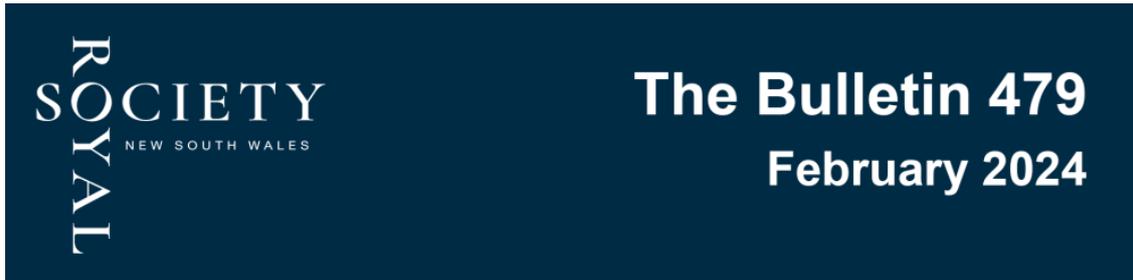


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## A message from the President

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

Welcome to the first issue of *The Bulletin* of 2024. I hope that you enjoyed the opportunity to rest, recharge, and spend time with family and friends during the break. The year is already brimming with ways for you to participate in the life and work of the Society.

You can still register to join the more than 150 guests at the important social occasion of our Annual Dinner and Awards Presentations in the Strangers' Room, Parliament House, Macquarie St on Friday, 1 March.

Our patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, will welcome guests and present the awards. Dr Saul Griffith FRSN will electrify us as the after-dinner speaker. You will find the [event notice](#) on the Society's website and in this Bulletin. You must register by 5.00 pm on Wednesday 21 February, through this link.



Staying with the theme of our patron, you will have received your invitation to the first Ideas@theHouse for 2024 on Wednesday, 6 March. John Bell AO OBE, Founder and Former Artistic Director of Bell Shakespeare, will present a brief survey of the political scenarios in Shakespeare's plays — Tragedies, Histories, and even the Comedies in the context of these three questions. How do his observations resonate with us now? What can we take from them to confront the dilemmas we face today? Although the in-person audience in Government House is limited to 100, Bell's presentation "[Shakespeare on politics — what can we learn?](#)" will be live-streamed and video recorded. One way or another, I encourage you to join us.

Even before these two gatherings, the Society will present five open lectures — two in the Sydney CBD and one in each of its three Branches. Full details are provided [here](#) and are included in the

events summary of this *Bulletin*. We have invited new members of the Society admitted towards the end of 2023 to attend the Ordinary General Meeting on 7 February to receive their certificates. Please join us to celebrate them and listen to Emeritus Professor Roy Green’s discussion of [“Productivity: what is it, and why it matters.”](#)

Council and other Society members engaged in the Master Planning Project, facilitated by design thinkers from Poetic Thinking, are not standing still. We are working through the draft Report and Recommendations “Securing the Society’s Future”, received in January, through the lens of ensuring that the Society is contemporary, progressive, and relevant. The discussion will be open to members for their input over the coming weeks.

As I mentioned in our final *Bulletin* for 2023, another feature in our year-end calendar is the invitation to members to renew their subscriptions for the next year. The membership fee is unchanged from 2023. You would have received the first email about renewing your subscription on 29 October 2023 and reminders on 25 November and 9 January. My letter outlines the many accomplishments of the Society during 2023 and its even greater ambitions for 2024 and beyond, such as those being framed currently through our Master Planning Project. Please renew now if you have not already done so.

When you see him, I encourage you to join the Council by congratulating Society Fellow and Librarian, [Professor Stephen Garton](#), for his election by the Australian Academy of the Humanities as its twentieth President for three years from January 2024. As the Society's Librarian, Stephen was instrumental in completing the agreement with the State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW) to donate the Society’s collection to the Library. All members (eligible to vote) received an email on 1 December 2023 in which the results of the ballot were provided. At the close of the ballot at 5.00 pm on Thursday 30 November, 258 ballots had been submitted from 671 eligible voters, representing a return rate of 38.45%. The results were as follows.

	Votes	% (excl. abstentions)
Votes for the resolution	242	94.53%
Votes against the resolution	14	5.47%
Abstentions	2	

The Resolution was therefore agreed to by a majority of members. On behalf of the Society, I signed the Agreement on 7 December 2023. It ensures that the collection will continue to be identified as the RSNSW Collection within the SLNSW and therefore not lost as an integrated whole or as the physical manifestation of the Society’s history. The quality of the custodianship, conservatorship, and the subsequent accessibility of this significant historical collection to the public afforded by the donation overrides the Society’s need to retain ownership of an asset for which it does not have the resources to oversee.

We work for the Society because we understand the need to enhance public discourse on a wide range of topics that are crucial to our future. Society members have excellent ideas to contribute. In that spirit, I look forward to hearing your ideas and suggested ways to bring them to fruition.

Susan Pond AM FRSN FTSE FAHMS  
[President, Royal Society of NSW](#)

## For your diary

- [1319th Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture](#) (Wednesday, 7 February 2024, 6.00 for 6.30–8.00 pm AEDT, Metcalfe Theatre, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street,

Sydney), *Productivity: what it is, and why it matters*, Emeritus Professor Roy Green FRSN, Special Innovation Advisor, University of Technology Sydney

- [Southern Highlands Branch Meeting 2024-1](#) (Thursday, 15 February 2024, 6.30 pm AEDT, RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room), *Ten novels that changed the world*, Susannah Fullerton OAM FRSN, Author, Literary Lecturer, and Tour Leader
- [Hunter Branch Meeting 2024-1](#) (Monday, 19 February 2024, 6.30 pm (AEDT, Hunter Theatre, Cameron Street, Broadmeadows, NSW) *Exploring the Holographic*, Dr Martina Mrongovius, Artist and Designer
- [Annual Meeting of the Four Societies](#) (Wednesday, 21 February 2024, 6.00 for 6.30–8.00 pm AEDT, Metcalfe Theatre, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney), *Resilience before Readiness – "... for the want of a horseshoe nail"*, Vince di Pietro AM CSC FRSN, Independent Consultant, former Commodore, Royal Australian Navy, and former CEO, Lockheed Martin Australia
- [Western NSW Branch Meeting 2024-1](#) (Wednesday, 28 February 6.00 pm AEDT, Wagga Wagga Campus (Riverina Playhouse), Charles Sturt University and live-streaming), *Parasites, Australia's silent threat—coincidence, nature's hand, or policy complacency*, Professor Shookoofeh Shamsi, Professor of Veterinary Parasitology, Gulbali Institute, Charles Sturt University
- [RSNSW 2024 Annual Dinner and Presentation of Awards](#) (Friday, 1 March 2024, 6.00 – 10.00 pm AEDT, Strangers' Room, NSW Parliament House, 6 Macquarie Street, Sydney)
- [Ideas@theHouse: March 2024](#) (Wednesday, 6 March 2024, 6.30–8.00 pm, Government House Sydney (by invitation) and live streaming), *Shakespeare on politics: what can we learn?* John Bell AO OBE, Founder and Former Artistic Director, Bell Shakespeare

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

## News

### Announcement of the Royal Society of NSW Awards for 2023

The Royal Society of New South Wales has long recognised distinguished achievements in various fields of knowledge through its Awards. Some are amongst the oldest in Australia while others are more recent. In 2023, the Society broadened and streamlined its Awards portfolio to recognise recent and evolving fields and disciplines, and emerging as well as established research stars. From 2023 onwards, the Society Awards are being made in two main classes reflecting the Society's history: Career Excellence Medals and Discipline Awards and Medals; with additional Awards, Scholarships, and Citations, including Internal Awards for distinguished service to the Society and community.

