dassh | 2026 Conference

The Future-Facing University

Leadership from the Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities

Melbourne | 15 - 18 September 2026

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Arriving

Train: Best access to the Swinburne campus is via **Glenferrie train station**. Glenferrie station is on the Alamein, Belgrave and Lilydale lines.

Tram: Six tram routes (16, 48, 70, 72, 75 & 109) are available to and from the campus.

Car: Ticket & permit parking available at the multi-deck car park with entry on Wakefield Street.

If you have trouble finding the venue, please contact Ellen Kirkpatrick on 0421 361 667.

Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship (AGSE)
Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn Campus
50 William Street, Hawthorn,
VIC 3122

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We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung People of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather and pay our respect to Elders past and present. We recognise our connections to Wurundjeri Country, history, culture, and spirituality, and commit to operating in a manner that respects, celebrates, and honours their Elders and Ancestors.

2026 Conference Program

Pre-Conference

Tuesday 15 September

RMIT The Capitol
113 Swanston St, Melbourne VIC 3000

6.30pm **The First Inventors: How People Shaped a Continent**
An evening with Larissa Behrendt, Billy Griffiths and Sean Ulm

7.30pm **Welcome reception**
Canapes and drinks provided

Conference Day One

Wednesday 16 September

Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship (AGSE)
Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn Campus
50 William Street, Hawthorn, VIC 3122

8.30am **Guests arrive and registrations -** AGSE Foyer, Ground Floor
Tea and coffee upon arrival

9.00am **Conference commences -** AGSE-202, Level 2
Professor James Verdon, Executive Dean, School of Social Sciences, Media, Film & Education, Swinburne University of Technology

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The Future-Facing University

2026 Annual Conference

9.30am **Shaping the Future of Higher Education**
Luke Sheehy, CEO of Universities Australia

The opening session sets the scene by examining the changing role of universities in an era of technological transformation, evolving workforce needs and shifting public expectations. What is the role of the university in shaping Australia's future? CEO of Universities Australia Luke Sheehy explores the strategic direction and contributions of the university sector.

10.00am **Megan Lilly,** Acting Commissioner, Jobs and Skills Australia
The workforce requires graduates with both technical expertise and enduring human capabilities. Megan Lilly examines emerging skills needs, the role of tertiary education in developing a future-ready workforce, and the role of universities in building adaptable, skilled and resilient graduates.

Chair
Professor James Verdon, Executive Dean, School of Social Sciences, Media, Film & Education, Swinburne University of Technology

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10.45am **Morning tea -** AGSE Foyer, Ground Floor

11.15am **Panel: The Change Landscape -** AGSE-202, Level 2
Professor Ute Roessner, CEO of Australian Research Council
Professor Kate Darian-Smith, President, Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia

What are the emerging priorities shaping Australia and Aotearoa's research and higher education system? Professor Cynthia White, Professor Ute Roessner and Professor Kate Darian-Smith will explore current sector developments and the future of the social sciences.

Chair
Professor Cynthia White, Pro Vice-Chancellor, College of Humanities & Social Sciences, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University

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12.30pm **Lunch -** AGSE Foyer, Ground Floor

1.30pm **Higher Education at a Crossroads**
AGSE 202, Level 2
Professor Andrew Norton, Monash Business School

Professor Andrew Norton unpacks the key trends and risks shaping the future of higher education, with a focus on the policy context influencing institutional decision-making.

Chair
Professor Heather Zwicker, Executive Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, The University of Queensland

Aotearoa New Zealand break-out
AGSE109, Level 1

Professor Bill Fish, Head of School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University

A collegial discussion for Aotearoa members to connect and share perspectives on current priorities and emerging sector issues, including the shift towards university self-accreditation.

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2.20pm **Afternoon Tea -** AGSE Foyer, Ground Floor

3.00pm **Education and Regional Futures in the Asia-Pacific -** AGSE 202, Level 2

Professor Bethan Greener, Head of School, People, Environment and Planning, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University
Susannah Patton, Director Asia Engagement, RMIT University
Bronte Neyland, Vice-President (External Engagement), Swinburne University of Technology

Universities play an increasingly important role in strengthening regional relationships, fostering international collaboration and building long-term capability across the Asia-Pacific. This panel will explore how higher education contributes to regional engagement through education, research and partnerships, and consider the opportunities and responsibilities of universities in supporting shared regional futures.

Chair
Professor Hugh Campbell, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Division of Humanities, Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka University of Otago

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4.00pm **Conclusion of day program**

Conference Dinner

Wednesday 16 September

Melbourne Museum
11 Nicholson Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053

5.30pm **Guest arrival & drinks service commences**

6.00pm **First Nations introduction & access to Bunjilaka Aboriginal Centre**

6.30pm **Roaming entrees**

7.30pm **Seated main course**

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Conference Day Two

Thursday 17 September

Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship (AGSE)
Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn Campus
50 William Street, Hawthorn, VIC 3122

9.00am

Room One: AGM & Council Meeting

AGSE202, Level 2

Professor Heather Zwicker, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Campus Culture and Leadership) & Executive Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, The University of Queensland

The AGM includes Board elections and provides members with reports on the organisation's activities and finances. There is opportunity for members to engage in the governance and future direction of DASSH for 2026-2028.

