

MENZIES EARLY CAREER NETWORK

CONNECTING
MENZIES AND
AMERICA

20
26





*President John F. Kennedy meets with Prime Minister of Australia Robert Gordon Menzies,
24 February 1961*

PROGRAM

2026-2027

TIME

EVENT

SPEAKER

Friday, 14 August

Introductory Workshop: Southern Cross University Sydney Campus, Sydney

Wednesday, 9 September

Online International Relations seminar with Dr David Lee

Wednesday, 16 September

Online ANZUS and Security seminar with Dr Sue Thompson

Wednesday, 23 September

Online Law and Economics seminar with Professor Henry Ergas

Wednesday, 30 September

Online Domestic Policy and Politics seminar with Dr David Furse-Roberts

Wednesday, 11 November

Masterclass with Professor Tim Lynch, Robert Menzies Institute, University of Melbourne

Thursday and Friday,
12-13 November

ANZUS, Menzies and America, The political, strategic, and cultural impact of the USA across Australian history, **Robert Menzies Institute Annual Conference**
Old Quad, University of Melbourne

ROBERT MENZIES INSTITUTE



Georgina Downer

Georgina Downer is the CEO of the Robert Menzies Institute at the University of Melbourne. She is a former diplomat and qualified lawyer, with a Masters degree in Public International Law from the London School of Economics. She has worked across Asia and the Pacific for the Australian Government, the International Republican Institute, and the UNDP. Georgina was a Research Fellow at the Institute of Public Affairs and the inaugural Director of Asialink Diplomacy. In addition to her executive experience, Georgina has served on the Boards of the indigenous not-for-profit, The Torch, the Menzies Research Centre, and the Victorian Liberal Party. She is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Dr Damien Freeman

Damien Freeman is a Fellow of the Robert Menzies Institute where he leads the Institute's Menzies Early Career Network. He was educated at the University of Sydney (MA, LLB(Hons), MPhil) and the University of Cambridge (PhD). His books include *Abbott's Right: the conservative tradition from Menzies to Abbott* and *The End of Settlement: why the 2023 referendum failed*. He has published a range of occasional papers for the Centre for Independent Studies and the PM Glynn Institute and has edited two volumes for the Jeparit Press—*Finding Menzies* and *Menzies Rediscovered*—and wrote the introduction to Jeparit's *Fancies I Dare Not Speak: the hidden verse of R. G. Menzies*. Most recently, he contributed a chapter on "Toryism and belonging" in *Immigration & Multiculturalism* edited by Chetna Mahadik.



Dr Zachary Gorman

Dr Zachary Gorman is the historian and research manager at the Robert Menzies Institute. A professional historian, Gorman has worked as a researcher and academic since 2013, including several years at the University of Wollongong, where he received his PhD. He has authored or edited nine books, including *Sir Joseph Carruthers: Founder of the New South Wales Liberal Party*, *Summoning Magna Carta: Freedom's Symbol Over a Millennium*, and *Unity in Autonomy: A Federal History of the Founding of the Liberal Party*. He has been published in a wide range of academic journals.



Chetna Mahadik

Chetna Mahadik is the General Manager of the Robert Menzies Institute.

A communications professional, her background spans across journalism and communications, across media, charity and public policy sector in India, Europe and Australia. She holds an Erasmus Mundus Masters in Media and Globalisation from the University of Hamburg. Most recently, she edited *Immigration & Multiculturalism: The Past, the Present and the Future* for Connor Court Publishing.

INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP

14 AUGUST 2026

VENUE: SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY SYDNEY CAMPUS, 60 PHILLIP STREET, SYDNEY NSW 2000

TIME

EVENT

10:00

Registration

10:15

Welcome by Dr Damien Freeman and introductory activity

11:15

Morning tea

11:30

"From Tocqueville and Hancock to Menzies: Australian democracy in theory and practice" - Guest Lecture by Professor Henry Ergas

12:30

Preparation for group presentations

13:00

Lunch

13:30

"Menzies, Evatt and Keating: three approaches to Australian foreign policy"
Tom Switzer in conversation with Georgina Downer

14:30

Afternoon Tea

15:00

"What would Menzies think?" Group presentations with responses by Dr Zachary Gorman

16:00

Conclusion

WORKSHOP AND MASTERCLASS PRESENTERS



Professor Henry Ergas AO

Henry Ergas has served as Professor of Infrastructure Economics at the University of Wollongong's SMART Infrastructure Facility and at the OECD in Paris where amongst other roles he headed the Secretary-General's Task Force on Structural Adjustment and was Counsellor for Structural Policy in the Economics Department. He has taught at the École nationale de la statistique et de l'administration économique in Paris, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and Monash University. He chaired the Howard Government's Intellectual Property and Competition Policy Review and was a member of the Export Infrastructure Review. He is a lay member of the New Zealand High Court and a columnist for *The Australian*.