The Awards for 2023 were announced at the 1318th Ordinary General Meeting of the Society, held on Wednesday, 29 November 2023, by the President, Dr Susan Pond AM FRSN.

Listed below are the winners, together with links to information about the awards and their recipients

#### RSNSW Career Excellence Awards

**RSNSW  
Awards  
2023**



[RSNSW James Cook Medal:](#)

Scientia Professor Helen Christensen AO FASSA FAHMS (Blackdog Institute, UNSW Sydney)

[RSNSW Edgeworth David Medal:](#)

Professor Qilin Wang FRSN (University of Technology Sydney)

[RSNSW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Scholars Medal:](#)

Aunty Frances Bodkin (Western Sydney University)

[RSNSW Ida Browne Early Career Medal:](#)

Dr Brendan Nuen (The George Institute, UNSW Sydney)

**RSNSW Discipline Awards and Lectureships**

[RSNSW Clarke Medal and Lecture in Earth Sciences:](#)

Professor Moninya Roughan FRSN (UNSW Sydney)

[RSNSW Walter Burfitt Award in Medical and Veterinary Sciences and Technology:](#)

Professor Maria Kavallaris AM FRSN FAHMS (UNSW Sydney)

[RSNSW Award in the Social and Behavioural Sciences:](#)

Scientia Professor Kaarin Anstey FRSN FASSA FAHMS (UNSW Sydney)

[RSNSW Award in the History and Philosophy of Science:](#)

Professor Hans Pols FRSN FAHA FASSA (University of Sydney)

**RSNSW Scholarships, Early Career, and Student Awards**

[RSNSW Bicentennial Postgraduate Scholarships](#)

- Ms Sasha Bailey (University of Sydney)
- Mr Jaydon McKinnon (University of Wollongong)

[RSNSW Bicentennial Early Career Research and Service Citations](#)

- Dr Jacinta Martin (University of Newcastle)
- Dr Abhimanu Pandey (Australian National University)
- Dr Shoujin Wang (University of Technology Sydney)

[RSNSW Jak Kelly Award](#)

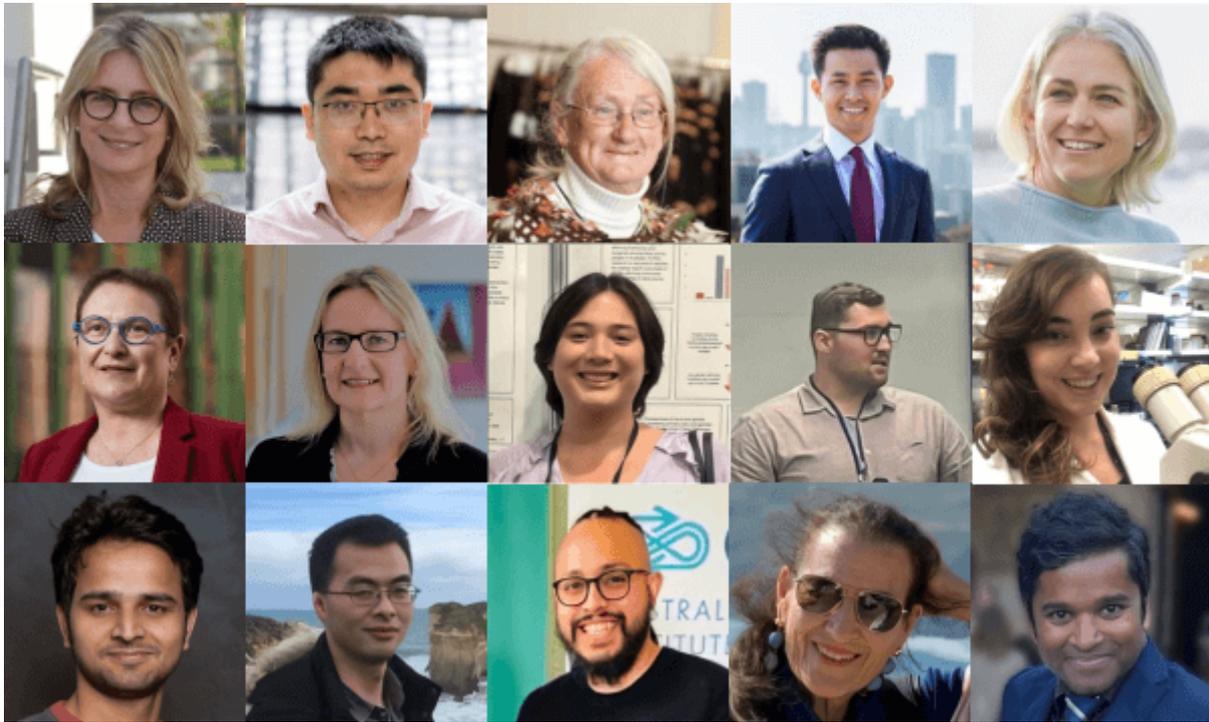
- Mr Jamie Alvarado-Montes (Macquarie University)

**RSNSW Service Awards**

[RSNSW Medal](#) — Ms Judith Wheeldon AM FRSN

[RSNSW Citation](#) — Mr Jason Antony MRSN

The Council of The Royal Society of NSW extends its warmest congratulations to the winners of the 2023 Awards and wishes them well in their future endeavours.



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## **Resolution to Donate the Society's Library and Archives to the State Library of NSW: Outcome of the Ballot**

On 10 November 2023, all RSNSW members eligible to vote in Society ballots received a notice to vote electronically on Council's unanimous resolution of 3 November 2023 recommending to members that the Society donate its collection of books and archives currently stored in the State Library of South Wales (SLNSW) and 121 Darlington Road Darlington (the RSNSW Collection) to the SLNSW.

At the close of the ballot at 5.00 pm on Thursday 30 November, 258 ballots had been submitted from 671 eligible voters, representing a return rate of 38.45%. The results, circulated by email to Society members on 1 December 2023, were as follows.

	<b>Votes</b>	<b>% (excl. abstentions)</b>
Votes for the resolution	242	94.53%
Votes against the resolution	14	5.47%
Abstentions	2	

The Resolution was therefore been agreed to by a majority of members.

The return rate in this ballot was one of the highest achieved by the Society since it commenced its use of the Election Buddy electronic balloting system at the start of the pandemic lockdown in 2020.

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## **Society Vice-President, Robert Whittaker, awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Western Sydney University**

Late in 2023 the Society learned of an Honorary Doctorate being awarded to our Vice-President, Emeritus Professor Peter Shergold AC FRSN, by Western Sydney University at its recent October 2023 graduations. The RSNSW Council was also delighted to belatedly learn of the same honour, an Honorary Doctor of Letters, being awarded to another of our Fellows and Council Member, **Adjunct Professor Robert Whittaker AM FRSN**, at the recent end-of-year graduation ceremonies at WSU.



The citation for Professor Whittaker (pictured with the WSU Chancellor Professor Jennifer Westacott AO), read by the WSU Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Deborah Sweeney, noted that he is an influential leader in the building profession, having played a prominent role in raising professional standards both within New South Wales and more broadly across Australia. He is a Chartered Builder and Principal of Holdom Whittaker, a consulting firm for builders, building surveyors, and engineers.

Robert Whittaker has worked in the building sector for 40 years, commencing during his undergraduate studies at UTS. For the past two decades, he has been an entrepreneur and leader in the construction industry, holding a number of senior positions of trust, including that of member and chair of various national and state committees and judging panels such as the Professional Excellence in Building Awards Committee. His counsel continues to be sought by State and Federal Government policymakers and the broader community, with some of his formal roles including a ministerial appointment on the NSW Property Services Advisory Council, membership of the Discipline and Accreditation Committees of the former NSW Building Professionals Board, and Chair of the former National Building Professionals Register. In these positions, Professor Whittaker has been instrumental in recognising and subsequently addressing the need for more transparency in the attainment of professional standards across the building industry.

