APPI
Australian Public Policy Institute

Annual Impact Report

2025–2026

A groundbreaking government and university joint-venture in the public interest.

APPI
Australian Public Policy Institute

About us

Uniting governments and universities to improve public policy in Australia.

The Australian Public Policy Institute (APPI) is a unique joint-venture between government and a coalition of universities dedicated to public benefit research. The Institute partners with government to identify public policy solutions by mobilising university expertise, accelerating collaboration between policymakers and researchers for the good of all Australians. APPI is an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation working in the public interest.

A growing partnership

- NSW Government
- Australian Public Service Commission, Australian Government
- University of Sydney
- Western Sydney University
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of New South Wales
- Charles Sturt University
- University of Wollongong
- University of Melbourne
- Monash University

Our university partnerships will continue to grow in 2026-27 and beyond.

REGISTERED CHARITY acnc.gov.au/charityregister

appi.org.au

NSW GOVERNMENT

Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

UTS

UNSW SYDNEY

Charles Sturt University

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AUSTRALIA

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

MONASH University

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Acknowledgement of Country

APPI acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and the Ngunnawal people upon whose ancestral lands our offices are located. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters.

2025 - 26 Year in review

Uniting governments and universities to improve public policy in Australia.

860+

Facilitated engagements with policymakers, researchers and other experts.

960+

Government policymakers, researchers and experts from various fields shared their expertise.

COLLABORATION

790+ hrs

Facilitated collaboration

41

Active projects, incl. 8 Fellowships and 6 new Policy Challenge Grant projects

CONTRIBUTORS

560+ hrs

Policy translation support for over 120 researchers

530+

Researchers involved in 139 Policy Challenge Grant applications for the 2026 grant round

430+

Policymakers, researchers and other experts contributed to bespoke policy projects for government

75

Leading experts contributed to *The Policymaker*

INTERACTIONS

1.1K+

Senior leaders in government, academia, industry and community took part in our flagship events

146K+

Website views

82K+

Website visitors

POLICY AREAS

Tackling some of the most pressing policy challenges, including:

- Economic reform and productivity
- Housing affordability
- Environmental protection and climate adaptation
- Health and wellbeing
- Public sector capabilities
- School and tertiary education

From our Chair

These are challenging times for public policy in Australia. Expertise is slipping as complexity rises. Governments are looking for ways to strengthen our economic competitiveness and productivity, to address the impact of technology on social relationships, to lift the effectiveness of service delivery, especially aged care and mental health, to address environmental challenges and to deal with an international environment facing a bonfire of certainties.

In my time as a senior public servant and then a university chancellor, I learnt that public policy is rarely easy and never perfect. Effective public policy requires imagination, expertise and the willingness to go where the evidence takes you, even if that is not where you started. It also requires the courage to recognise when policies are not working and act to change them.

> The Australian Public Policy Institute is dedicated to helping public policy makers by bringing together government and universities in a shared endeavour to advance the public interest.

It seeks to forge a partnership between the expertise that resides in universities and the policymakers and advisers in the federal and state governments who are ultimately responsible for policy decisions. Policymakers are time-poor, and universities need to become more adept at understanding what policymakers find useful and digestible. Together they can achieve better policy outcomes.

Universities are the engine room of research in Australia, but they also play a critical and often under-appreciated role in the civic square as problem solvers. Government and university experts make distinctive and complementary contributions to the craft of public policy. For university researchers, this contribution is anchored in expertise, evidence and a shared commitment to the public good. Whether in social policy, international relations, defence and security, health, STEM, business and commerce or myriad other fields, they have much to add to the national conversation about what works and what needs to be done.

It has been an exciting year for the Institute, with the addition of the University of Melbourne and Monash University to the partnership, the launch of new initiatives for our university and government partners, and engagement with state governments across the country. Our objective is to work with a constellation of governments and universities across the country to maximise the contributions that university researchers can make to this shared mission.

This year, we said farewell to the Institute's previous CEO, Libby Hackett, who led the Institute for four years and made a profound contribution to its early establishment. We also thank Rod Glover, who served as Interim CEO for three months and helped to consolidate our work with governments and extend our networks. We are grateful for their dedication to bolstering the research-to-policy ecosystem. I also want to acknowledge the huge contribution made by Jillian Kilby on the Board since the Institute was established.