Professor Timothy Lynch

Tim Lynch is Professor of American Politics at the University of Melbourne. In 2022-23, Tim was the Milward L. Simpson Visiting Fulbright Professor at the University of Wyoming. His latest book is *In the Shadow of the Cold War: American Foreign Policy from George Bush Sr. to Donald Trump*. He is editor of the two-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Military and Diplomatic History*. He is a regular contributor for *The Australian*.



Tom Switzer

Tom Switzer is the presenter of Switzerland and a contributor to *The Australian*, *The Australian Financial Review* and *Sky News Australia*. Previously, he has served as Executive Director at the Centre for Independent Studies, presenter of *Between the Lines* on the ABC's Radio National, senior fellow at the University of Sydney's United States Studies Centre and Australian editor of *The Spectator*. He has been published in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The National Interest*, *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *The American Conservative*.

ONLINE SEMINAR EXPERTS



Dr David Furse-Roberts

David Furse-Roberts presently works as a speechwriter and researcher for a federal senator. He holds a PhD in history from the University of NSW and is the author of *God and Menzies*. He is also the editor of *Howard: The Art of Persuasion* and *Menzies: The Forgotten Speeches*. Since joining the Menzies Research Centre in 2016, he has written for the ABC, *Quadrant*, *Spectator Australia* and other publications on the history and contemporary relevance of liberalism in Australia.



Dr David Lee

David Lee is an Associate Professor at the University of New South Wales. Previously was based in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for 24 years. He has published widely on Australian history including Australia during the Cold War. His most recent books are *Australia and the World: International Relations and Global Events since Federation and John Curtin*. He is also author of *The Second Rush: Mining and the Transformation of Australia* and *Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist*. He is Chair of the Commonwealth Working Party of the Australian Dictionary of Biography has been the National Archives of Australia's Cabinet historian since 2022.



Dr Sue Thompson

Sue Thompson is an Associate Professor at ANU's National Security College. Previously, she was the research coordinator at the Australian Civil Military Centre in the Australian Department of Defence, corporate affairs officer for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) and as a communications and policy officer for the Mental Health Council of Australia. Her books include *The United States and Southeast Asian Regionalism: Collective Security and Economic Development, 1945-75* and *British Military Withdrawal from South-East Asia and the Rise of Regional Cooperation*.

2026 WORKSTREAMS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STREAM



Conor Barnes

Conor Barnes has studied for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne, majoring in Politics and International Studies. He currently works as a media and communications adviser to a Federal Member of Parliament and Shadow Minister. He previously worked as an electorate officer to a Victorian State Member of Parliament and has additional experience in social media advertising and marketing. Throughout his time at the University of Melbourne, Conor was actively involved in student leadership, serving as a Board Member of the University of Melbourne Student Union, President of the Melbourne University Liberal Club and on the executive committees of a range of clubs and societies. Outside of work, Conor has a keen interest in history, politics, languages and theatre, and is a passionate supporter of the Western Bulldogs.



Chai Couzens

Chai Couzens is completing (2026) a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne, majoring in History and minoring in Politics. She has a passion for a range of historical periods, including Medieval European History, Early Modern History and Modern Political History. Chai enjoys using primary written and visual sources to better understand the past, while also applying this research to her contemporary political studies. She is a Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholar, who completed Melbourne University's Extension Program in Art History during her Year 12 studies. She received the Principal's Scholarship (2024) and made the Arts Dean's Honours List. Chai has interned with the Collections and Testimonies Team at the Melbourne Holocaust Museum and volunteers at the National Trust, where she enjoys giving back to the community by inspiring appreciation for culture and heritage. She intends to complete a Masters in 2027 and work in museum curatorship.



Chelsea Burgess Hannon

Chelsea Burgess Hannon is a student at Macquarie University studying a Bachelor of Security Studies while working for the NSW Leader of the Opposition, Kellie Sloane MP. She serves as an Executive Member of both the NSW Young Liberals and the Australian Liberal Students' Federation, and has worked on political campaigns at the local, state and federal levels across Australia. Her policy interests include metropolitan and regional planning, housing affordability, transport connectivity, defence and national security. She has a particular interest in fast rail development and the role of major infrastructure projects in supporting economic growth, connecting communities and improving Australia's long-term productivity and resilience. Chelsea is passionate about public policy and public service and has a strong interest in the intersection of economic development, infrastructure and national security in shaping the future. Outside of work and study, she enjoys tennis, ballroom dancing and walking along Sydney Harbour.