Professor Whittaker is highly committed to the advancement of the building profession in tertiary education, in which he continues to be proactive. He is an active participant on external advisory committees for a number of universities, resulting in adjunct professorial appointments at the Universities of Canberra, Newcastle, and Western Sydney. His contributions have led to the inclusion of professional ethics and personal accountability as essential components of construction management degrees at these and other universities in the sector. Within the vocational sector, he has served for many years as a member of the National Industry Reference Committee for Construction, together with various technical advisory groups for trade and paraprofessional qualifications.

Robert Whittaker was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2014, for his 'significant contribution to the building and construction industry as a leader and educator'. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Building, the Royal Society of New South Wales, and the Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors, a Member of the Society of Construction Law (Australia), and a Companion of the Institution of Engineers Australia.

The Council of the Royal Society of New South Wales warmly congratulates Robert Whittaker AM FRSN on this latest recognition of his career in, and commitment to, the building industry in NSW and Australia.

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## Society Fellow, Catherine Coleborne, awarded an AHA fellowship

The Society was delighted to learn that Society Fellow, **Professor Catherine Coleborne FRSN FASSA FAHA**, Professor of History and Director, Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Newcastle, had been inducted as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities during November 2023.



Professor Coleborne has received international recognition for her scholarship on the histories of psychiatry, mental health, madness, and institutions in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, including her influential work about the interactions between families and hospitals for the insane in the colonial period. Catharine's research also extends to mobility in history in relation to policing, poverty, and colonial life. She has held significant competitive external research funding in New Zealand (Marsden Fund, Royal Society of Aotearoa/New Zealand) and Australia (Australian Research Council) and has been a Harold White Fellow at the National Library of Australia and a Fellow of the Centre for Mobilities Research at Lancaster University in the UK. She was elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia in November 2021 and elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales in May 2021.

The Council of the Society extends sincere congratulations to Professor Coleborne on this further recognition of an outstanding research career.

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## Society Fellow, Ben Quilty, awarded an Honorary AHA Fellowship

In November 2023, the Society was delighted to learn that the distinguished artist and Society Fellow, **Ben Quilty FRSN FAHA**, had been inducted as an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.



Ben Quilty, who lives and works in Gundungurra Country, south of Sydney, is widely known for his thick, gestural oil paintings. As noted in the AHA citation, his works often serve as a reflection of social and political events; from the current global refugee crisis to the complex social history of Australia, he is constantly critiquing notions of identity, patriotism, and belonging.

Quilty won the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize in 2009 and the Archibald Prize in 2011 with his portrait of the artist, Margaret Olley. In 2011, he travelled to Afghanistan as an official war artist with The Australian War Memorial and was invited by World Vision Australia to travel to the Middle East with the author, Richard Flanagan, to witness the international Syrian refugee crisis in 2016. In 2019, the Art Gallery of South Australia presented the first major survey exhibition of Quilty's work. The exhibition toured to the Art Gallery of NSW and QAGOMA. In 2010, Quilty was a member of the NSW State Government Arts Advisory Committee, assisting the Arts Minister on the most effective structure for their Arts Vision. He served a nine-year term as a Board Member of

the Art Gallery of NSW finishing in 2021 and in the same year founded and opened Ngununggula, the first Regional Gallery to exist in the NSW Southern Highlands.

The Council of the Society extends its sincere congratulations to Ben Quilty on this honour that recognises his substantial artistic contributions that reflects for others the anguish of trauma and the challenges of service.

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## Roy Green FRSN appointed to the CSIRO Board

On 7 December 2023, the Minister for Industry and Science, Mr Ed Husic MP, announced the appointment of Society Fellow, **Emeritus Professor Roy Green FRSN**, to the Board of CSIRO. On his [LinkedIn page](#), Mr Husic noted that Roy Green has been a massive champion of Australian industry, innovation, and advanced manufacturing — a believer in our nation’s ability to get things done. He said, “That’s why I’m thrilled that he’ll be joining the board of our national science agency — helping shape CSIRO’s strategic direction and deepen engagement with Australian industry.”



Roy Green is an Emeritus Professor and Special Innovation Advisor at the University of Technology Sydney, where he was Dean of the UTS Business School. He has led and participated in numerous public inquiries, as well as chairing bodies such as the Australian Government’s Innovative Regions Centre, CSIRO Manufacturing Sector Advisory Council, Food Innovation and Agribusiness Ltd (FIAL) Industry Growth Centre, NSW Manufacturing Industries Advisory Council and Queensland Competition Authority. He was also a member of the Prime Minister’s Manufacturing Taskforce. Currently, he chairs the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing (ARM) Hub and the Port of Newcastle, and is a board director of the SmartSat CRC and a member of the Charles Sturt University Council, the University of Newcastle Vice Chancellor’s Industry Advisory Board, the Committee for Sydney Economy Advisory Council, and the Australian Design Council.

In speaking to [InnovationAus.com](#), Professor Green said that he is “greatly looking forward to working with the CSIRO board and new CEO Professor Doug Hilton to address our big global challenges, particularly around energy transition and industrial transformation. In doing so, CSIRO will be well placed to deliver a more dynamic and sustainable knowledge-driven economy for Australia.”

The Council of the Royal Society of NSW offers its sincere congratulations to Professor Roy Green on his appointment to the CSIRO Board and this further recognition of an outstanding career in the innovation sector. Society members will be interested to learn that Professor Green will be delivering the first Open Lecture of 2024, titled “[Productivity: what is it, and why it matters](#)”, to be held at 6.30 pm on 7 February in the Metcalfe Auditorium in the State Library.

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## Society welcomes new Members and Fellows: December 2023

The Royal Society of NSW warmly welcomes 23 new members to the Society's ranks, effective from 29 November 2023.

## Fellows

Professor Sally Cripps  
Professor Yingjie Jay Guo  
Professor Richard Holden  
Professor Amir Karton  
Dr Jiao Jiao Li  
Professor Aduli Malau-Aduli  
Professor David Miller  
Professor Deo Prasad  
Professor Nicholas Reid  
Professor Craig Simmons  
Professor Nicholas Talley  
Professor Christopher Ward  
Professor Stephanie Watson  
Professor Robert Wood

# New Fellows & Members



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

## Members

Professor Alister Baker  
Mr Garry Crockett  
Associate Professor Temitope Egbelakin  
Ms Julia (Ting Ting) Gong  
Dr Lamia Nakhai  
Ms Sandra Woodwood

## Associate Members

Dr Daniel Lindegger  
Ms Rebel Bailey  
Ms Felicity Nelson  
Ms Sue Loucks

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

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## George Willis FRSN FAA wins the 2024 Australian Mathematical Society George Szekeres Medal

At the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Australian Mathematical Society (AustMS) in early December, RSNSW Fellow and former Treasurer of the Society's Hunter Branch, **Emeritus Professor George Willis FRSN FAA** of the University of Newcastle, was announced as the winner of the AustMS George Szekeres Medal — the AustMS' most prestigious Medal that recognises research achievement and outstanding support of the mathematical sciences. George Willis is now the third RSNSW Fellow to win the George Szekeres Medal,



alongside Professor Ian Sloan AO FRSN FAA in 2002 and Professor Nalini Joshi AO FRSN FAA in 2020.

Professor Willis is known internationally as an innovator and problem solver in diverse fields of mathematics. In the field of topological algebra, his insights into locally compact groups and fundamental concepts that he has introduced, such as the scale function and flatness, have initiated new research directions and made new applications possible.

