Resource Network SA. She is passionate about parliaments and connecting citizens and communities with law makers, and her book Committees of Influence explores the important role parliamentary committees play in rights protection in Australia. In 2022 Dr Moulds was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to explore how to empower young people to engage effectively with Australian parliaments. She is currently the Editor of the Australasian Parliamentary Review and the Deputy Chair of the International Parliamentary Engagement Network.
	Professor Judith McNamara, Dean School of Law Professor Judith McNamara is a Professor in Law and the Dean of Law at the University of Adelaide. She is a former practicing lawyer and has been an academic since 2006. Judith was previously the Head of School in the School of Law at the Queensland University of Technology. She is dedicated to supporting law students to become resilient, future-focussed legal professionals with a commitment to justice and the communities they serve. Judith has a background in professional practice. Professor McNamara's research interests include law and design thinking, legal education and the student experience. She has undertaken several legal education research projects including as a Chief Investigator on an Australian Learning and Teaching Council category 1 project investigating the capstone experience in law. Professor McNamara's teaching expertise includes contract law, legal research, ethics, and work-integrated learning. Throughout her academic career, Judith has demonstrated her commitment to innovative teaching and assessment and student-centered learning. She has published extensively in legal education and has expertise in curriculum design and learning and teaching pedagogies. She is currently investigating how higher education institutions can adopt a more responsive and empathetic approach to student engagement. Professor McNamara is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

10:00am to 10:40am – Foundations of Democratic Innovation

Opening address by **Distinguished Professor Irene Watson: Coloniality, the possibility and impossibility of Democracy**. Sets the intellectual and cultural framing of the Festival through Indigenous perspectives and critiques of democratic systems.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:



Distinguished Professor Irene Watson

Professor Irene Watson is a Distinguished Research Professor of Law with the College of Business and Law, at Adelaide University. Her research focuses on Indigenous Peoples and colonialism. Professor Watson belongs to the Tanganekald, Meintang, Bunganditj and Potaruwutj First Nations Peoples, of the South-East of South Australia.

Irene has served and advised numerous Aboriginal communities and organisations across Australia, upon advancing Aboriginal rights. She has published on the impact of colonialism on First Peoples lives and country and includes amongst many publications, *Aboriginal Peoples, Colonialism, and International Law: Raw Law* (Routledge 2015), and *Indigenous Peoples as Subjects in International Law* (Routledge 2017).

10:45am to 11:30am – Reimagining Constitutional Foundations and Dem36 Launch

This Expert Panel discussion will launch *Democracy 2036* as a forward-looking initiative that invites long-term, inclusive reimagining of democracy and South Australia's Constitution.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:

	Professor Emeritus Alan Reid AM Alan Reid is Professor Emeritus of Education at Adelaide University having held a number of positions including Dean of Education, Director of Research Centres, and Professor of Education. He has been a leading figure in some significant educational policy developments at the state and national levels; and his research and writing in education focus on curriculum, education policy, and the history and politics of public education. His most recent book <i>Changing Australian Education: How policy is taking us backwards and what can be done about it</i> (Allen and Unwin) argues for new directions in Australian education. For the past few years Alan has been working on a book and lecture series covering South Australia's political history; and he currently chairs Democracy36 which aims to contribute to community consultation about ideas for advancing democracy in South Australia and beyond.
	Dr Ainoa Cabada Dr Ainoa Cabada is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at Adelaide University. She is an emerging human rights expert whose research examines government practices that erode democracy, incite conflict and mass atrocities, and contribute to forced migration. Dr Cabada's expertise focuses on early warning of mass atrocities, refugee migration, blacklisting of political dissidents and authoritarianism. She has published in prestigious academic journals, and she has presented her research at national and international conferences.
	Professor John Williams Professor John Williams AM FAAL FASSA is the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic at Adelaide University, where he leads the institution's academic strategy, curriculum transformation, and commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. He has been co-editor and founder of the <i>New Federalist</i>, and editor of the <i>Australian Journal of Legal History</i> (now <i>Legal History</i>) and the <i>Adelaide Law Review</i>. John has been a member of a number of academic and government committees including the National Archives Advisory Council, Vice-President of the Australian Association of Constitutional Law, the advisory committee of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas and chair

	of the South Australian Fulbright Committee. In 2001 he was awarded a Centenary of Federation Medal, and in 2022 was appointed a member of the Order of Australia for service to tertiary education, the law and professional organisations. John is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Law since 2012 and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences since 2025.
	Dr David Washington Dr David Washington is the Executive Director of the Don Dunstan Foundation. David has had a long career in journalism as a reporter, editor and senior manager, most recently as Editorial Director of Solstice Media and Editor of InDaily. Beyond journalism, he has worked in a range senior communication roles: for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Sydney Olympics and the University of Adelaide. He was an adviser to South Australian Attorney-General John Rau in 2011-12.

11:30am to 12:45pm – Aboriginal Governance from an Elders' Perspective

Join us for a unique opportunity to hear distinguished members of the Purkarninthe Aboriginal Elders in conversation with Bradley Distinguished Professor Irene Watson.

Kaurna name, Purkarninthe – means 'becoming an Elder' – and the Aboriginal Elders support Aboriginal learning across the University and support to students. The Purkarninthe group consists of eight metropolitan Elders who have kinship ties across South Australia, with two members holding honorary degrees from UniSA. All are well known and widely respected for their broad range of community and cultural knowledge and leadership.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:



Aunty Roslyn Weetra (nee Branson)

Aunty Roslyn Weetra (nee Branson) was born in Alice Springs in 1949, and she is a Narungga, Ngadjuri, Eastern Arrernte and Kaurna woman. She was brought up at Pine Point on the Yorke Peninsula and later moved to Port Adelaide; she married and had 3 children; and now has 10 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren. In 1999 Aunty Roslyn graduated from Underdale with a Diploma in Aboriginal Studies and a Bachelor of Arts degree. She has worked in roles as an Aboriginal Liaison person and project officer for State and Commonwealth Departments and Aboriginal Organisations; has held the role of ATSIC Commissioner and been involved in Aboriginal Heritage and Languages – Kaurna and Ngadjuri. Aunty Roslyn is committed to a broad range of Aboriginal community boards, groups and committees that include: Researcher for cancer at SAMHRI; Elder in the Nunga Court; Aboriginal Elders Visiting Prisons; Member on Ngadjuri Nations Native Title Board; Elder involved in Yellaka Dance Group which reflects Kaurna cultural practices; Aboriginal Community Health in Adelaide SA Health; Hobbies: Writing children's stories, poems, songs, painting, watching old movies.