We are looking forward to many exciting new initiatives and partnerships in the coming year, as well as announcing our new permanent CEO to drive forward APPI's ability to support Australian governments to be better prepared, more capable to respond and able to effectively coordinate across jurisdictions.

Peter Varghese AO
Chair of the APPI Board

APPI
Australian Public Policy Institute

Growing our national role

This year marked an important milestone in APPI's evolution to a growing national platform harnessing research and expertise for public policy.

At a time when governments around the world are grappling with many competing and interconnected priorities, the need for stronger connection between policymakers and research expertise has become more important than ever.

During the year, the University of Melbourne and Monash University joined the Institute, further strengthening our university coalition in connecting policymakers with expertise from across Australia. APPI also deepened its engagement with the NSW Government, Australian Public Service and Commonwealth departments and agencies.

The Institute's growing national role was reflected in the calibre of engagement across the year. The 2025 Policymaker Summit and APPI Oration brought together senior leaders from government, universities and industry, including Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia, Commonwealth ministers including Senator The Hon Tim Ayres, and senior public servants.

APPI has also increasingly engaged in international networks championing evidence-based policy and innovation. This year, the Institute signed a MOU with the UK's Policy Insights Unit (formerly the Open Innovation Team) to collaborate and share best practice. The Institute also regularly engages with the Global Research Impact Network. Having participated in various international fora this year, APPI's model has been showcased as a unique example of a joint-venture between government and universities.

These developments reflect APPI's growing role as a platform for connecting governments with university expertise to address complex policy challenges and improve the lives of all Australians.

Peter Varghese AO
Chair of the APPI Board

Senator The Hon Tim Ayres
Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science

Professor Libby Hackett
Former CEO, *Farewell reflections*

Professor Michael Wesley
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global, Culture and Engagement), University of Melbourne

Professor Simon Wilkie
Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics and Head of Monash Business School, Monash University

> Through our partnerships, capability programs, fellowships and policy dialogue, APPI is becoming a force for better public policy in Australia, bringing together the people, evidence and ideas needed to tackle complex public challenges.

> What impresses me the most is the way APPI is building a reliable pipeline of timely expertise that feeds directly into the policy process.

> Through a unique joint-venture, we have created an enduring policy institute for Australia that straddles government and universities to address our most pressing public policy challenges.

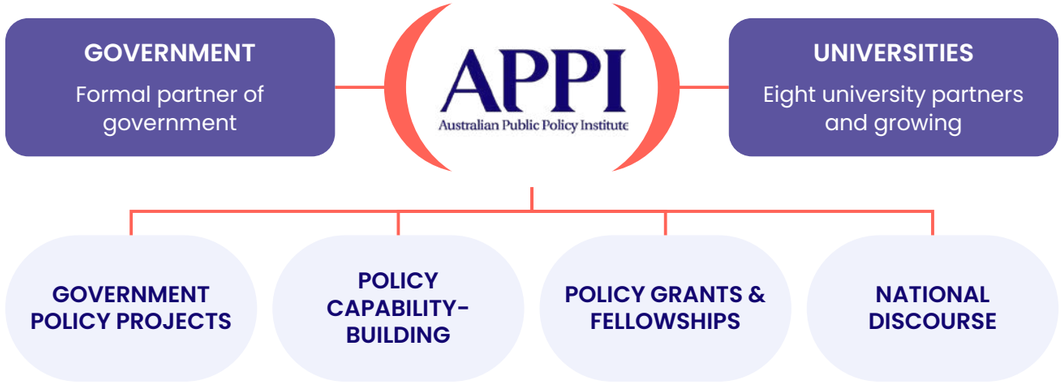
> The University of Melbourne is committed to deep collaboration for the public good, so we are delighted to be joining this partnership as the Institute broadens its national reach and impact.

> Monash University is dedicated to more effectively utilising research and education to help communities thrive. APPI provides a practical platform that enables our researchers to contribute to policy development in ways that are rigorous and impact-driven.

How we deliver: The APPI model

APPI drives effective policy outcomes in all areas. Our work is specifically designed to support Australian policymakers in a rapidly evolving policy landscape, harnessing leading university expertise to develop practical, evidence-based solutions.