George Willis' undergraduate studies were undertaken at the University of Adelaide, before undertaking a PhD at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, graduating in 1981. Following his PhD, he undertook a sequence of postdoctoral fellowships at the University of New South Wales, the University of Halifax, Nova Scotia, the University of Adelaide, and the Australian National University. He moved to the University of Newcastle as a Lecturer in the early 1990s, rising to the role of Laureate Professor in 2009. He is now an Emeritus Professor at the University of Newcastle, following his retirement in 2022. During his career, his achievements and standing have been recognised by prestigious Australian Research Council Fellowships, namely, an ARC Professorial Fellowship in 2009 and an ARC Laureate Fellowship in 2018. He was elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science in 2014 and as a Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW in 2018.

The Council of the Royal Society of NSW extends its warm congratulations to Professor George Willis on this most recent recognition of his outstanding research career and his contributions to the field of mathematics.

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## December 2023 issue of the Journal is now available online

The December 2023 issue of the *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW*, published on 18 December, is now [available online](#).

This issue includes eight papers, abstracts from nine recent PhD theses, and obituaries for two Fellows of the Society, Emeritus Professor Stephen Gaukroger FRSN FAHA (University of Sydney) and Emeritus Professor Adrian Lee FRSN (UNSW Sydney), who passed away in recent months.

The table of contents lists the articles:

- Stephen Gaukroger, Does science get the credit for too much?
- Deborah Beck., The Governor's scrapbook.
- Peter French, The rôle of serendipity in biotechnology start-up companies — two case studies.
- Peter Coyne, Ferals — some remote Australian island experiences.
- Gus McLachlan and Andrew Condon, Drones, smart munitions and cyberspace: 21st-century defence of Ukraine & implications for Australia (\*)
- James Renwick, The Russia/Ukraine conflict — developments in war crimes.
- Len Fisher, A simple past — a complex future: thoughts from the Heron Island symposium, "Complexity, Criticality and Computation".
- Jim Falk et al, Critical hydrological impacts from climate change: Addressing an urgent global need.



Journal and Proceedings  
of the  
Royal Society  
of  
New South Wales

"For the advancement of studies and investigations in Science, Art, Literature and Philosophy."

(\*) The paper by Gus McLachlan and Andrew Condon is a transcript of their presentation to the Society's 1310th Ordinary General Meeting, the [recording of which is available on YouTube](#).

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## **Society Fellow Duncan Ivison FRSN FAHA appointed as the next University of Manchester Vice-Chancellor**

The Royal Society of New South Wales was delighted to learn of the announcement by the University of Manchester that its next Vice-Chancellor, from 1 August 2024, will be **Professor Duncan Ivison FRSN FAHA**.

Most recently Professor Ivison, who is a Professor of Political Philosophy, was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Sydney, and before that the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. He completed his undergraduate studies with a BA in Political Science at McGill University in Montréal, Canada, where he grew up, and his postgraduate studies, comprising an MSc and PhD, at the London School of Economics. His early academic career included a postdoctoral fellowship at the Australian National University, a lectureship at the University of York, a senior lectureship at the University of Sydney, and an associate professorship at the University of Toronto.

Professor Ivison was elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities in 2009 and as a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales in 2017. His RSNSW Fellowship laudation notes that he “is an accomplished political philosopher and a senior academic leader who has written extensively on human rights and liberalism.”

The Council of the Royal Society of New South Wales extends its warmest congratulations to Professor Ivison on his appointment as the incoming Vice-Chancellor at Manchester and wishes him every success in the role. Further information about [Professor Ivison's appointment](#) is available on the University of Manchester website.

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## **Vale Professor Ian Metcalfe MRSN**

The Royal Society of New South Wales was saddened to learn of the peaceful passing of **Professor Ian Metcalfe MRSN**, in Sydney, on 21 December 2023.

Ian was a devoted husband to (Emeritus Professor) Amarjit Kaur, an incredible father to Noreen and David, and a beloved grandfather to John and James. He was a globally recognised and accomplished professor, researcher, lecturer, and author in Earth Sciences. Ian will be dearly missed, not only for his outstanding contributions to academia but also for his exemplary role as a husband and father.



Ian was born in Yorkshire and began his association with UNE (University of New England) in 1992 after completing his PhD at the University of Leeds. Prior to that, he had worked at the University of Malaya, the University of Nottingham, and the National University of Malaysia. Over the years, his career at UNE included various roles, from Senior Lecturer to Research Fellow, and ultimately, he held the position of Adjunct Professor since 2005.

Professor Ian Metcalfe's impact on the academic world is substantial. He currently holds the position of #7 on Google Scholar for total citations among academics associated with UNE, marking the highest position in the physical sciences at the University. His h-index, a measure of research impact, stands at 49, with his publications garnering over 15,000 citations. Despite not holding a continuous position, Professor Metcalfe authored over 300 peer-reviewed papers and served as an Editor for several esteemed journals in Earth Sciences. His extensive body of work significantly enhanced UNE's international research profile.

Professor Metcalfe's most influential contributions were in the fields of regional and global tectonics, palaeogeography, palaeontology (particularly microfossils and mass extinctions), and geologic timescale calibration studies. His work on the continental lithospheric terranes and suture zones of East and Southeast Asia is internationally renowned, with his Three-Tethys model for the evolution of Asia has gained widespread acceptance. His work has provided a foundational framework for global reconstruction and deep earth resources research for several decades.

Conodont biostratigraphy was another area where Professor Metcalfe made a particularly positive impact. His pioneering work on the Lower Carboniferous of northern England has become part of global zonation schemes. His contributions to conodont biostratigraphy, biogeography, and stratigraphy, especially concerning the Permian-Triassic boundary, have been invaluable to the field.

Beyond geology, Professor Metcalfe extended his intellectual pursuits into the social sciences. He served as a Wellcome Trust Research Fellow and worked on the project "Women workers in industrialising Asia." He also held positions as Deputy Director of the Asia Centre at UNE and Program Director for the UNE Research Initiative "Environmental and Social Impacts of Resource Development in Asia." He had been an active member of the New England Branch of the Royal Society of NSW in the 1990s and rejoined the Society in 2016.

Ian Metcalfe's impact on academia, his dedication to his family, and his diverse intellectual interests have left an indelible mark on those who knew him. He will be remembered with deep respect and admiration by colleagues, friends, and students alike.

Chris Fellows MRSN, Howard Brasted, and Trevor Brown MRSN

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## **Society Fellow, Stephen Garton, elected as President of the Australian Academies of Humanities**

The Society was delighted to learn that one of its Fellows, and also the Librarian of the Society, **Professor Stephen Garton AM FRSN FAHA FASSA**, was elected by the Australian Academy of the Humanities as its twentieth President. Professor Garton will serve a three-year term commencing in 2024.

Professor Garton's research expertise is Australian history. He has also published in the fields of American and British history. His major books provide thought-provoking insights into areas

including the history of medicine, particularly psychiatry, social welfare, war veterans and the aftermath of war, sexuality, and the history of higher education.

Stephen Garton has also had an extensive career in university management, serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and also as interim Vice-Chancellor, at the University of Sydney. In 2020, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to tertiary education administration and to history.



The Council of the Society extends its warm congratulations to Professor Garton on this further recognition of his standing as an eminent scholar and researcher in the humanities.

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## Australia Day Honours 2024

The Society is delighted to learn of the awards to the following Society Fellows and Members whose names appear in the 2024 Australia Day Honours List.

The following have been honoured as **Officers of the Order of Australia (AO)**.

**Professor Ian Hickie AO FRSN FASSA FAHMS**, Professor and Co-Director, Health and Policy, Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney, for distinguished service to psychiatric research and reforms as an advocate for improved mental health care and awareness.

**(The late) Emeritus Professor Robin King AO FRSN FTSE** for distinguished service to engineering, to tertiary education, and to professional organisations through executive roles.

The following have been honoured as **Members of the Order of Australia (AM)**.

**Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM FRSN**, of the University of Technology Sydney, for significant service to business, and to tertiary education in the fields of science, technology and innovation.

**Emeritus Professor Gisela Kaplan AM FRSN**, of the University of New England, for significant service to science education through research into animal behaviour.

**(The late) Emeritus Professor Adrian Lee AM FRSN**, of the University of New South Wales, for significant service to tertiary education, to microbiology, and to professional organisations.

**Dr John Vallance, AM FRSN FAHA**, former State Librarian of New South Wales, for significant service to education, to library services and programs, and to the arts.

Should the Society have missed the names of other Members and Fellows who have been included in the 2024 Australian Honours, please let us know by writing to [RSNSW Communications](#).



# Australia Day 2024 Honours

## Events

### 1319th Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture

#### Productivity: what is it, and why it matters

#### Emeritus Professor Roy Green FRSN

#### Special Innovation Advisor University of Technology Sydney



**Date:** Wednesday, 7 February 2024, 6.00 pm for 6.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Metcalfe Theatre, State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney

**Entry:** Members, \$10; Non-members, \$20; Students, \$5

**Registration:** [Registration through Membes](#) is required

**Drinks:** A cash bar will be available in the adjacent Macquarie Room from 6.00 pm

**All are welcome**

[Please click here to register](#)

**Summary:** Productivity isn't everything, but in the long run, it's almost everything", Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman famously said. Productivity is a measure of output per unit of input, and a key determinant of living standards since the Industrial Revolution, but it remains an elusive concept. However defined, productivity growth has slowed across most developed economies, and more so in Australia than anywhere else. In the decade to 2020, average annual productivity growth was the lowest in 60 years at 1.1 per cent, with Australia slipping down the OECD rankings. And last year, productivity actually went backwards.

What are the causes of this decline, both globally and in Australia? Some argue that major industrial transformations have already taken place, and the digital revolution, despite its ubiquitous impact, does not compare with the advent of such things as commercial flight, the telephone, and urban sanitation. Others observe that the digital revolution itself and the rise of the intangible economy make productivity growth difficult or even impossible to measure accurately over time, and hence we should not pay it so much attention.

After much debate, the view taking hold among economists is that most countries have an identifiable cohort of high-value, R&D-intensive firms on the global productivity frontier. The differentiator is the extent to which public policy and institutions are able to facilitate the diffusion of technological change and innovation to the much larger population of firms which would otherwise be productivity 'laggards', pulling down average productivity growth. The challenge is that diffusion is a much slower process than disruptive or breakthrough innovation and requires the development of enterprise 'absorptive capacity'.

Australia does not compare favourably in this context, now ranking 93rd out of 133 countries in the Harvard Atlas of Economic Complexity, which measures the diversity and knowledge intensity of our export mix. In addition, both government and business expenditure on R&D as a share of GDP has fallen behind the OECD average, and far behind global exemplars like Korea, Israel, Sweden, and Japan. In absolute terms, Amazon spends almost ten times more than the entire

Commonwealth research and innovation budget. Universities are now having to do much of the heavy lifting, but only as a result of their access to international student revenues.

How did we get here, is this a problem that needs addressing, and, if so, what can we do about it?

**Roy Green** is an Emeritus Professor and Special Innovation Advisor at the University of Technology Sydney, where he was Dean of the UTS Business School. He graduated with First Class Honours from the University of Adelaide and a PhD in Economics from the University of Cambridge.

Roy has enjoyed a career in universities, government and industry and has published widely in the areas of science, technology and innovation policy, and management education, including projects with the OECD and European Commission.

He has led and participated in numerous public inquiries, as well as chairing bodies such as the Australian Government's Innovative Regions Centre, CSIRO Manufacturing Sector Advisory Council, Food Innovation and Agribusiness Ltd (FIAL) Industry Growth Centre, NSW Manufacturing Industries Advisory Council, and the Queensland Competition Authority. He was also a member of the Prime Minister's Manufacturing Taskforce.

Currently, Roy chairs the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing (ARM) Hub and the Port of Newcastle, and is a board director of the SmartSat CRC and a member of the Charles Sturt University Council, the University of Newcastle Vice Chancellor's Industry Advisory Board, the Committee for Sydney Economy Advisory Council, and the Australian Design Council. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW.

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## Southern Highlands Branch Meeting 2024-1

### Ten novels that changed the world

#### Susannah Fullerton OAM FRSN

#### Author, Literary Lecturer, and Tour Leader



**Date:** Thursday, 15 February 2024, 6.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room

**All are welcome**

**Summary:** Literature has always had the power to change – just think of the impact of the King James Bible, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, Dr Johnson's *Dictionary*, Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. And yet fiction too has the power to change – to evoke sympathy, to make us take on different opinions, and even to bring about political and legal change.

This talk examines ten novels that altered our world when it came to race relations, charity, the shape of literature, and the plight of the poor and the different. Discover which novels have had a universal impact and be encouraged to think about which books you would select as having in some way brought about enormous change.

President of Jane Austin Society of Australia, **Susannah Fullerton OAM FRSN** majored in English Literature at the University of Auckland. She then completed a postgraduate degree in

Victorian fiction and prose at the University of Edinburgh. For over 25 years Susannah has been President of the Jane Austen Society of Australia. She has lectured extensively on Jane Austen in Australia and overseas and has published many articles about Jane Austen's works. She is the co-author of *Jane Austen – Antipodean Views* and published *Jane Austen and Crime* in 2004, and *Brief Encounters: Literary Travellers in Australia* (Picador) in 2009. Susannah's latest books are *A Dance with Jane Austen*, *Happily Ever After: Celebrating Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*, and a memoir *Jane & I: A Tale of Austen Addiction*.

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## Hunter Branch Meeting 2024-1

### Exploring the Holographic

**Dr Martina Mrongovius**

**Artist and Designer**



**Date:** Monday, 19 February 2024, 6.30 pm (AEDT), followed by a social event until 8.30 pm

**Registration:** [Registration is required](#) by 5.00 pm on Friday 16 February 2024 through Membes.

Max: 50 people

**Venue:** Hunter Theatre, Cameron Street, Broadmeadows, NSW 2292

**Entry:** Society members, \$15; Non-members, \$25; Students, \$5

**Enquiries:** [Via email](#) to RSNSW Hunter Branch Secretary (Prof. Philip Bolton)

**Society Members, Fellows, and members of the public are welcome**

*This event is a joint presentation of the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society – Newcastle and the Hunter Branch of the Royal Society of NSW.*

**ADFAS**  
newcastle

[Please click here to register](#)

**Summary:** Martina is passionate about art, physics, and design. In her art practice, she creates holographic images that explore urban experience. Made from montages of photos and videos they create dynamic scenes animated by the viewer's movement. In this lecture, Martina will discuss how her artworks were inspired by holographic imaging and navigating the urban landscape. Join us to learn from Martina about this interface between art and science.

**Dr Martina Mrongovius** is an Australian artist and designer with a background in applied physics. She completed her PhD in Melbourne at RMIT University's Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory where she investigated how holographic images are encountered. Martina has also worked at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, Germany, the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, as a Visiting Professor at Kun Shan University in Taiwan, and has curated projects and mentored students at the Center for the Holographic Arts in New York. In a collaborative research project, she created a series of holograms that will be launched on a CubeSat from the International Space Station.