Uncle David Rathman

Uncle David Rathman AM, PSM, FIML, was born and raised in the city of Port Augusta, South Australia. From 1976 through to 2014 he held a number of public service positions across South Australia, including Aboriginal Community Worker, Senior Aboriginal Community Worker (Staff Development), being a member of the Australian Government Committee advising on the future of Aboriginal education, Director: Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Chief Executive: Department of State Aboriginal Affairs, Executive Director: Aboriginal Education and Employment Services, and Executive Director of Student, Aboriginal and Family Services. Uncle David was awarded the Public Service Medal in 1993 and is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders. On Australia Day in

	2000 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM), receiving his medal for services to Aboriginal Affairs, particularly for the delivery of SA Government services in the areas of education and community welfare. He was also awarded a Centenary Medal by the Australian Government. Uncle David continues to serve the Aboriginal community in South Australia as a member of both the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Board and the Board of the South Australian Museum, and as Chair of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee. He operates a small consultancy which has undertaken work for several Government agencies, non-Government groups and private sector companies. Uncle David was recently appointed Ambassador for the Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre (AACC) now in development at Lot Fourteen. He is a Member of the Order of Australia.
	Aunty Lynette Crocker (nee Smith) Aunty Lynette Crocker (nee Smith) is a Ngangkai Burka, a Senior Kurna Woman. She is a Traditional Owner and named applicant on the Local Government and Kurna Indigenous Land Use Agreement and named applicant Kurna Native Title Claim / Apical Ancestor Group (Nellie Reminemn AKA Mary Monarto). Aunty Lynette is a retiree and volunteer on a wide range of community and local government committees including the areas of reconciliation, education, natural resources, conservation, native title, cultural heritage, Elders assembly, the Arts and architecture, law, and health. Her roles include executive committee, board, and foundation membership, and advisor and consultant. Aunty Lynette has participated in the development of Reconciliation Action Plans for the Campbelltown, Adelaide and Marion City Councils and she displays a great commitment to reconciliation working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities over the past 30 years. Her passion is Community Development in particular the wellbeing of our mother earth and the wellbeing of her people, whilst her focus is the true telling of the history of our space and place and our position in the universe.
	Professor Irene Watson Professor Irene Watson is a Distinguished Research Professor of Law with the College of Business and Law, at Adelaide University. Her research focuses on Indigenous Peoples and colonialism. Professor Watson belongs to the Tanganekald, Meintang, Bunganditj and Potaruwutj First Nations Peoples, of the South-East of South Australia. Irene has served and advised numerous Aboriginal communities and organisations across Australia, upon advancing Aboriginal rights. She has published on the impact of colonialism on First

	Peoples lives and country and includes amongst many publications, Aboriginal Peoples, Colonialism, and International Law: Raw Law (Routledge 2015), and Indigenous Peoples as Subjects in International Law (Routledge 2017).
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1:00pm to 2:15pm – Putting people back in our democracy

Josh Lerner, DemocracyCo, Sarah Hill and Amanda Atlee will lead an interactive, engaging and energising workshop exploring how our public institutions can better involve citizens between elections, practical ways communities can contribute to positive change, and how everyday people can work together to make things happen. Want to connect with others who care about strengthening our democracy? Join us for a thoughtful, energising session!

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:

	Josh Lerner Josh Lerner is the founder of People Powered, the global hub for participatory democracy. He has 20 years of experience developing, researching, and supporting innovative democracy programs around the world. He previously founded and directed the Participatory Budgeting Project, a nonprofit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money. Josh completed a PhD in Politics at the New School for Social Research and a Masters in Planning from the University of Toronto. He is the author of Making Democracy Fun: How Game Design Can Empower Citizens and Transform Politics, Everyone Counts: Could Participatory Budgeting Change Democracy?, and dozens of articles exploring the future of democracy. Josh recently stepped down as Co-Executive Director of People Powered at the end of the month, to write a book on the future of democracy.
	Emma Fletcher Emma is Co- CEO of a social enterprise DemocracyCo. DemocracyCo design and facilitate sophisticated engagement ecosystems which bring citizens together with government and other stakeholders – to find a way forward on complex policy issues. They use a broad range of communications and engagement methods – but their speciality is deliberative democratic processes like Citizens Assemblies. They have completed over 120 deliberative processes – across Australian and overseas over 11 years. Emma has had a career working at senior levels of government, including running parliamentary inquiries, negotiating inter government agreements, Cabinet business and working in politics as a political advisor. DemocracyCo was formed in the shadow of Emma's greatest A-Ha! moment, when she experienced firsthand the 'smarts' and expertise which reside in community, and made a decision to channel her energy into raising opportunities for people to have a greater influence and agency.



Emily Jenke

Emily is Co-CEO of [DemocracyCo](#). With almost 25 years of experience, Emily is one of Australia's most accomplished deliberative facilitators. She is renowned for creating inclusive, engaging environments where people feel comfortable tackling complex or contentious issues, enabling groups to build understanding, find common ground and make informed decisions. She is exceptional at enabling and supporting groups to understand each other, to understand complex issues and ultimately in helping them to reach agreement or find a way forward. Emily loves working with people – not matter where they are from, what they are experiencing – her work fills her cup.



Sarah Hill

Sarah is a community connection nerd at heart. She thrives on connecting people, places, cultures and stories. Born in Switzerland and raised in Swiss-Australian culture she has grown to appreciate diversity, language and difference.

With qualifications in Town Planning, Social Science and Public Health, Sarah has gained a deep understanding of the value of community. In her part time day job Sarah specialises in community engagement across a range of local and state government projects and has done both in Australia and the UK. Sarah's volunteer grassroots community advocacy focuses on placemaking, social media storytelling, climate action, organic farming, community connection and local business collaboration. Sarah has been involved in [Imagine Uraidla Inc.](#) since 2018. She loves creating community events and watching the magic that happens when people share their stories. Sarah is super passionate about local citizens, people, being in charge of their own destiny and feeling empowered to take local action without waiting for authorities to act. Her community is her playground, and she can't wait to share what fun Imagine Uraidla have created locally. Personally, Sarah is happiest at home on her small hobby farm gardening with her two boys, husband Paul and heritage chooks.

**Amanda Atlee, City of Onkaparinga**

Amanda (she/her) enjoys seeing the sparks created when people do things outside of their comfort zone and achieve more than they thought possible, individually or collectively. That's why she has worked in community organising for over a decade now, with the team at Amnesty International Australia. Amanda has also worked for the National Autistic Society in London, campaigning for improved rights, services, and opportunities to help create a society that works for autistic people. In the end, she believes that empowering people to uncover what they're capable of is an act of human rights advancement in and of itself. While the last two years have presented some of the toughest challenges we have faced -- the energy and commitment of our activists, Amanda believes, fuels our ability to drive change.