We undertake **government policy projects**, mobilising university expertise and evidence to develop practical policy solutions; **build capabilities** of public servants and university researchers to develop long-term skills and knowledge exchange; support policy development and innovation through **grants and fellowships**; and organise a wide range of **events and thought leadership** to raise awareness and engagement of evidence-based public policy.



EMBEDDING EXPERTISE IN GOVERNMENT POLICY	Our government policy projects are designed to address **complex, multidimensional public policy challenges**, mobilising world-class expertise to outline pragmatic policy opportunities for government. Emerging Insights Forums support governments to be more strategic and future-focused on medium-term issues.
BUILDING CAPABILITIES FOR COLLABORATIVE POLICYMAKING	We aim to drive new opportunities for collaboration and capacity uplift for established and emerging policy experts and researchers. These programs **enhance skills and knowledge exchang**e around collaborative, evidence-based policymaking and policy impact.
IDENTIFYING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS	Our **Policy Challenge Grants** support research teams to advance policy research in critical areas that benefit all Australians. **Policy Fellows**, drawn from the public service and our partner universities, pursue public policy development supported by APPI experts.
BOOSTING ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC POLICY	We work to bolster local and national dialogue on the importance of evidence-based public policy in everyday lives through a range of events, interactive workshops and thought leadership, including our digital publication, *The Policymaker*.

2025 APPI Oration delivered by the Governor-General

The 2025 APPI Oration was delivered by Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia, before an audience of policymakers, researchers, university leaders and students at Western Sydney University.

Reflecting on her first year as Governor-General, Her Excellency shared lessons from communities across Australia and explored the role of care, kindness and respect in public life. The address challenged policymakers and leaders to consider how institutions can strengthen trust, foster inclusion and create the conditions for people to participate fully in society.

The Oration also highlighted the importance of bringing together different forms of knowledge and experience when responding to complex challenges. Drawing on conversations with Australians from across the country, the Governor-General reflected on how public policy can support stronger communities by remaining connected to lived experience while addressing long-term national priorities.

Following the address, the Governor-General joined APPI Chair, Peter Varghese AO and then CEO, Libby Hackett for a discussion on leadership, public service and the opportunities facing Australia as it navigates a period of significant economic, social and technological change.

> Public benefit can and always should be a consequence of good public policy, grounded in evidence, supercharged by the power of a coalition of universities and their academics and students, mobilising expertise for the good of all Australians.
>
> **What you are doing at the Institute is a significant act of care for our country and for our future.**

Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Economy and productivity

Helping governments navigate Australia's economic challenges.

Our model in action:

- Case study: 44 hours of direct collaboration with NSW Government on cultural tax reforms, in addition to analysis of 300+ submissions ahead of a nationally significant government summit at the Sydney Opera House
- 26 experts shared their perspectives on Australia's economic reform agenda on *The Policymaker*
- Major evidence-led policy engagement on digital transformation of the construction sector in NSW

Learn more

appi.org.au/policy-areas/economy-and-productivity

APPI highlights from 2025-26

The year saw renewed attention on Australia's long-term economic dynamism. Many Australians continued to face cost-of-living pressures, alongside ongoing concerns about housing affordability and economic security. At the same time, concerns over productivity growth, rising geopolitical tensions and disruptions to global trade and supply chains reinforced the need to strengthen economic resilience and support long-term prosperity.

In response, governments renewed their focus on productivity, tax and broader economic reform. The Australian Government's Economic Reform Roundtable in August 2025 brought together leaders from business, unions, academia and the community sector to identify measures to lift productivity, investment and economic diversification. Alongside initiatives such as Future Made in Australia and state-based agendas, governments increasingly sought evidence-informed approaches.

Against this backdrop, APPI helped connect policymakers with leading university expertise on Australia's future economic capability. Through evidence generation, policy engagement and cross-sector collaboration, APPI supported government partners to access evidence and research on some of the nation's most pressing economic challenges.

Australia's creative industries

APPI supported the NSW Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport to examine how tax reform could strengthen Australia's creative industries and support long-term economic growth. The project brought together researchers, policymakers and industry stakeholders to inform policy development in this emerging area.

Through the project, APPI supported the Department in engaging with evidence and expertise on cultural tax reform and facilitated new connections for collaboration. APPI also contributed directly to the development of consultation materials, including a discussion paper and a summary report, which are being used to inform a national cultural policy process.