## Annual Meeting of the Four Societies 2024

**Resilience before Readiness –  
“... for the want of a horseshoe nail**

**Vince Di Pietro AM CSC FRSN**

**Independent Consultant and  
former Commodore, Royal Australian Navy &  
former CEO, Lockheed Martin Australia**

*A joint meeting of the Australian Institute of Energy, the Australian Nuclear Association, Engineers Australia (Sydney Division), and RSNSW, kindly supported by [Academy Travel](#).*

**Date:** Wednesday, 21 February 2024, 6.00 pm for 6.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Metcalfe Theatre, State Library of New South Wales (Macquarie Street entrance)

**Entry:** No charge (with a registration discount code) for members of the four Societies. Non-members: \$20; Students: \$5

**Registration:** [Registration through Membes](#) is required.

**Drinks:** A cash bar will be available in the Macquarie Room adjacent to the Metcalfe Theatre from 6.00 pm

**All are welcome.**



**Please register now**

**Summary:** The 2019/2020 Black Summer bushfires devastated significant areas of land and destroyed much property. While the psychological damage continues to be felt by many, the emergency response and subsequent recovery exposed many shortcomings in our nation's capacity and capabilities. The concurrent emergency of early COVID-19 amplified the shortcomings beyond reasonable doubt. While much of the spotlight is afforded to the readiness possibilities offered by technology and equipment, the essential nature of national resilience needed to underpin preparedness may be in need of closer understanding, analysis, and improvement. Whether discussing high-end military equipment, cyber-attacks on our docks, or regional childcare, are our assumptions correct? Are we investing in success or repeating previous experiences and expecting a different outcome?

**Vince Di Pietro** is an independent consultant. Vince draws upon 40 years of service in the Royal Australian Navy specialising in aviation, flight training, professional military education, international diplomacy, risk management, certification, and safety. In addition to Command appointments, Vince served twice as a Director-General, as a Naval Attache to the United States, and as Commander of the Fleet Air Arm. On his retirement from the Navy, Vince was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Lockheed Martin Australia and New Zealand until retiring from that position in April 2019. After many moves in Australia and overseas, Vince settled permanently in the Shoalhaven. During and after



the Currowan Bushfire, Vince was the Local Recovery Coordinator for the Shoalhaven City Council overseeing the recovery coordination of the damage sustained by 82% of the Shoalhaven's 4600 square kilometers. Having learned much during the fire emergency, Vince designed, coordinated, and implemented the Recovery into Resilience Project in the Shoalhaven. The Project was delivered on time and budget in October 2023 and is now fully operational at 26 Community Information Hubs, powered by solar and battery and connected via satellite internet.

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## Western NSW Branch Meeting 2024-1

### **Parasites, Australia's silent threat— coincidence, nature's hand, or policy complacency**

**Professor Shookoofeh Shamsi**

**Professor of Veterinary Parasitology  
Gulbali Institute for Agriculture, Water & Environment  
Charles Sturt University**



**Date:** Wednesday, 28 February 2024, 6.00 — 7.00 pm (AEDT)

**Venue:** Wagga Wagga Campus (Riverina Playhouse), Charles Sturt University and live-streaming

**Entry:** No charge

**Registration:** [Registration through Humanitix](#) is required

**All are welcome**

**Please register now**

*This meeting is a joint presentation of Charles Sturt University and the Western NSW Branch of the Royal Society of NSW.*

**Summary:** Australia is facing a surge in parasitic incidents that have increasingly captured news headlines: Australia gives up the fight against eradication of bee mites; Oyster farms are under siege from deadly parasites; Native fish fall victim to gut-burrowing invaders, and the country's unique native wildlife faces the deadly threat of cat-borne parasites. Most shockingly, a python worm was recently extracted from a human brain. Despite this growing wave of parasitic challenges, Australia's tendency to downplay their significance is surprising.

This public lecture explores the heart of this enigma, exploring the origins, implications, and possible human factors contributing to Australia's parasitic predicaments. Are these occurrences mere coincidences, driven by the forces of Mother Nature, or do they serve as stark reminders of complacency within the policy-making domain?

**Professor Shookoofeh Shamsi** has qualifications in veterinary and medical sciences (parasitology) and skills in conventional morphological and molecular parasite identification methods. She is a taxonomist with a huge interest in identifying species, who goes beyond taxonomy to understand parasitism, ecology, evolution, ecosystems, and how parasite populations change in response to anthropological and environmental factors. She is currently leading and collaborating on various research projects focussing on the health, welfare, behaviour, biosecurity, and biology of both wild and farmed, as well as a range of terrestrial and aquatic, animals.

Recently, her research focus has broadened to include the culture of indigenous Australians in lessons of sustainability.

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## RSNSW 2024 Annual Dinner and Presentation of Awards



ROYAL  
SOCIETY  
NEW SOUTH WALES

### Royal Society of New South Wales 2024 Annual Dinner and Presentation of Awards

Strangers' Room, Parliament House, Sydney, NSW  
1 March 2024, 6.00–10.00 pm AEST

Dress: Black Tie

Registration: closes at 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 21 February



Platinum Sponsor



Gold Sponsor



Yves Hernot

Silver Sponsors

**Date and Time:** Friday, 1 March 2024, 6.00–10.00 pm

**Venue:** Strangers' Room, Parliament House, 6 Macquarie Street, Sydney

**Registration:** \$200 (incl. GST) per person, closing at 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 21 February 2024

**Dress:** Black tie

**Enquiries:** By email to [RSNSW Annual Dinner enquiries](#)

**All are welcome**

This year's Annual Dinner and Presentation of Awards will be held in the Strangers' Room, Parliament House, Sydney. This historic building has recently undergone restoration. The Strangers' Room is the principal dining facility in the Parliament building. It is located beyond the entry foyer and has an outstanding view over the Domain, looking towards Sydney Harbour. Our

Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, will be in attendance.

Entrance to the building is via the security gatehouse on Macquarie Street, near the State Library. Security officers will direct you to the building entrance and a staff member will meet you and escort you into the building.

For people who use wheelchairs or with mobility disabilities, there is a ramp and lift access from the Macquarie Street entrance to Reception on level 7.

General access car parking is not available at Parliament House. Nearby commercial car parks are located at:

- Cook and Phillip Park Pool (access via Cathedral St);
- The Domain Car Park (access via St Mary's Road);
- Sydney Hospital, next door to Parliament House (access via Hospital Road).

People with a current Mobility Parking Scheme Permit attending Parliament House may arrange accessible parking, subject to availability on the day. Requests for accessible parking may be made through the [Disability Car Parking Request Form](#) on the Parliamentary Catering website. Enquiries regarding the availability of disability parking can be made by [email](#).

The after-dinner address will be given by Dr Saul Griffith FRSN. Saul Griffith is an engineer and entrepreneur specialising in clean and renewable energy technologies. Saul has founded a dozen technology companies across 20 years in Silicon Valley. Saul is the author of 3 books including 'Electrify' and 'The Big Switch'. Saul has recently turned his attention from Otherlab, his independent Research and Development company, to policy work and writing, including founding Rewiring America and Rewiring Australia, non-partisan organisations dedicated to electrification and decarbonisation and the associated policy and regulatory implications of meeting our climate goals.

The Society gratefully acknowledges our Platinum Sponsor, Essential Energy, our Gold Sponsor, UNSW Sydney, and our Silver Sponsors, the Quantum Law Group and Yves Hernot, for supporting this event.

### **How to register**

Do join us to celebrate this event by clicking the button below. Members and non-members are equally welcome. We encourage you to register younger colleagues and colleagues from across New South Wales.

Dietary requirements can be catered for so long as we are informed in advance when registering.

**Please register now**

All enquiries should be sent by email to [RSNSW Annual Dinner enquiries](#).

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## **Ideas@theHouse: March 2024**

**Ideas@theHouse**

**presented by**



**Her Excellency the Honourable  
Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW**



**Shakespeare on politics — what can we learn**

**John Bell AO OBE**

**Founder and Former Artistic Director  
Bell Shakespeare**

**Date:** Wednesday, 6 March 2024, 6.30 – 8.00 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Face-to-face (by invitation for Society members) and live streaming from Government House Sydney

**Registration:** Society members will have received an email inviting them to register to receive a formal invitation from Government House. A link to the live stream will be published on the website and in a subsequent *Bulletin*.