2:00pm to 3:00pm – Your Gov Relations Plan: A Former Staffer's Blueprint for FORE Good's Policy Model



Ever wondered how you turn a community concern into something a decision-maker actually reads and acts on?

FORE Good is a non-partisan organisation whose team has taken real issues all the way to the floor of Federal and Victorian Parliament, using nothing but a one-page brief and a well-run meeting.

In this session, you'll get behind the scenes of how that works: why the briefs are structured the way they are, what makes an MP meeting land, and how FORE Good built this capability from a standing start. Practical, plain-language and hands-on, this session is for anyone who has something to say and wants it heard, no policy background required.

For further details and to RSVP for this external event, please visit:

<https://forms.gle/hKCqGK9SmvSSXXtz8>.

2:30pm to 3:30pm – Civic Capability and Participatory Practice – The Future of Democracy (Workshop)

Most people are deeply frustrated with the status quo of democracy. To build a more democratic future, we need to do more than defend the current system, elect new politicians, or enact a single magical reform. In this workshop, international guest Josh Lerner will share how movements around the world are shifting to new models of democracy. Through hands-on discussions, we will then imagine new futures of democracy, and how to turn these visions into reality.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:



Josh Lerner

Josh Lerner is the founder of [People Powered](#), the global hub for participatory democracy. He has 20 years of experience developing, researching, and supporting innovative democracy programs around the world. He previously founded and directed the [Participatory Budgeting Project](#), a nonprofit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money. Josh completed a PhD in Politics at the New School for Social Research and a Masters in Planning from the University of Toronto. He is the author of [Making Democracy Fun: How Game Design Can Empower Citizens and Transform Politics](#), [Everyone Counts: Could Participatory Budgeting Change Democracy?](#), and dozens of articles exploring the future of democracy. Josh recently stepped down as Co-Executive Director of People Powered, to write a book on the future of democracy.

4:00pm to 5:00pm – Active Citizen Lab #1: Engaging with Parliament

Co-design session exploring parliamentary engagement, barriers, and reform ideas. Outputs include citizen-generated recommendations.

This interactive session is designed to empower citizens to critically examine how Parliament currently engages with the public and to co-design practical improvements. Through a facilitated, small-group deliberative process, participants explore existing parliamentary engagement mechanisms—such as petitions, committees, and consultations—while identifying the real-world barriers that prevent many people from participating. It will take the form of a facilitated, small-group citizen process examining parliamentary petitions, and parliamentary committees; barriers regular people face when trying to engage; and what should change to make parliamentary engagement easier, fairer and more accessible.

Location: Online Only.

Featuring:



Associate Professor Dr Sarah Moulds, School of Law

Sarah Moulds is an Associate Professor in Law Adelaide University and co-founder of the Rights Resource Network SA. She is passionate about parliaments and connecting citizens and communities with law makers, and her book *Committees of Influence* explores the important role parliamentary committees play in rights protection in Australia. In 2022 Dr Moulds was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to explore how to empower young people to engage effectively with Australian parliaments. She is currently the Editor of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* and the Deputy Chair of the International Parliamentary Engagement Network.



Elise Uberio

Elise Uberio is Head of the Social Policy Section in the House of Commons Library at the UK Parliament, as well as Deputy Chair of IPEN.

Holding a PhD in Political Theory from Cardiff University, Dr Uberio's academic research has explored citizenship, multiculturalism, democracy, and political inclusion. She brings a unique combination of scholarly expertise and practical parliamentary experience, with a strong focus on helping legislatures use evidence to inform policy and strengthen democratic institutions.



Professor Cristina Leston-Bandeira

Professor Cristina Leston-Bandeira is Professor of Politics at the University of Leeds and one of the world's leading scholars on parliaments, democratic engagement, and the relationship between citizens and representative institutions. Cristina is Chair of the International Parliament Engagement Network. With more than three decades of research focused on parliamentary studies, she has built an international reputation for advancing understanding of how legislatures can strengthen public trust, participation, and democratic legitimacy. Her work explores parliamentary reform, citizen engagement, petitions, digital democracy, and the ways institutions can better connect with the communities they serve.

4:00pm to 6:00pm – Active Citizen Lab #2: Youth Democracy Lab

The purpose of the Active Citizenship Skills Labs: Youth Democracy Lab is to support young people to develop the skills, confidence, and agency needed to actively shape the democratic decisions that affect their lives. Designed as a highly interactive and youth-centred space, the Lab prioritises participation, peer learning, and practical action over formal or abstract civic instruction.

The Lab creates opportunities for young people to examine how laws, policies, and institutions impact them directly—particularly those most affected by enforcement, surveillance, and unequal access to power. Participants explore questions of rights, accountability, fairness, and voice, while learning how democratic tools can be used to advocate for change, reform systems, and centre dignity and lived experience in decision-making.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:

	Helen Connally Helen has 30 years' experience as a leader in human services. Throughout her career, Helen has taken an active advocacy role on the main policy issues that impact on the wellbeing of Australian families and children, with a strong focus on early intervention and prevention strategies. Helen's roles have included directorships at the Australian Red Cross and the Australian Council of Social Service. In April 2017, Helen became South Australia's first Commissioner for Children and Young People. The Commissioner promotes and advocates for the rights, development and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia, with a special focus to engage with and listen to children who aren't usually heard. Helen retired as Commissioner in 2025.
	YACSA is South Australia's peak body for young people and the youth sector. It works to strengthen the voice, participation and influence of young people, while supporting a capable, connected and forward-looking youth sector. YACSA brings together young people, community organisations, government and sector leaders to address issues affecting young people across South Australia. YACSA plays an important role in connecting frontline experience, youth perspectives and sector expertise with policy, systems and decision-making. It believes young people should have a genuine say in the decisions that affect their lives – and that effective policy and services are stronger when young people are meaningfully involved in shaping them. YACSA works alongside government, the youth sector and young people to help build more responsive systems, stronger communities and better opportunities for young people across South Australia.

5:00pm to 6:15pm – Civic Capability and Civics Education (Expert Panels)

Expert Panel 1: “Democratic Literacy & Civics Education for a Resilient Society”

This expert panel aims to explore how education systems, institutions, and communities can better equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to participate meaningfully in democracy—particularly in the face of misinformation, disengagement, and social change. It situates these conversations within the growing national and local government focus on strengthening civics education, recognising renewed investment in democratic literacy for children, young people, and the wider community. The session highlights how policy attention and public investment can be leveraged to translate civic knowledge into meaningful participation and democratic action at both local and national levels.

Location: Bradley Forum, City West Campus.

