



Australasian Study
of Parliament Group

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026



*Parliaments
when democracy
is under challenge*

30 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER 2026

Parliament of NSW, Sydney

2026 CONFERENCE

The theme for this year is *Parliaments when democracy is under challenge*.

Democracy is the cornerstone of modern governance in our jurisdictions. It promotes individual freedoms, equality, and the right to participate in the open decision-making processes that shape our society. Despite its ideals, democracy is facing challenges on several fronts in the 21st century.

Challenges include the implications of new technologies, the proliferation of mis and disinformation, and declining trust and engagement. In light of these challenges, parliaments, parliamentarians and those who support the work of parliament face the challenge of how to respond to, protect and preserve democratic values.

The conference will explore the theme of parliaments when democracy is under challenge. Under this theme, the presenters will explore a wide-range of topics such as:

- the unique value of parliamentary systems of government in the pursuit of democratic ideals
- the role of the parliamentary procedures in strengthening, preserving and/or hindering democracy
- modern risks and challenges to parliamentary democracy
- the interaction between the three of arms of government in maintaining democracy
- civic engagement in parliamentary and democratic processes
- accountability and transparency in democratic governance.



PROGRAM

DAY ONE - Wednesday 30 September 2026		
1:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Registration	Fountain Court
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	ASPG Executive meeting	Jubilee Room
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm	ASPG Annual General Meeting <i>All delegates are welcome to attend</i>	
4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Welcome reception Hosted by the Hon Greg Piper MP, Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly	Fountain Court

PROGRAM

DAY TWO - Thursday 1 October 2026

Session 1

8:00 am – 8:45 am	Registration	Fountain Court
9:00 am – 9:30 am	Opening formalities Introduction by Steven Reynolds, Clerk of the Parliaments, Parliament of NSW Welcome to Country by Binowee Bayles Official conference opening by the Hon Ben Franklin MLC, President of the Legislative Council	Strangers' Function Room
9:30 am – 10:00 am	Keynote speech Honourable Justice Jeremy Kirk, Judge of the Supreme Court of NSW	
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Dr Sarah Moulds, Adelaide University and Toni Matulik, Parliament of Australia <i>Parliamentary education and its role in strengthening civic engagement and democratic institutions</i> <i>Facilitator: Steven Reynolds, Clerk of the Parliaments, Parliament of NSW</i>	
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Morning tea	Fountain Court

PROGRAM

DAY TWO - Thursday 1 October 2026

Session 2

Facilitator: Jeannie Douglass, Parliament of NSW

11:00 am – 11:30 am	Sharon Bent, Bent Psychology <i>Scrolling towards silence: social media, cognitive overload and the attrition of democratic representation</i>	Strangers' Function Room
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	Lenny Roth and Tom Gotsis, Parliament of NSW <i>Political deepfakes and the new laws in New South Wales</i>	
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm	Dr Melissa Miao, Parliament of NSW <i>A verified, impartial and accountable Hansard: A democratic citizen's right and a parliament's responsibility</i>	
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch	

Session 3

Facilitator: Allison Stowe, Parliament of NSW

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Fleur Hall and Justin Baker, Parliament of Australia <i>The contract renewed: ceremony, ritual and the democratic promise</i>	Legislative Council Chamber
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm	Laura Woodbridge, Monash University <i>Parliamentary design, democracy and partisanship</i>	
2:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Helen Jessica Lock, New Zealand Parliament <i>Leveraging relationships for civic engagement: collaborative responses to democratic disengagement</i>	
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Afternoon tea	Fountain Court

PROGRAM

DAY TWO - Thursday 1 October 2026

Session 4

3:30 pm - 4.30 pm	Panel session: Kaitlyn Farquhar, The National Council of Women Australia, Damon Goolagong and Chelsea Burgess Hannon, Parliament of NSW <i>Youth engagement with parliament</i> <i>Facilitator: Kate Mihaljek, Parliament of NSW</i>	Strangers' Function Room
4:30 pm - 5:30 pm	Tour of Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council chambers <i>Optional</i>	Meet at Legislative Assembly Chamber
6:30 pm - 10:00 pm	Conference dinner With guest Catherine Williams, Executive Director, The Centre for Public Integrity	Royal Automobile Club of Australia 89 Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000



PROGRAM

DAY THREE - Friday 2 October 2026

Session 5

9:00 am – 9:30 am	Keynote address The Hon John Hatzistergos AM, Chief Commissioner of NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption <i>Facilitator: Helen Minnican Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Parliament of NSW</i>	Strangers' Function Room
Facilitator: Hayley Jarrett, Parliament of NSW		
9:30 am – 10:00am	Sue Hunt, Parliament of NSW <i>Conduct, representation and exclusive cognisance - the matter of Ward</i>	Strangers' Function Room
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Patrick O'Brien, Parliament of Victoria <i>It's the Constitution, stupid! Why the Victorian Government believes it has the right to control Parliament's access to information – and why it is wrong</i>	
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Morning tea	Fountain Court

PROGRAM

DAY THREE - Friday 2 October 2026

Session 6

Facilitator: Simon Johnston, Parliament of NSW

11:00 am - 11:30 am	Dr Evan Smith and Dr Alexia Adhikari <i>Transcribing the past for the future: reimagining South Australia's 1894 women's suffrage petition to parliament as an interactive public resource</i>	Strangers' Function Room
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	Dr Belinda Beattie, University of New England <i>Unequal burdens in a developing democracy: parliamentary pay and the structural disadvantage of rural and regional members in New South Wales, 1862-1889</i>	
12:00 pm - 12:30 pm	Dr Sam Hames, University of Queensland <i>Accessible to whom and for what purposes? Researchers reflecting on working across 125 years of parliamentary proceedings</i>	
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch	

Session 7

Facilitator: Rohan Tyler, Parliament of NSW

1:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Catie Parsons, Parliament of Western Australia <i>Auditor General's opinions on ministerial notifications in Western Australia - supporting executive accountability or merely a 'fig leaf'?</i>	Strangers' Function Room
2:00 pm - 2:30 pm	The Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC, Member of the NSW Legislative Council <i>Proving its worth: Reflecting on the Delegated Legislation Committee's scrutiny function, four years on</i>	
2:30 pm - 3:00 pm	Dr Ramona Vijayarasa, University of Technology Sydney <i>Gender-responsive law-making as a democratic safeguard: comparative lessons for parliaments under pressure</i>	
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Afternoon tea	

PROGRAM

DAY THREE - Friday 2 October 2026

Session 8

Facilitator: Peta Leemen, Parliament of NSW

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Jayson Rimamata and Duane Baiabe, National Parliament of Solomon Islands <i>The role of the parliamentary procedures in strengthening, preserving and/or hindering democracy</i>	Strangers' Function Room
4:00 pm - 4:30 pm	William Coad, Parliament of South Australia <i>The end of the binary? Crossbench fragmentation in the House of Assembly, 56th Parliament of South Australia</i>	
4:30 pm - 5:00 pm	Luke Viece, Parliament of Tasmania <i>Caught in a bind: fixed term parliaments in Tasmania</i>	
5:00 pm – 5:15 pm	Conference closing remarks Dr Isla Macphail, President ASPG Emma Lewis, Secretary ASPG - Queensland Chapter	
5:15 pm - 6:00 pm	Farewell drinks	Jubilee Room