**Entry:** No charge

**All are welcome to the live stream**

**Summary:** John Bell will present a brief survey of the political scenarios in Shakespeare's plays — Tragedies, Histories, and even the Comedies — in the context of these three questions. How do his observations resonate with us now? What can we take from them to confront the dilemmas we face today?

**John Bell** is the founder of Bell Shakespeare and one of Australia's most acclaimed theatre personalities. In a career of acting and directing, John has been instrumental in shaping the Australian theatre industry as we know it. After graduating from Sydney University in 1962, John worked for the Old Tote Theatre Company, all of Australia's state theatre companies, and was an Associate Artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company in the United Kingdom. As co-founder of Sydney's Nimrod Theatre Company, John presented many productions of landmark Australian plays including David Williamson's *Travelling North*, *The Club*, and *The Removalists*. He also initiated an Australian Shakespeare style with Nimrod productions such as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Macbeth*.

In 1990 John founded The Bell Shakespeare Company where his productions included *The Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo And Juliet*, *The Taming Of The Shrew*, *Richard 3*, *Pericles*, *Henry 4*, *Henry 5*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony And Cleopatra*, *The Comedy Of Errors*, *Wars Of The Roses*, *Measure For Measure*, *Macbeth*, and *As You Like It*, as well as John Webster's *The Duchess Of Malfi*, Goldoni's *The Servant Of Two Masters*, Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, and Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*. His Shakespeare roles include Hamlet, Shylock, Henry V, Richard III, Macbeth, Malvolio, Berowne, Petruchio, Leontes, Coriolanus, Prospero, King Lear, Titus Andronicus, and Falstaff. He played the title role in co-productions with Queensland Theatre Company including: *Richard 3*, Heiner Müller's *Anatomy Titus Fall Of Rome: A Shakespeare Commentary* and performed the role of Mephistopheles, in *Faustus*. John directed *Tosca* and *Carmen* for Opera Australia, *The Rake's Progress* for the Victorian Opera and has also

directed a production of *Madame Butterfly* for an Oz Opera national tour. John performed the role of the Professor in Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Uncle Vanya*, presented in association with Bell Shakespeare which also toured to Washington and New York.

John played the leading role in *The Father* for the Sydney Theatre Company and the Melbourne Theatre Company in late 2017 and directed and starred in *Diplomacy* for Ensemble Theatre in 2018. He toured the country throughout 2018 with Simon Tedeschi in two shows *Enoch Arden* and *Bright Star*. John also appeared in two television series aired in 2019, *Diary Of An Uber Driver* for ABC and *Lambs Of God* for Fox Television. In 2019, John played the title role in Moliere's *The Miser* for Bell Shakespeare. 2021 saw John in the highly successful *Grand Horizons* for Sydney Theatre Company and a welcome return season in 2022 at Sydney Theatre. 2022 had John collaborating with Simon Tedeschi on a number of shows around the country including 'Words And Music' and 'With Love, Amadeus'. John also performed his one-man show on Shakespeare 'One Man In His Time' in Sydney and Melbourne for Bell Shakespeare as well as another one-man show 'A Few Of My Favourite Things' at the Edinburgh Festival. He also featured with the Australian Haydn Ensemble in *Haydn Speaks*. At the end of 2022, John starred in a production of 'A Christmas Carol' for the Ensemble Theatre. 2024 will see John appearing at Blackheath Chamber Music Festival as well as with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Umberto Clerici plus further dates planned with Simon Tedeschi.

John Bell is an Officer of the Order of Australia and the Order of the British Empire. He has an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the Universities of Sydney, New South Wales, and Newcastle. In 1997, the National Trust of Australia named him as one of Australia's Living Treasures. In 2003, the Australia Business Arts Foundation awarded John the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Cultural Leadership Award. His many awards as an actor and director include the Helpmann Award for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor (*Richard 3*, 2002 & *Jaques* in *As you Like It*, 2015) and nominated for Best Support Actor and Best Actor (*Uncle Vanya*, 2011 and *The Father*, 2017), a Producers and Directors Guild Award for Lifetime Achievement and the JC Williamson Award (2009) for extraordinary contribution to Australia's live entertainment industry, and the 2010 Sydney Theatre Award for Lifetime Achievement in recognition of his extraordinary career as an actor, director, and producer. John is the founder and chair of The Bouddi Foundation for the Arts, based on the NSW Central Coast, dedicated to supporting young artists of all genres.

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## Branch and Committee Reports

### Program Committee Report

The Society provides an active program of events through its Hunter, Southern Highlands, and Western NSW branches, and in Sydney. The full program for the year can be found in the [website event calendar](#).

With events held recently by the branches reported on separately in this Bulletin, this section focuses on recent events held in Sydney.



### Report on the 29 November 2023 event held in Sydney

At the final event for 2023, the 1318<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Meeting, held in the Metcalfe Auditorium of the State Library on Wednesday 29 November, Emeritus Professor John Church AO FAA FTSE of

the UNSW Sydney Climate Change Research Centre, and winner of the Society's 2022 James Cook Medal, delivered a most informative and engaging talk titled [What do we really know about 20th- and 21st-century sea-level change?](#)



To emphasise the potential impact of sea level rise and the vulnerability of coastal societies, Professor Church began by explaining that over 200 million people live within an elevation of one metre of the high tide level, and that over one billion people live within 10 metres of this mark. He then went on to describe the causes of sea level rise including thermal expansion of the ocean due to warming, changes of the ocean mass due to contributions from glacier and ice sheet melting, and changes in liquid water storage on land, and discussed that relative sea level change arises from local effects of such as ocean density and circulation, land movement, and the distribution of the mass on the earth. While thirty years ago, there were not adequate explanations of the dynamics of sea level rise, today the situation is far different with vastly improved instrumentation (including satellite altimeters, ARGO floats, and the GRACE satellites that provide information about gravitational changes, together with models that are very much more sophisticated and capable of matching observations.

In the talk, he emphasised that satellite altimeter observations show an increasing rate of sea level rise, but one that is not uniform due to geological phenomena — in particular those associated with changes in the loading of the land and sea floors due to the melting of the great ice sheets from the last ice age and the increased mass of water in the oceans. Of particular interest was his description of post-glacial rebound, or glacial isostatic adjustment, which is continuing to cause land on the coast of eastern North America to sink, leading to increased relative sea level rise, e.g., in New York.

While many of the factors affecting sea level rise are understood, there remain significant uncertainties surrounding the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, and the instabilities that could give rise to their collapse. Greenland is of particular immediate concern since the total loss of its ice sheet could contribute over 7 metres to sea level rise.

Professor Church concluded his talk by discussing the thresholds of anticipated global warming ranging from 2.7 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial level with the current policies and actions, 2.4 degrees with the 2030 targets, 2.0 degrees with future pledges and targets, and 1.8 degrees only in the most optimistic scenario, emphasising that the crossing of these thresholds will affect millions of people and necessitate urgent, significant, and sustained mitigation and adaptation measures. He also made clear that sea level rise will be felt most acutely during extreme weather events, with heightened tides, storm surges, and waves, turning what previously may have been one in 100-year events into potentially annual or more frequent events. Overall, the talk was a very sobering reminder of the future impacts of climate change over decades and centuries to come, and also the non-uniformity of the impacts, with some countries being significantly affected while others, such as Australia, less so.