Featuring:



Professor Emeritus Alan Reid AM

Alan Reid is Professor Emeritus of Education at Adelaide University having held a number of positions including Dean of Education, Director of Research Centres, and Professor of Education. He has been a leading figure in some significant educational policy developments at the state and national levels; and his research and writing in education focus on curriculum, education policy, and the history and politics of public education. His most recent book *Changing Australian Education: How policy is taking us backwards and what can be done about it* (Allen and Unwin) argues for new directions in Australian education. For the past few years Alan has been working on a book and lecture series covering South Australia’s political history; and he currently chairs Democracy36 which aims to contribute to community consultation about ideas for advancing democracy in South Australia and beyond.



Associate Professor Joe McIntyre

Associate Professor Joe McIntyre is a legal scholar at Adelaide University whose research explores the role of courts, judges, and legal institutions in democratic society. Awarded a PhD from the University of Cambridge, he has taught and researched across Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and previously worked with the South Australian Crown Solicitor’s Office and the Solicitor-General’s Office. His scholarship focuses on judicial theory, judicial independence, accountability, access to justice, civil procedure reform, and legal literacy. In recent years he has become a leading researcher on pseudolaw and sovereign citizen movements, examining the impact of legal misinformation on democratic institutions and the justice system. He is the author of *The Judicial*

	<i>Function</i> and is widely recognised for his work on strengthening public understanding of law and democratic governance.
	Malcolm McInerney Malcolm McInerney is President of the HaSS Association Australia (HAA) and an experienced leader in Humanities and Social Sciences education. With a career spanning almost five decades, he has worked as a secondary teacher, curriculum leader, education manager, and university academic, making significant contributions to the teaching of history, geography, civics, and citizenship across Australia. He played a key role in the development and implementation of the Australian Curriculum, particularly in Geography and Humanities and Social Sciences. Malcolm is widely respected for his leadership of professional teacher associations at state and national levels.
	Dr Sharon Zivkovic Dr Sharon Zivkovic is the Founder and CEO of the social enterprise Community Capacity Builders which has been delivering active citizenship and social entrepreneurship programs for over 20 years. Community Capacity Builders first active citizenship program was developed with support from the University of Adelaide's Business Initiatives for Graduates Program, and the program was evaluated during Sharon's University of South Australia PhD project. It was discovered during this evaluation that program participants were unable to influence systems change. Community Capacity Builders has recently piloted a new Active Citizenship for Systems Change Program that is informed by Sharon's PhD findings and incorporates active citizenship approaches that focus on systems change. Sharon is recognised nationally and internationally for her work in systems change. In 2016, she received a Fresh Scientist Award for her innovative work in addressing wicked problems using complexity science, and in 2021 Sharon's work in Applied Complexity (Social Entrepreneurship and Wicked Problems) was recognised on the Map of the Complexity Sciences.

Expert Presentation 2: “Youth Attitudes to Democracy”

This presentation shares current research on youth attitudes to democracy, offering insight into how young people perceive democratic institutions, their levels of trust and engagement, and the factors shaping their participation.

Location: Bradley Forum, City West Campus.

Featuring:

	Professor Lisa Hill Professor Lisa Hill is a Professor of Politics at Adelaide University and one of Australia’s leading scholars in political theory, democratic participation, and electoral behaviour. Her research spans political thought, voting and democratic inclusion, compulsory voting, political corruption, human rights, and the history of liberal democracy, with a particular focus on how democratic institutions can become more representative and inclusive. A widely published author and public commentator, Professor Hill’s work has shaped national and international debates on voter participation, democratic reform, and the challenges facing contemporary democracies.
	Dr Nick Bordeleau Dr Nick Bordeleau is a Research Fellow at the Jeff Bleich Centre for Democracy and Disruptive Technologies at Flinders University. His research fits within the fields of political behaviour and democracy studies, with particular focus on the role of citizens in times of democratic (in)stability. This includes understanding why citizens vote for illiberal parties and candidates, what can explain public support for undemocratic politics, as well as making sense of political misinformation and false beliefs. His works have been published in several peer-reviewed journals including Political Psychology, European Political Science, and the Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review. He is also the co-author of Conspiracy Theories and Their Believers (2025), published as part of the Cambridge Elements series on Comparative Political Behaviour.

6:30pm to 8:30pm – ARDN/Dem36 Reboot: AI and Democracy Salon

Can AI Save Democracy? Join Dem36 and the Australian Resilient Democracy Network (ARDN) in South Australia for a short conversation about ARDN Global Fellow Beth Noveck's new book, *Reboot: AI and the Race to Save Democracy*. Co-hosted by ARDN members Laura Welty (The Australian National University) and Matt Ryan (Dem36/The GovLab), the session will start with a short Q&A with Professor Noveck facilitated by Professor Emma Thomas (Flinders University). That will be followed by informal networking and mingling, with time to connect with other researchers and practitioners over shared ideas and research interests.

Location: West Oak Hotel, City West Campus (drinks and meals available to purchase).

Featuring:



Professor Beth Noveck

Beth Noveck is the author of *Reboot: AI and the Race to Save Democracy* (Yale University Press, 2026). A professor at Northeastern University with appointments in law, engineering, policy, communications and computer science, she directs The Burnes Center for Social Change and The Governance Lab (The GovLab). Her work focuses on “Democratic AI” or how to use AI to strengthen democratic institutions and improve government performance. She previously served in the White House, 10 Downing Street, and advised the German Chancellery, and founded the White House Open Government Initiative. She leads InnovateUS, which supports free public sector learning and its research initiative the Observatory of Public Sector AI, the largest collection of data on the public sector and its use of AI. She created AI for Impact, which designs and deploys open source AI tools to improve public outcomes. In 2026, Beth joined the Australian Resilient Democracy Network as a Global Fellow and the Harvard Kennedy School as a Policy Fellow.



Professor Emma Thomas

Professor Emma Thomas is a social psychologist in the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, at Flinders University, where she serves as Matthew Flinders Professor and Australian Research Council Future Fellow. She also leads the Flinders Social Influence and Social Change Lab and holds leadership positions in the Jeff Bleich Centre for Democracy and Disruptive Technologies and Flinders Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing. Her research concentrates on the psychological mechanisms that drive political engagement, collective action, and extremism.



Dr Laura Welty

Dr Laura Welty is a member of the Australian Resilient Democracy Network (ARDN) - a collaboration of Australian researchers, civil society leaders, and government agencies established in 2024 to strengthen the resilience of Australia's democracy. The network brings together expertise from across sectors to generate practical, evidence-based research that helps policymakers and communities understand emerging democratic challenges and identify effective solutions. By fostering collaboration, sharing data and insights, and supporting policy-relevant research, ARDN aims to ensure Australia's democratic institutions remain responsive, inclusive, and capable of adapting to a rapidly changing social, technological, and political environment.