Ziyen Tejani

Ziyen Tejani recently completed a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Social Science in Politics at Macquarie University. His interests include Australian foreign policy, liberal democratic institutions and Australia's engagement with the Indo-Pacific. As a New Colombo Plan Scholar in Singapore, he studied at the National University of Singapore and undertook research placements with the Middle East Institute and Adam Smith Center, developing a strong interest in Australia's regional role. He has also worked across universities, parliamentary settings and public policy think tanks, including the Menzies Research Centre, contributing to research and government program delivery. Ziyen served as Assistant Editor of *Speech: The Power of Persuasion*, a collection on political oratory launched by two former Australian prime ministers. His MECN research will examine how the Menzies government connected ANZUS and the Colombo Plan within an emerging regional strategy, and how this shaped Australia's relationship with Britain, the United States and Asia.

2026 WORKSTREAMS

ANZUS AND SECURITY STREAM



Luke Bentley

Luke Bentley is a student at the Australian National University, where he is completing a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of International Security Studies. He currently works at the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and is also involved in secondary education roles. His academic and professional interests lie in public law and policy, national security, and Australia's engagement in the Indo-Pacific, with a particular focus on Southeast Asia and the Australia-Indonesia relationship. Luke is especially interested in the how historical ideas, personalities and memory can inform contemporary political and strategic challenges. Through the Menzies Early Career Network, Luke will examine how the West New Guinea dispute influenced the foreign and strategic outlook of the Menzies Government. Through a comparative analysis of Australian and American responses to the crisis, he hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of Menzies' leadership and the role it played in shaping the evolution of the Australia-United States relationship.



Jacob Gormley

Jacob Gormley is a first-year PhD student at the University of Southern Queensland, researching AUKUS, Australian foreign policy and diaspora influence. His work explores how identity, communication and political networks shape Australia's international engagement and its relationships across the Indo-Pacific. He holds a Master of International Relations from Macquarie University and a Bachelor of Communication from Western Sydney University. Jacob currently works as Media and Communications Coordinator at AMA (NSW), and has previous experience in federal politics, public affairs and Catholic media. He is also the District Rotaract Representative for Western Sydney.



Maxim Nikiforov

Maxim Nikiforov is a final-year student at the Australian National University (ANU), studying a Bachelor of Political Science. Currently, Maxim is a data scientist at the ANU Department of Pacific Affairs. He is a former intern at the ANU Centre for European Studies and research assistant at the ANU Research School of Social Sciences. He was a 2026 participant at the American Enterprise Institute's Summer Honors Program in Washington D.C., studying competition with China in the Asia-Pacific. The bulk of Maxim's research and interests lie in foreign policy analysis and political economy. He has previously studied the effects of foreign aid on perceptions of the United States, the impact of energy prices on defence spending, and is currently contributing to the National Service Delivery Trends Assessment report on Papua New Guinea's quality of education, health, and justice services.



George Trigenis

Combining strong quantitative skills with a deep interest in public policy, economics and emerging technologies, George Trigenis is particularly interested in how government can strengthen Australia's economic resilience, international competitiveness and national security in an increasingly complex global environment. George is completing a Bachelor of Advanced Finance and Economics (Honours) at The University of Queensland, where he has contributed to research examining technology governance through his involvement with the Protocol Think Tank and the Tech Policy Design Institute. He also currently serves on the Advisory Council of Queensland Youth Parliament, where he's contributed to policy development and legislative review processes regarding the distribution of mining royalties across regional Queensland. These experiences have strengthened his ability to analyse complex policy challenges and translate them into practical, evidence-based insights.

2026 WORKSTREAMS

LAW AND ECONOMICS STREAM



Amelia Dimech

I am a third-year Economics student at Macquarie University with experience across both the public and private sectors. Having worked in both the New South Wales Parliament and the Parliament of Australia, she has developed a strong interest in public policy, economic reform, and effective government. She currently works as a Research Assistant in the New South Wales Parliament, where she contributes to policy research, legislative analysis, and stakeholder engagement. Her academic and professional experiences have shaped her interest in productivity reform, taxation policy, housing affordability, regulatory reform, and broader macroeconomic issues affecting Australia's long-term prosperity. She is passionate about evidence-based policymaking and the role that sound economic policy can play in creating opportunity and improving living standards.