The recording of this event, now [available on our YouTube channel](#), is recommended viewing for Society members. This recording has received over 2,600 views on YouTube since it was published in early December. The associated YouTube Short — a brief clip (of up to 60 seconds) extracted from the talk — has received over 2,200 views, while this same clip posted to Facebook has received around 56,000 viewings, leading to approximately 130 new followers on our channel. As may be expected, Facebook's algorithms led to this being promoted to a significant audience of climate change deniers. The comments, on both Facebook and YouTube, reveal a mix of people who received the messages contained in this talk both positively and negatively. Indeed, the only

other recent event that has generated comparable audience commentary is the presentation by Emeritus Professor Hugh White AO FASSA on “This is going to be different: Learning to live with Chinese Power”. The message from these talks for our Society is that substantial audience impact, as measured by social media metrics, comes only with presentations or discussions that are both broadly accessible and contain some controversial elements, as perceived by various sectors of society.

Lindsay Botten FRSN  
Webmaster, Royal Society of NSW

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## Hunter Branch Report

### Forthcoming events

A program of five events is planned by the Hunter Branch for 2024. They are:

- Exploring the Holographic, Dr Martina Mrongovious, Monday, 19 February, 6.30 pm, Hunter Theatre, Cameron Street, Broadmeadow, NSW (jointly with ADFAS Newcastle)
- Conservation, Frogs, and Citizen Science, Honorary Professor Michael Mahony, Thursday, 11 April, 5.15 pm, The King Street Room, NEX Newcastle Exhibition and Convention Centre, Newcastle West
- Topic: TBA, Presenter: TBA, Thursday, 20 June, 5.15 pm, The King Street Room, NEX Newcastle Exhibition and Convention Centre, Newcastle West
- Topic: TBA, Presenter: TBA, Thursday, 15 August, 5.15 pm, The King Street Room, NEX Newcastle Exhibition and Convention Centre, Newcastle West
- Topic: TBA, Professor Francesco Paolucci, Thursday, 24 October, 5.15 pm, The King Street Room, NEX Newcastle Exhibition and Convention Centre, Newcastle West



The Hunter Branch is currently finalising arrangements for the 2024 program of events and looks forward to members of the Society and their friends joining the Branch for Society events during the coming year. The Society is also planning to record the latter four events held in Newcastle in 2024, thus opening up this program to a much wider audience.

Philip Bolton  
Secretary, Hunter Branch

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## Southern Highlands Branch Report

### Forthcoming Events

A program of ten events is planned for 2024, all of which will be held at the Mittagong RSL commencing at 6.30 pm. They are:

- Ten novels that changed the world, Susannah Fullerton OAM FRSN, Thursday, 15 February



- Topic: TBA, Professor Alan Nutman, Thursday, 21 March
- Topic: TBA, Professor Fred Watson, Astronomer-at-Large, Thursday, 18 April
- Topic: TBA, Distinguished Professor Anatoly Rosenfeld, Thursday, 16 May
- Topic: TBA, Distinguished Professor Gordon Wallace, Thursday, 20 June
- Topic: TBA, Dr Brad Tucker, Thursday, 18 July
- Topic: TBA, Dr Carolyn Hogg, Thursday, 15 August
- Topic: TBA, Ms Greta Bradman, Thursday, 19 September
- Topic: TBA, Professor Michael Kassiou, Thursday, 17 October
- Topic: TBA, Scientia Professor Gordon Parker, 21 November

Anne Wood FRSN

Chair, Southern Highlands Branch

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## Western NSW Branch Report

### Event Report

In conjunction with the Western NSW Branch of the Royal Society of New South Wales, Charles Sturt University is conducting its Provocations Public Lecture series that showcases and celebrates research at the University.



### Forthcoming Events

A program of six lectures in the Provocations series is planned for 2024. These will be live streamed online and recorded for subsequent availability on the Society's YouTube channel. The events are:

- [Parasites, Australia's silent threat - Coincidence, nature's hand, or policy complacency?](#), Professor Shokoofeh Shamsi, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga Campus, Wednesday, 28 February 2024, 6.00 pm AEDT
- Topic: TBA, Professor Alan Cooper, Charles Sturt University, Albury Campus, Wednesday, 10 April 2024, 6.00 pm AEST
- Topic: TBA, Professor Muhammad Shiddiky, Charles Sturt University, Orange Campus, Wednesday, 26 June 2024, 6.00 pm AEST
- Adapting to change — Invasive plants and pests take up the challenge, Professor Leslie Weston, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga Campus, Wednesday, 28 August 2024, 6.00 pm AEDT
- Topic: TBA, Professor Sarah O'Shea, Charles Sturt University, Dubbo Campus, Wednesday, 23 October 2024, 6.00 pm AEST
- Topic: TBA, Professor Allen Ross, Charles Sturt University, Orange Campus, Wednesday, 5 November 2024, 6.00 pm AEDT



Nilima Mathai  
Treasurer  
Western NSW Branch

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## The Society and Social Media

The Society's presence on social media platforms is growing strongly, particularly following the appointment of the Society's part-time Communications Officer. Our [Facebook page](#), [LinkedIn channel](#), [X/Twitter feed](#), and [YouTube channel](#) are engaging an increased following, and we continue to build our repository of events on YouTube. Our YouTube channel now has over 780 subscribers, while the more than 141 videos online have received nearly 95,000 viewings.

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

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

## YouTube recordings of recent events

All online presentations and all face-to-face presentations held in Sydney and by the Western NSW Branch are recorded and uploaded to the Society's YouTube channel. These can be accessed directly from [YouTube](#) or from the [Presentations](#) page of the RSNSW website.

For convenience, the video links below provide access to recordings from the most recent three months. We hope that these will be of interest to members.



YouTube recording of the presentation at the 1318th Ordinary General Meeting (29 November 2023) on the subject of *What do we really know about 20th- and 21st-century sea-level change?* by Emeritus Professor John Church AO FAA FTSE, UNSW Sydney Climate Change Research Centre — the winner of the 2022 RSNSW James Cook Medal. A

summary of the session and a brief biography of the presenter is available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation at the Western NSW Branch Meeting 2023-4 (16 November 2023) on the subject of *Thirst for power — the rivers of conflict in Southeast Asia*, by Professor Lee Baumgartner, Executive Director of the Gulbali Institute for Agriculture, Water, and Environment at Charles Sturt University. A summary of the session and a brief biography of each of the presenters are available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation at the 1317th Ordinary General Meeting and 2022 Clarke Memorial Lecture (8 November 2023) on the subject of *Caves as observatories of groundwater recharge*, by Professor Andy Baker from the School of Biological, Earth, and Environmental Sciences of UNSW Sydney. A summary of the session and a brief biography of each of the presenters are available from the [online event notice](#).

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

# OUR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY BRAIN

Thursday 2 November 2023

8:45am–5:00pm AEDT

Government House Sydney + live streaming



## WELCOME, OPENING & KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

YouTube recording of the opening session of the 2024 Royal Society of NSW and Learned Academies Forum with the theme of *Our 21st Century Brain*, held at Government House Sydney on 2 November 2024. A summary of the Forum, together with a brochure containing the program and biographies of presenters, is available from the [online event notice](#). The complete set of six recordings of the day's sessions is available from the [YouTube playlist](#) for the Forum.

## ELECTRIFICATION & OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY & BUSINESS

PROFESSOR RENATE EGAN



ROYAL  
NEW SOUTH WALES

UNE  
University of  
New England

SRI  
SMART REGION  
INCUBATOR

YouTube recording of the presentation at the joint UNE SRI and RSNSW Presentation held in Armidale (30 October 2023) on the subject of *Electrification and Opportunities for Community and Business*, presented by Professor Renate Egan, Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Photovoltaics at UNSW Sydney. A summary of the session and a brief biography of each of the presenters are available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation at the 1316th Ordinary General Meeting (4 October 2023) on the subject of *Australia's nuclear future: A new discourse for the 2040s*, by Helen Cook, Principal of GNE Advisory and Dr Adi Paterson, former CEO of ANSTO. A summary of the session and a brief biography of each of the presenters are available from the [online event notice](#).

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