Matt Ryan, Executive Director, Democracy 2036

Matt Ryan is the Executive Director of Democracy 2036 (Dem36) and a Senior Fellow of The GovLab. Dem36 is a community-led initiative focused on renewing and strengthening democracy in the lead-up to the state's bicentenary in 2036. Through public engagement, research, and dialogue, Dem36 is developing a Charter for Democratic Renewal in South Australia.

7:30pm to 8:30pm – Civic Capability and Civics Education – Teacher and Community Leaders Training

The purpose of this Teacher and Community Leaders training session is to build practical civic capability by equipping educators and community leaders with the tools, confidence, and methods needed to support active democratic participation. Using the *Citizens Now* approach to doing democracy, the session moves beyond theory to focus on the everyday skills and conditions people need to participate meaningfully in democratic life.

The session explores what actually enables or blocks democratic engagement, centring the lived realities of young people and communities and examining what today's democratic institutions are (and are not) providing. By foregrounding youth expectations and experiences, it helps participants better align civic learning with contemporary forms of participation, agency, and decision-making.

Location: Online Only.

Featuring:



Associate Professor Dr Sarah Moulds, School of Law

Sarah Moulds is an Associate Professor in Law Adelaide University and co-founder of the Rights Resource Network SA. She is passionate about parliaments and connecting citizens and communities with law makers, and her book *Committees of Influence* explores the important role parliamentary committees play in rights protection in Australia. In 2022 Dr Moulds was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to explore how to empower young people to engage effectively with Australian parliaments. She is currently the Editor of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* and the Deputy Chair of the International Parliamentary Engagement Network.



Natalie Badcock

Natalie Badcock is a registered secondary Legal Studies, Civics and Citizenship and English teacher and an admitted solicitor. Natalie worked as a solicitor in both civil litigation and corporate advisory before transitioning into education. In her metropolitan and remote teaching roles she has had the opportunity to teach from R-12 across all subject areas of the Australian Curriculum and in EAL/D settings. Natalie has managed Community Education and Engagement for the Parliament of South Australia since 2017 and has been involved in many of SA's civics education initiatives. Natalie is excited about finding innovative ways to present civics education as well as encouraging people of all ages to engage with the democratic process.



Andrew Beaton, Campaigns Director, Australian Democracy Network.

Andrew has spent 15 years spearheading transformative advocacy and communications initiatives that tackle complex global challenges, from human rights and child protection to climate justice and strengthening democratic processes. He is driven by a core belief in building movements and shaping narratives that lead to a more equitable and sustainable world. From directing high-stakes national political campaigns, to leading global communications, campaigns, and advocacy for a global network dedicated to ending child sexual exploitation, Andrew brings senior campaigning and organisational leadership to directing ADN's campaigns team.

Full Program – Tuesday, 18 August 2026

9:30am to 11:00am – ECR/HDR Democracy Innovation Challenge

Through the ECR/HDR Democracy Innovation Challenge, participants are supported to critically examine the drivers of declining public trust and weaknesses in institutional accountability. The session is designed to share cutting edge research in the area of evidence-based strategies to improve public trust and institutional accountability.

Location: Online Only.

Featuring:



Associate Professor Joe McIntyre

Associate Professor Joe McIntyre is a legal scholar at Adelaide University whose research explores the role of courts, judges, and legal institutions in democratic society. Awarded a PhD from the University of Cambridge, he has taught and researched across Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and previously worked with the South Australian Crown Solicitor's Office and the Solicitor-General's Office. His scholarship focuses on judicial theory, judicial independence, accountability, access to justice, civil procedure reform, and legal literacy. In recent years he has become a leading researcher on pseudolaw and sovereign citizen movements, examining the impact of legal misinformation on democratic institutions and the justice system. He is the author of *The Judicial Function* and is widely recognised for his work on strengthening public understanding of law and democratic governance.



Emeritus Professor Adam Graycar AO

Emeritus Professor Adam Graycar AO is one of Australia's foremost experts on public policy, governance, corruption, and integrity systems. Across a distinguished career spanning academia and government, he has held senior positions at Adelaide University, the Australian National University, the University of New South Wales, Rutgers University, and the National University of Singapore. He also served as Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology and Head of the Cabinet Office in the South Australian Government. A Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and a Member of the Order of Australia, Professor Graycar has authored more than 300 scholarly publications and is internationally recognised for his work on corruption prevention, ethics, public administration, and institutional integrity. His research and advisory work have informed governments and international organisations including the United Nations, World Bank, and International Anti-Corruption Academy.

**Dr Ainoa Cabada**

Dr Ainoa Cabada is a postdoctoral researcher at Adelaide University. She is an emerging human rights expert whose research examines government practices that erode democracy, incite conflict and mass atrocities, and contribute to forced migration. Dr Cabada's expertise focuses on early warning of mass atrocities, refugee migration, blacklisting of political dissidents and authoritarianism. She has published in prestigious academic journals, and she has presented her research at national and international conferences.

10:30am to 11:30am – Active Citizen Lab #3: Human Rights Approaches to Law and Policymaking

This Lab focuses on strengthening democratic agency through a human rights lens. It provides hands-on training in the core tools citizens can use to influence decision-making—such as writing effective submissions, using petitions strategically, engaging MPs and parliamentary processes, and understanding the right to protest and protest-related laws.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus and Online.

Featuring:



Associate Professor Dr Sarah Moulds, Adelaide Law School

Sarah Moulds is an Associate Professor in Law Adelaide University and co-founder of the Rights Resource Network SA. She is passionate about parliaments and connecting citizens and communities with law makers, and her book *Committees of Influence* explores the important role parliamentary committees play in rights protection in Australia. In 2022 Dr Moulds was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to explore how to empower young people to engage effectively with Australian parliaments. She is currently the Editor of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* and the Deputy Chair of the International Parliamentary Engagement Network.