William Rait

William Rait is a Juris Doctor candidate at Melbourne Law School with eclectic academic interests including law, philosophy, science, history, and geopolitics. As part of his studies, he undertook an exchange semester at The University of Texas at Austin, where he developed his interests in American constitutional law, intelligence studies, and public policy. His academic work aims to explore the people, institutions, ideas, and cultural forces that have shaped liberal democratic societies. He is particularly interested in the philosophical foundations of law and human rights, the relationship between religion, science, and legal systems, and the cultural and legal influences of the United States on Australia. Alongside his legal studies, Will is training as an Officer Cadet in the Australian Army Reserve. Through the Menzies Early Career Network, he hopes to engage with scholars and policymakers working to strengthen democratic institutions and civic culture in Australia.



Lucas Sherington

Lucas Sherington is a current Law and Humanities student at the University of Queensland, with a strong interest in commercial law, international relations and public leadership. Since commencing university, he has developed experience across legal research, dispute resolution and advocacy. Lucas works in the disputes team at a top Australian law firm, has interned in Singapore at a leading international firm and in Australia at the Australian Centre for International Commercial Arbitration. He has also competed internationally in various mooting competitions, developing his advocacy skills through engagement with complex legal problems and cross-border disputes. Alongside his legal and academic pursuits, Lucas is a recipient of the Ramsay Undergraduate Scholarship, reflecting his broader interest in the humanities, civic leadership and public service. He is particularly interested in the intersection of law, advocacy and international affairs, and hopes to pursue a career combining rigorous legal analysis with public-minded leadership.



Kenya Woodborne

Kenya is a second-year Dalyell Scholar at the University of Sydney, pursuing a Bachelor of Arts/Advanced Studies with a double major in International Relations and English. Born in South Africa, Kenya's early life was shaped by the experience of migration and resettlement in rural Queensland. Driven by an aspiration to engage meaningfully with the world beyond the classroom, Kenya undertook a gap year marked by international volunteering and professional pursuits. Having since relocated to Sydney to pursue further academic study, Kenya remains committed to scholarship and service at the intersection of politics, literature, and a broadened global understanding. She is the White Family Scholarship recipient at St Andrew's College and dedicates her spare time to sporting and cultural pursuits within the college community. Her passions lie within the domain of socio-political issues, with a deep interest in human rights, international diplomacy, and both domestic and foreign policy.

2026 WORKSTREAMS

DOMESTIC POLICY AND POLITICS STREAM



Hudson Cooke

Creative Arts student at Bond University, majoring in International Relations and Advertising. Currently undertaking work experience at the Office of the Federal Member for Moncrieff, Angie Bell. Working with third-party advisory groups on brand building, social management, and ongoing creative aspects. On several issues, including veterans, housing, living standards, and the federal budget. Serve on the Executive team for the Gold Coast Young Liberal Nationals Branch. With a strong interest in Australian politics, advertising, media strategy, and the role of media in shaping public discourse. Passionate about the direction of Australia and the ongoing advocacy for the everyday Australians who are and have become politically disconnected from the governing institutions. My long-term career endeavours are to work for political parties and groups on both federal and state-level campaigns to deliver better outcomes for Australia and the parties that serve it.



Oliver Hervir

Oliver is in his final year of a Doctor of Medicine at The University of Sydney. Prior to that he studied a Bachelor of Philosophy (Science) at the Australian National University. He is passionate about Australia's health system, with a particular interest in drug availability, accessibility, and pricing. He looks forward to exploring these ideas through MECN 2026.



Cassie Tudge

A Law (Honours) and Commerce student at Monash University, Cassie Tudge is drawn to Robert Menzies' belief that citizenship means contribution. Alongside her studies, she works as a paralegal at HR Legal, a liaison at Sky News, and a recovery peer worker with Eating Disorders Victoria, and has undertaken work experience with the Federal Court. Cassie serves as Treasurer of the Victorian Young Liberals and previously served as Vice President of the Monash University Liberal Club. She was School Captain at Presbyterian Ladies' College, where she helped lead fundraising supporting girls' education in Malawi and access to menstrual hygiene in developing nations. She has tutored children from Sudanese refugee backgrounds, written for the Herald Sun, and received the Premier's Spirit of Democracy Prize. Cassie is grateful to the Robert Menzies Institute for reminding young Aussies, through Menzies' legacy, to be proud of their nation, serious about freedom, and responsible for the Australia they inherit.



Olivia Zhu

Olivia Zhu is a second-year Bachelor of Science student at the University of Sydney, majoring in Neuroscience and Statistics. She is currently a research assistant within the University of Sydney Faculty of Medicine and Health. Her academic interests include mental health, history, and politics, with a particular focus on the intersection of the sciences and humanities.

Robert Menzies

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