Attendees
DASSH Council representatives & any interested members

NOTE: All members are welcome to attend the AGM. Only designated Council members are eligible to vote.

Room Two: Research Integrity in Practice

AGSE108, Level 1

Professor Tim Marjoribanks, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Integrity, Swinburne University of Technology

As research environments become increasingly complex, leaders are navigating a growing range of integrity challenges. This facilitated workshop will examine practical issues around authorship, ethics, data management and external partners.

Attendees
DASSH Research & HDR leaders, & any interested attendees

Room Three: Assessment in the Age of AI

AGSE109, Level 1

Professor Phill Dawson, Co-Lead, Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE), Deakin University

Assessment is central to assuring student learning and graduate capability in a rapidly evolving higher education environment. Participants will examine emerging approaches to designing authentic assessment and learning outcomes.

Attendees
DASSH Teaching and Learning leaders & any interested attendees

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11.00am **Morning tea -** AGSE Foyer, Ground Floor

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11.30am **Purpose and Participation in Higher Education,** AGSE202, Level 2

Professor the Hon. Verity Firth, Vice-President Societal Impact, University of New South Wales & Chair of Engagement Australia

In a time of transformation across the tertiary sector, questions of access, equity and institutional purpose are increasingly significant. This plenary examines how universities can strengthen participation and social impact while maintaining meaningful engagement with communities and learners.

Chair
Professor Katherine Johnson, Dean, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University

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12.30pm **Lunch -** AGSE Foyer, Ground Floor

1.45pm **The AI-Integrated University -** AGSE202, Level 2

Professor Theo Farrell, Vice-Chancellor and President La Trobe University

Artificial intelligence is reshaping not only university operations, but also how knowledge is created, assessed and communicated. Drawing on emerging examples of AI integration across curriculum and institutional strategy, this session explores the implications for universities responding to rapid technological and workforce change.

Chair
Professor Simon Tormey, Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University

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2.45pm **Closing remarks -** AGSE202, Level 2

3.00pm **Afternoon tea -** AGSE Foyer, Ground Floor

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Post-Conference

Thursday 17 September

The Hawthorn Hotel
481 Burwood Road, Hawthorn, VIC 3122

4.00pm **Mentors and Mentees catch-up**

Any DASSH member who would like to continue the conversation is welcome to join the informal catch-up at the Hawthorn Hotel near the Swinburne campus.

Friday 18 September

Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship (AGSE)
Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn Campus
50 William Street, Hawthorn, VIC 3122

9.00am **Networks & Communities of Practice gatherings -** AGSE, Level 1

DASSH members participating in the Teaching and Learning Network, Research Community of Practice and Bachelor of Arts working group + any interested members will meet at Swinburne University of Technology for member-led gatherings.

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Speakers & Panellists

Prof. the Hon. Verity Firth

Vice-President Societal Impact & Engagement, University of New South Wales

Professor Verity Firth AM is the Vice-President Societal Impact, Equity and Engagement at the University of New South Wales. Prof. Firth is Chair of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, and Chair of Engagement Australia. She is Deputy Chair of the Australian Public Policy Institute and Teachers Mutual Bank. She is a member of the Commonwealth Government's Tertiary System Advisory Council and served on the Implementation Advisory Committee for the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission.

Professor Theo Farrell

Vice-Chancellor, La Trobe University

Professor Theo Farrell commenced as Vice-Chancellor and President of La Trobe University in February 2024. He previously held leadership roles at the University of Wollongong, City University of London, and King's College London. Professor Farrell is Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (UK) and past President of the British International Studies Association. He believes passionately in the mission of universities to build a beter world through research, education, industry partnerships, and civic engagement. He has acted as strategic advisor to the UK government and US-led command in Afghanistan.

Megan Lilly

Acting Commissioner, Jobs and Skills Australia

Megan Lilly is Acting Commissioner at Jobs and Skills Australia, bringing more than two decades of leadership in education, training, and workforce development. She joined JSA in September 2024, following a distinguished career at the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group), where she served as the Executive Director of the Centre for Education and Training. Throughout her career, Megan has been a prominent voice in national policy development, advocating for stronger links between education and industry. At Ai Group, she led strategic initiatives to address workforce capability, vocational education reform, and skills development across key sectors of the economy.

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Professor Ute Roessner

Chief Executive Officer, Australian Research Council

Professor Ute Roessner AM FAA is Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Research Council, having joined the organisation in March 2025. She is an internationally recognised leader in metabolomics and lipidomics, with a distinguished career in plant science research. Ute's pioneering work established frontier technologies for parallel analyses of hundreds of metabolites, enabling comprehensive investigation into how plants function under adverse environments. She previously held the position of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Initiatives and Infrastructure) at the Australian National University, has been appointed as Member of the Order of Australia and is an elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.