Dr Laura Welty, PhD AFHEA (UK)

Dr Laura Welty, PhD AFHEA (UK) is a Lecturer in Political Science in the School of Politics and International Relations at the Australian National University. She completed her PhD, *“Preventing and Countering Salafist Radicalisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina,”* in 2022 at the University of Sydney. She received her MA in Non-Proliferation and Terrorism Studies from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) in 2014. She attended Charles University in Prague to pursue a regional specialization in Balkan and Central European studies. She has a dual BA in History and Political Science from Franklin University Switzerland in 2014. Her Bachelor’s thesis was on “The Legality of Assassination and Targeted Killing in the War on Terror.” Laura was previously the Project Coordinator for the Electoral Integrity Project (2018-2019), Survey Administrator for the Global Party Survey (2019), a Postgraduate Teaching Fellow at the University of Sydney (2019), and a research assistant for the Sydney Policy Lab (2022) and an ARC-funded grant *‘The US Alliance in a Time of Strategic Change: Lessons from History and Views from the Nation’* (2023-2024). She is currently the Book

	Reviews Editor for <i>Nationalism and Ethnic Politics</i> and a member of the Australian Resilient Democracy Network.
	Dr Ainoa Cabada Dr Ainoa Cabada is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at Adelaide University. She is an emerging human rights expert whose research examines government practices that erode democracy, incite conflict and mass atrocities, and contribute to forced migration. Dr Cabada's expertise focuses on early warning of mass atrocities, refugee migration, blacklisting of political dissidents and authoritarianism. She has published in prestigious academic journals, and she has presented her research at national and international conferences.
	Andrew Beaton, Campaigns Director, Australian Democracy Network. Andrew has spent 15 years spearheading transformative advocacy and communications initiatives that tackle complex global challenges, from human rights and child protection to climate justice and strengthening democratic processes. He is driven by a core belief in building movements and shaping narratives that lead to a more equitable and sustainable world. From directing high-stakes national political campaigns, to leading global communications, campaigns, and advocacy for a global network dedicated to ending child sexual exploitation, Andrew brings senior campaigning and organisational leadership to directing ADN's campaigns team.

12:00pm to 1:00pm – Giving Voice: How Do Arts and Culture Support Democracy?

How do arts and culture create spaces for expression, dialogue, critique, and belonging in our democracy?

This panel examines how arts and culture create spaces for expression, dialogue, critique, and belonging—particularly for voices and experiences often marginalised within formal political processes. Speakers will consider how storytelling, performance, visual arts, music, and cultural institutions can foster civic connection, challenge dominant narratives, and make complex democratic issues tangible and emotionally resonant. The discussion also explores the role of artists and cultural workers as democratic actors—both reflecting society and actively contributing to social and political change.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:



Greg Mackie OAM

Greg Mackie OAM is one of South Australia's most influential cultural leaders and advocates. A former CEO of the History Trust of South Australia and founder of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas, he has spent more than four decades championing arts, culture, history, and civic engagement. His distinguished career has spanned bookselling, public administration, cultural policy, local government, and community leadership, earning him an OAM for services to the arts.



Elizabeth Ho OAM

Elizabeth Ho OAM is a respected public sector and higher education leader whose career has focused on community engagement, cultural development, and civic participation. She was the inaugural Director of the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre at the University of South Australia and has served in senior leadership roles with the State Library of South Australia. A Fellow of the University of South Australia, National Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia, and member of the South Australian Women's Honour Roll, she continues to support multiculturalism, education, and democratic participation through numerous governance roles.

	Emeritus Professor Ian Gibbins Emeritus Professor Ian Gibbins is an internationally recognised neuroscientist, educator, poet, musician, and video artist. After a distinguished academic career at Flinders University, including more than 20 years as Professor of Anatomy and Histology, he has become renowned for bringing science and the arts together through innovative creative practice. His work spans neuroscience, literature, electronic music, film, and public engagement, reflecting a lifelong commitment to curiosity, creativity, and learning.
	Associate Professor Tully Barnett Associate Professor Tully Barnett is a researcher in Creative Industries and Cultural Policy at Adelaide University. Her work explores the value of arts and culture, cultural participation, digital humanities, and the role of cultural institutions in public life. Widely published and actively engaged in national cultural policy debates, she is recognised for her research into how culture creates social value and contributes to stronger, more connected communities.
	Craig Middleton Craig Middleton is a museologist, curator, author, and creative producer who leads Archival Collection Development at the State Library of South Australia. Previously working with major cultural institutions including the National Museum of Australia, he is known for his expertise in social history, museum innovation, digital collections, and inclusive approaches to cultural heritage. His work explores how museums, archives, and public collections can broaden understanding, strengthen communities, and support active citizenship.
	Naomi Ebert-Smith Naomi Ebert-Smith is Chair of the Graham F. Smith Peace Foundation, a South Australian organisation dedicated to promoting peace through the arts. An experienced communications, marketing, and community engagement professional, she has worked across the not-for-profit, education, and philanthropic sectors for more than two decades. Through her leadership with the Foundation, she supports artistic initiatives that advance human rights, social justice, environmental sustainability, and community dialogue.

**Dr Jared Thomas**

Dr Jared Thomas is a Nukunu person of the Southern Flinders Ranges and the Adelaide University Coordinator of Indigenous Collections and Archives. He is a Creative Australia First Nations Board Member, Trustee of the History Trust of South Australia, Windmill Productions Board Member, and recently joined the Lot Fourteen First Nations Advisory Committee, where he also advises on the development of Tarrkarri - First Nations Cultures Centre. Through a Churchill Fellowship Jared investigated First Nations and marginalised people's interpretative strategies in permanent gallery displays in Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, and the United States. Jared is an award winning author of books for children and young people.

1:00pm to 2:00pm – Active Citizen Lab #4: Participating When Life Is Hard

Participating When Life Is Hard addresses a critical gap in democratic practice by asking how participation can be designed to work for people navigating barriers to being heard by decision-makers. Facilitated by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI), the Lab will bring people together around table discussions, each hosted by a community organisation and invited lived-experience participants. Members of the wider public are welcome to join these tables. Together, participants will identify, celebrate, and share 'what works' for giving people greater voice and control over decisions that affect their life when circumstances are challenging.

Location: Yungondi Y1-70 Enterprise Suite, City West Campus.

Featuring:

	Anti-Poverty Network SA Anti-Poverty Network SA is an alliance of people affected by or concerned about poverty and unemployment, and a voice for South Australians on low incomes. We are run by, and advocate for, jobseekers, low-income workers, sole parents, aged and disability pensioners, carers, students, community workers, and more.
	The Wyatt Trust The Wyatt Trust helps to create a South Australia free from poverty through its grant making, advocacy and investments. As Australia's oldest philanthropic trust, we acknowledge our privilege and responsibility to use these funds to help South Australians who are experiencing poverty.
	Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) The logo of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) shows an Aboriginal shield with designs painted upon it. The shield very much represents the role of ALRM. We are there to protect Aboriginal people, to shield them by using the legal system to protect them and their interests from harm and to help them to assert their rights to establish their proud Aboriginal identity as citizens of the state of South Australia.
	Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA) The Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA) is the peak organisation serving, empowering and advocating for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in South Australia. For over 50 years, we've supported CALD individuals and communities to become active contributors to South Australian society.



TACSI

TACSI is a team of multidisciplinary individuals bringing together a wealth of experience across sectors to help develop and activate better responses to Australia's toughest social challenges.