> "The ideas, research and advice have influenced and improved both government's and the cultural sector's understanding of reform areas for taxation reform in the arts and creative industries. APPI brought connections that the department did not have to the table. This has proved invaluable to the project.
>
> **Jeremy Kelshaw**
> Executive Director, NSW Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport

Productivity through digital innovation

Through its Policy Challenge Grant program, APPI supported research examining how digital technologies can improve productivity in NSW's construction sector. The project, led by Professor Srinath Perera from Western Sydney University explored opportunities to accelerate digital transformation, data-enabled construction practices and innovation across an industry that is critical to economic growth, infrastructure delivery and housing supply.

Following more than 18 months of applied research, the project delivered the DigiCon Policy Directions Framework and an accompanying digital platform designed to support digital transformation across the construction sector. The launch event brought together government, industry, academic and professional stakeholders to discuss opportunities for improving productivity through digital innovation and policy development in the built environment sector.

The project generated strong engagement with NSW Government stakeholders and helped translate research on construction sector digitalisation into practical policy discussions. By creating a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange, the project helped strengthen connections between evidence, policy and practice in an industry critical to productivity growth, infrastructure delivery and housing supply.

> With coordinated actions, policymakers can foster a more connected, data-driven, and future-ready construction ecosystem that enhances productivity and reduces inefficiencies.

Professor Srinath Perera
Western Sydney University

Housing affordability

Housing affordability continues to reshape traditional pathways to home ownership, particularly for younger Australians and lower-income households. Caitlin McGee and Gordon Noble from the University of Technology Sydney were supported by a Policy Challenge Grant to examine how build-to-rent-to-own models could provide a pathway to ownership for Australians increasingly locked out of the housing market. Developed through consultation with housing providers, investors, developers and policymakers, the project outlined practical opportunities for government to support pilot programs and explore new ownership models for a growing population of 'forever renters'.

> The current housing crisis is undermining social cohesion and economic prosperity. Build-to-rent-to-own housing could be a gamechanger in addressing intergenerational equity and economic inequality.

Gordon Noble
University of Technology Sydney

Informing Australia's economic reform agenda

Throughout 2025-26, APPI contributed to national conversations on productivity, economic reform and building Australia's workforce capabilities for the future. Ahead of the Australian Government's Economic Reform Roundtable in August 2025, APPI elevated evidence-based perspectives in the national productivity debate by publishing a series of expert perspectives on *The Policymaker*. Drawing on experts from across Australia's leading universities, the series explored the reforms needed to strengthen long-term economic growth.

The series explored a broad range of priorities, including research and innovation, investment and capital formation, artificial intelligence, housing, public spending for prevention, productivity measurement and coordinated reform across all levels of government.

By bringing together leading academic voices around one of the year's most significant policy priorities, APPI provided policymakers and stakeholders with access to evidence-based insights on the drivers of productivity and economic growth.

We have worked across state governments to share insights and invite expert perspectives on productivity lessons to inform cross-jurisdictional approaches.

Through *The Policymaker* and project-related engagement, several recurrent themes emerged from APPI's work on productivity and economic reform:

1. **Productivity is inextricably tied to capability:** Investment in skills, education, research and strong institutions underpins long-term economic growth.
2. **Innovation requires deliberate policy:** AI, research commercialisation and mission-driven innovation all depend on effective public policy.
3. **Government collaboration matters:** Productivity growth requires governments that can coordinate, experiment, evaluate and deliver reform effectively.
4. **Investment drives future prosperity:** Tax settings, infrastructure investment, patient capital and superannuation can all help build national growth.
5. **Resilience and productivity are increasingly linked:** Supply chains, climate transition, digital infrastructure and economic security are now central productivity challenges.

APPI also published a special feature on the 2025-26 Federal Budget, examining how fiscal policy, tax reform and public investment can help build Australia's future capability. The two-part series explored the role of structural tax reform, investment incentives and institutional capability in supporting productivity growth and economic resilience, extending the Institute's engagement with key economic policy issues.