Luke Sheehy

Chief Executive Officer, Universities Australia

Mr Luke Sheehy commenced as the CEO of Universities Australia in February 2024. He is a highly skilled leader with more than 20 years' experience shaping the agenda of higher education.
Prior to UA, Mr Sheehy led the Australian Technology Network of Universities for almost five years. He has also held key education roles in government, worked as an education and strategy consultant for the Asian Development Bank and held senior management roles at Swinburne University.
As the first member of his family to graduate from university, Mr Sheehy knows first-hand the power of education to transform lives and is driven to ensure that opportunity is provided to as many people as possible.

Professor Andrew Norton

Professor of Higher Education Policy, Monash University

Professor Andrew Norton is a leading authority on higher education policy in Australia, currently serving as Professor of Higher Education Policy at Monash Business School, Monash University.
With a career spanning over 25 years, Andrew has held influential positions including as Professor in the Practice of Higher Education Policy at the Australian National University, Higher Education Program Director at the Grattan Institute and advisory roles to government ministers and university vice chancellors. He contributed to the 2023 Universities Accord ministerial reference group, the 2016 expert panel advising on the reform of higher education, and co-authored the 2014 review of the demand-driven funding system.

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Professor Bethan Greener

Head of the School of People, Environment and Planning, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University

Professor Greener is Head of the School of People, Environment and Planning (PEP) within Massey's College of Humanities and Social Sciences. She comes out of the discipline of International Relations, where her research focused on international security matters. Professor Greener has an abiding interest in how institutions function, how norms are generated, and how education and knowledge shapes actors and the world they live in.

Susannah Patton

Director, Asia Engagement, RMIT

Susannah is Director, Asia Engagement at RMIT and a non-resident fellow at the Lowy Institute. She has more than 15 years' experience supporting Australia's engagement with Asia, and is an active participant in policy dialogues, conferences and professional education programs connecting Australia with Asia and improving Australians' understanding of the region. Her experience includes serving in various Southeast Asia-focused positions in the Australian government, including in the Southeast Asia Branch at the Office of National Intelligence, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and as a diplomat in the Australian Embassy in Bangkok. Most recently she was Director of the Lowy Institute's Southeast Asia Program.

Professor Kate Darian-Smith

President, Academy of Social Sciences in Australia

Professor Kate Darian-Smith is President of Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA), and Professorial Fellow, University of Melbourne. Kate has held leadership roles (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean, Head of School, Associate Dean, Centre Director) at the University of Melbourne and the University of Tasmania. She has served on the DASSH Executive (2020-24); ARC College of Experts; Board, Australia-Japan Foundation; Council, Museum of Australian Democracy; President, International Australian Studies Association; currently sits on Committees at the National Library of Australia, DFAT and Port Arthur Historic Site; and is a member of several international academic editorial boards.

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Bronte Neyland

Vice-President (External Engagement), Swinburne University of Technology

A seasoned senior executive, Bronte has more than two decades of experience in the higher education sector, managing multidisciplinary teams spanning strategy, domestic and international recruitment and admissions, transnational education, web and marketing, media, and alumni relations. As Vice-President (External Engagement) at Swinburne University of Technology, Bronte contributes to the achievement of the University's strategic plan through leadership of engagement connections and activities concerning prospective students, alumni, donors, national and international partnerships, global mobility, indigenous engagement, media and other key market stakeholders.

Workshop Facilitators

Professor Tim Marjoribanks

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research Integrity, Swinburne University of Technlogy

Tim Marjoribanks is Professor of Management in the School of Business, Law, and Entrepreneurship, and Pro Vice Chancellor Research Integrity, Swinburne University of Technology. Tim's research and teaching engage with debates in organisational innovation, and technology and transformation, with a focus on the media industry, sport, and sustainability. He has held several leadership roles, including Associate Head of School, Associate Dean Research, Head of Department, and Chair, Research Policy and Quality Committee and Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee. Tim is a member of the ARC College of Experts.

Professor Phill Dawson

Co-Director, CRADLE, Deakin University

Professor Phillip (Phill) Dawson is Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE) at Deakin University. His work focuses on improving assessment while addressing integrity challenges and emerging technologies.
His book Defending Assessment Security in a Digital World (Routledge, 2021), examines academic integrity in a digital age. In 2024, he co-edited the Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education special issue Challenging Cheating and published the provocative article Validity Matters More Than Cheating.

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The Future-Facing University
2026 Annual Conference

Chairs

Professor Heather Zwicker

Executve Dean, Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences & Pro Vice-Chancellor (Campus Culture and Leadership),
The University of Queensland

Professor Cynthia White

Pro Vice-Chancellor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa
Massey University

Professor Hugh Campbell

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Division of Humanities, Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka University of Otago

Thank you to our conveners

Professor James Verdon

Executive Dean, School of Social Sciences, Media, Film & Education, Swinburne University of Technology

Lead Convener & Conference Host

Professor Katherine Johnson

Dean, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University

Co-Convener & Welcome Reception Host

Professor Simon Tormey

Executive Dean, Arts & Education, Deakin University

Co-Convener

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The Future-Facing University

2026 Annual Conference

Main conference program host

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Welcome reception host

RMIT UNIVERSITY

Partner university

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

2026 Conference Sponsor

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