2:30pm to 4:00pm – Technology, Trust and Collective Intelligence (Conversation and Workshop)

A public-facing session featuring Beth Noveck - international expert at the cutting edge of democratic innovation, grounded in practical examples of how participatory techniques, technology and AI can strengthen democratic engagement, improve deliberation and rebuild trust.

Location: Pridham Hall Function Room (Level 1), City West Campus.

Featuring:



Professor Beth Noveck

Beth Noveck is the author of *Reboot: AI and the Race to Save Democracy* (Yale University Press, 2026). A professor at Northeastern University with appointments in law, engineering, policy, communications and computer science, she directs The Burnes Center for Social Change and The Governance Lab (The GovLab). Her work focuses on “Democratic AI” or how to use AI to strengthen democratic institutions and improve government performance. She previously served in the White House, 10 Downing Street, and advised the German Chancellery, and founded the White House Open Government Initiative. She leads InnovateUS, which supports free public sector learning and its research initiative the Observatory of Public Sector AI, the largest collection of data on the public sector and its use of AI. She created AI for Impact, which designs and deploys open source AI tools to improve public outcomes. In 2026, Beth joined the Australian Resilient Democracy Network as a Global Fellow and the Harvard Kennedy School as a Policy Fellow.



Matt Ryan, Executive Director, Democracy 2036

Matt Ryan is a Senior Fellow at The Governance Lab (The GovLab), where he has prepared international reports and developed courses that support public servants worldwide to adopt innovative and participatory problem-solving techniques.

5:00pm to 6:00pm – Walking the Talk on Democracy

This Panel brings together diverse voices to reflect on the language, stories, and assumptions that shape public understanding of democracy. The panel explores questions such as ‘why so many people are fretting about democracy these days?’ ‘Is it a fad, or is there a genuine democratic crisis?’ ‘What evidence do we have for a crisis or threats to democracy in Australia?’ ‘Is the perception of the problems with democracy different among politicians and citizens?’ ‘Are the forces threatening democracy as strong in Australia as they are overseas?’ ‘What can we do to strengthen democracy, here and globally?’ ‘How well is democracy understood in Australia as a concept/system of government?’.

Location: Bradley Forum, City West Campus.

Featuring:

	Misha Ketchell Misha Ketchell is Editor-in-Chief of The Conversation Australia and New Zealand. Previously he was the founding editor of The Big Issue Australia and the editor of Crikey, The Reader, and The Melbourne Weekly. He also worked as a reporter for The Age and a producer at the ABC, where he worked on Media Watch, The 7:30 Report, and The Drum. He appears regularly as a volunteer presenter on Joy FM and is Chair of the Alliance for Journalists Freedom.
	Josh Lerner Josh Lerner is the founder of People Powered, the global hub for participatory democracy. He has 20 years of experience developing, researching, and supporting innovative democracy programs around the world. He previously founded and directed the Participatory Budgeting Project, a nonprofit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money. Josh completed a PhD in Politics at the New School for Social Research and a Masters in Planning from the University of Toronto. He is the author of Making Democracy Fun: How Game Design Can Empower Citizens and Transform Politics, Everyone Counts: Could Participatory Budgeting Change Democracy?, and dozens of articles exploring the future of democracy. Josh recently stepped down as Co-Executive Director of People Powered at the end of the month, to write a book on the future of democracy.



Nysa Khanna

Nysa Khanna, youth leader and award winning changemaker, has been able to impact young people across 100+ countries through her speeches and initiatives. Chosen as one of the top 9 global girls, she was chosen to give a TED-Ed talk in NYC as the sole representative of Australia, featured in a book by Girl Up and represented South Australia at the Parliament House.



Bronwyn Hurrell

Bronwyn Hurrell has more than 30 years' experience in media and public affairs, as a journalist, government media adviser, corporate communications manager, and consultant.

Writing for *The Advertiser* newspaper earlier in her career, she developed an instinct for the questions ordinary Australians want answered from those in power.

As a media adviser to former South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill for more than a decade, she implemented communication strategies across almost every area of government policy.

Bronwyn has since worked in the higher education sector and now, as a Senior Consultant at Hughes Public Relations, she advises public sector, private sector and community sector clients.

She has also undertaken academic research into media and democracy.

6:15pm to 7:30pm – Walking the Talk on Democracy (Expert Panel)

This panel explores how elected representatives, ministers, and party leaders shape democratic culture through their behaviour, priorities, and use of power—and what obligations they hold to strengthen civic capability, institutional trust, and participation, rather than merely manage electoral cycles.

Location: Bradley Forum, City West Campus.

Featuring:

	Professor Lisa Hill Professor Lisa Hill is a Professor of Politics at Adelaide University and one of Australia's leading scholars in political theory, democratic participation, and electoral behaviour. Her research spans political thought, voting and democratic inclusion, compulsory voting, political corruption, human rights, and the history of liberal democracy, with a particular focus on how democratic institutions can become more representative and inclusive. A widely published author and public commentator, Professor Hill's work has shaped national and international debates on voter participation, democratic reform, and the challenges facing contemporary democracies.
	Dr Susan Close Dr Susan Close is the CEO and Professor of Practice at the McKinnon Institute for Political Leadership, a CSIRO board member, and the former Deputy Premier of South Australia. Drawing on extensive experience in government, public policy, and leadership, she is widely recognised for her contributions to democratic governance, environmental policy, and civic leadership. Through her work at the McKinnon Institute, Dr Close supports the development of ethical, capable, and forward-thinking political leadership, helping to strengthen democratic institutions and public trust in government.
	Dr Catherine Williams Dr Catherine Williams is a leading expert in democratic accountability and public policy reform, with research focusing on political finance, executive accountability, lobbying regulation, and integrity systems. Holding degrees in Arts and Law as well as a PhD, she has made significant contributions to public debate and policy development on transparency and governance. Catherine is the co-author, with the late Stephen Charles KC, of <i>Keeping Them Honest</i>, a widely recognised examination of integrity reform in Australia, and regularly provides expert analysis to parliamentary inquiries, governments, and the broader public on strengthening democratic institutions.

Full Program – Wednesday, 19 August 2026

9:00am to 11:00am – How We Can Use AI to Redesign Government From The Inside Out (IPAA SA)

Drawing on experience advising leaders at the White House, 10 Downing Street and the German Chancellery, Beth will share her insights on how governments can harness AI to improve decision-making, tackle public challenges and build institutions that are fit for the future – The Institute of Public Administration Australia South Australian division (IPAA SA).

Location: Adelaide Convention Centre, North Terrace.

Featuring:



Professor Beth Noveck

Beth Noveck is the author of *Reboot: AI and the Race to Save Democracy* (Yale University Press, 2026). A professor at Northeastern University with appointments in law, engineering, policy, communications and computer science, she directs The Burnes Center for Social Change and The Governance Lab (The GovLab). Her work focuses on “Democratic AI” or how to use AI to strengthen democratic institutions and improve government performance. She previously served in the White House, 10 Downing Street, and advised the German Chancellery, and founded the White House Open Government Initiative. She leads InnovateUS, which supports free public sector learning and its research initiative the Observatory of Public Sector AI, the largest collection of data on the public sector and its use of AI. She created AI for Impact, which designs and deploys open source AI tools to improve public outcomes. In 2026, Beth joined the Australian Resilient Democracy Network as a Global Fellow and the Harvard Kennedy School as a Policy Fellow.



Peter Meere

Peter Meere is an experienced public sector leader and head of South Australia’s Office for AI, where he leads the strategic and responsible adoption of artificial intelligence across government. His work focuses on delivering public value through safe, ethical and effective AI implementation to improve services, support workforce transformation and drive economic growth.

Additional Festival Activities

Untangled Interactive Art Installation



The Festival is pleased to announce a collaboration with Untangle Project (www.theuntangleprojectaus.net) called '**Threads of Change**' - an immersive participatory installation that transforms public reflection on systems change into a living, evolving art piece. The Untangle Project is a lived experience led initiative creating safe, non-judgemental spaces for people affected by systems failure and social harm, with a specific focus on women's experiences of gambling harm. This installation extends that practice into a public, participatory context through transforming voice into shared visual form.

Participants are invited to respond to a simple but powerful question: **What needs to change in the systems shaping your life?** and write their response on a tag to be attached to ropes from a structure at Ground Floor, Nexus 10 Building, City East Campus from **Friday 14 August 2026**. After the exhibition concludes, those in attendance will receive a link to a summary of the exhibition's outcomes.

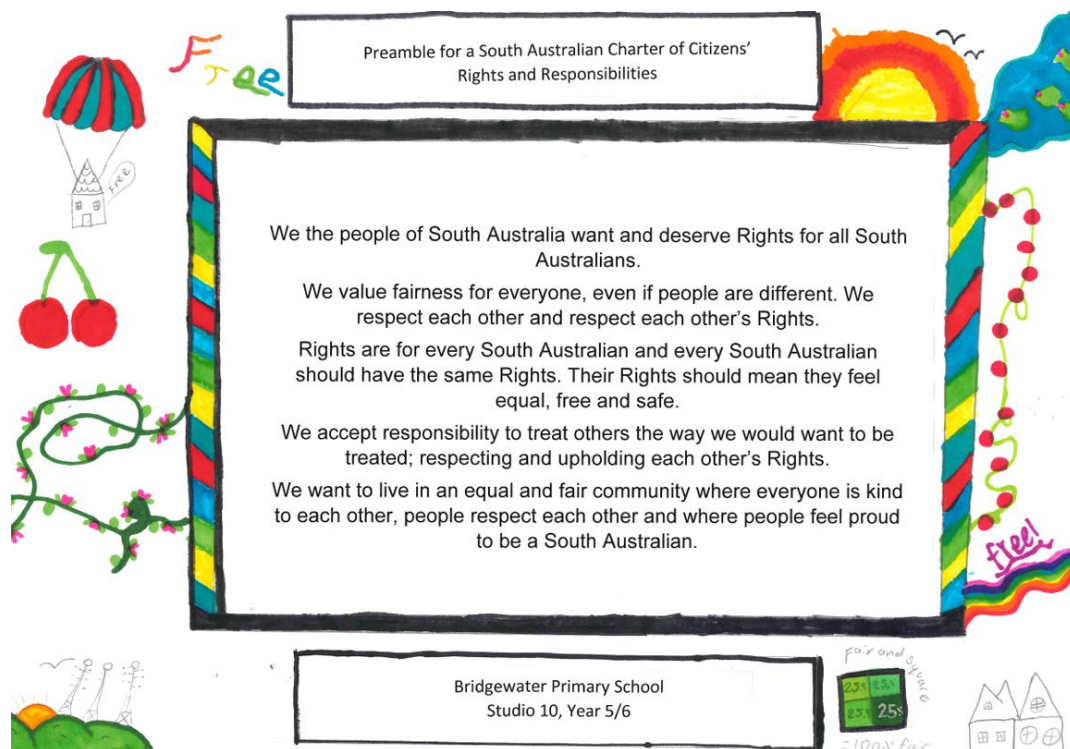
Dates: Friday, 14 August 2026 until Friday, 20 August 2026

Location: Ground Floor, Nexus 10 Building, City East Campus.

Schools Democracy Innovation Challenge

Students in participating High Schools and Primary Schools are supported to draft a preamble for a South Australian Charter of Citizens Rights and Responsibilities. Through guided, creative inquiry, participating schools are invited to grapple with real democratic questions—from articulating shared rights and responsibilities to re-imagining constitutional principles, or proposing student-generated democracy reforms grounded in their lived experience. The challenge is designed to shift civics education from learning *about* democracy to practising democracy through deliberation, collaboration, and values-based decision-making. Students in participating High Schools and Primary Schools are supported to draft a preamble for a South Australian Charter of Citizens Rights and Responsibilities. Entries will be shared at the Festival in a Gallery Walk (Pridham Hall) and participating schools will be invited to attend.

Here are some early examples from some outstanding students:



"All citizens of South Australia, regardless of their socioeconomic, ethnic or cultural backgrounds, possess a right and responsibility to uphold fundamental human rights. These rights encompass, but are not limited to, unrestricted access to food, drinking water, and a safe and secure shelter. Enshrined within these rights are the right to free speech as well as personal autonomy and complete self-determination, never at the expense of other people. These rights must belong to everyone, entirely devoid of external coercion from other parties. However, individuals must retain the responsibility to strive to keep these human rights intact throughout the course of time. As part of upholding the spirit of equality, they hereby shall participate in civic and democratic discourse for the betterment of themselves and the wider community.

South Australia was a pioneer in human rights for all genders, the first to grant women the right to vote and their right to stand for parliament. In the same spirit, this state now fully commits itself to upholding international human rights for all demographics, devoid of racial and economic bias, grounded in the idea of equality for every individual.

Henceforth, these human rights shall construct a lasting layer of foundational protection for all individuals, formed in the belief that every individual deserves a fruitful life, lived without a struggle for basic needs. All people are entitled to peace from all forms of war and distress, as well as social or economic conflict. This will always be the paramount aim of these human rights." **Dhanin Dhayalan, Glenunga International High School**

Walking the Talk on Democracy – Citizen Pledge Initiative

Public commitments to democratic action and engagement.

Please follow us on social media to find out more: [Democracy2036 | LinkedIn](#), and be sure to use the hashtag [#AUdemfestival](#) when joining the conversation.

Location: Online Only.

Further enquiries

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