Special feature on the 2025-26 Federal Budget

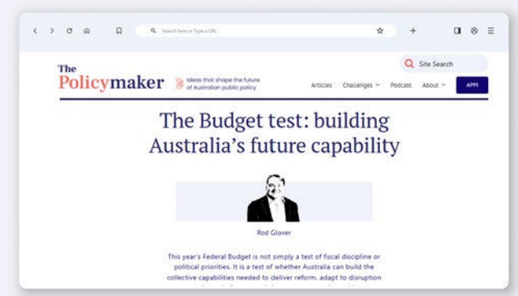
- *The Budget test: building Australia's future capability* – Rod Glover (Australian Public Policy Institute), 11 May 2026
- *Pulling the big levers: four tax reforms to strengthen the Australian economy* – Professor Beth Webster (University of Melbourne), 8 May 2026

Highlights from *The Policymaker*

- *Universities can empower Australia's productivity revival* – Professor Max Lu AO (University of Wollongong), 12 August 2025
- *Australia should invest more in R&D to drive productivity growth* – Dr Jenny Gordon (Australian National University), 5 August 2025
- *Rethinking the Australian Dream: from homeowners to sovereign investment and secure rentals* – Dr Raffaele Ciriello (University of Sydney), 13 June 2025
- *Setting Australian talent free* – Assistant Minister the Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP, 4 November 2025

> *The Policymaker* is influential in presenting evidence-based views […] within the broader community. Socialising ideas that counter the many reports based merely on anecdotes… is critical for social progress.

Professor Beth Webster
University of Melbourne



Energy and environment

Building resilience for future generations.

Our model in action:

- 11 active projects focused on government priorities in energy and environment
- 16 experts shared their perspectives on sustainability challenges on *The Policymaker*
- 3 projects successfully completed, supporting 11 academic experts with policy engagement and research translation

Learn more

appi.org.au/policy-areas/energy-and-environment

APPI highlights from 2025-26

Alongside the transition to a low-emissions economy, governments are responding to growing concerns about energy security, climate adaptation, environmental sustainability and the long-term protection of Australia's natural assets.

Throughout the year, APPI supported government partners with environmental responses by facilitating knowledge exchange, strengthening policy capability and fostering collaboration across government, universities and communities. From climate adaptation and coastal management to nature repair, sustainable housing and policy approaches to environmental resilience, APPI helped bring evidence, research and diverse perspectives into policy development and decision-making.

Exploring innovative approaches to climate adaptation and resilience

APPI worked with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to support the NSW Coastal and Estuary Management Program to deliver positive outcomes for coastal communities. APPI worked with leading Australian researchers to identify best practice governance and implementation approaches. The project also engaged more than 60 stakeholders from a range of NSW state agencies and local councils to assess the gap between the current delivery approach and a desired future state in 2030.

APPI also supported a government partner on early-stage discovery work examining market-based approaches to safe relocation. As climate risks intensify across Australia, governments are exploring new approaches to support community resilience and enable safe relocation from areas facing intolerable natural hazard risks. Drawing on international evidence, Australian data and stakeholder engagement, the project explores the opportunities, limitations and implementation challenges associated with these mechanisms. The work particularly focuses on the conditions and design principles required for such approaches to operate effectively, efficiently and equitably, contributing to broader policy development on climate adaptation and long-term resilience.

With AgriFutures Australia, APPI undertook a nation-wide project to map research capabilities across Australian universities in priority fields including food security, climate adaption, AI and digital transformation.

The project supports AgriFutures Australia's Rural Futures program, which leads national initiatives that focus on long-term challenges and priorities for the Australian agricultural sector. Findings will help the Rural Futures team identify emerging research strengths, collaboration opportunities and areas for future investment to support Australia's agricultural innovation ecosystem.

Nature and environmental stewardship

APPI worked with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to strengthen capabilities to deliver the NSW Nature Strategy. Through a bespoke program, participants applied systems thinking, partnership and anticipatory frameworks to live policy questions.

The program surfaced new considerations for future policy development and reinforced the value of collaboration across policy and technical teams. Participants also reported increased confidence in applying strategic policy tools and approaches to complex policy challenges, with 87 per cent of participants indicating they were likely to apply the learning in their work.

Through its Policy Challenge Grant program, APPI also supported a project examining how Traditional Ecological Knowledge can strengthen coastal ecosystem restoration and environmental management. Drawing on research with the Gamay Rangers and the La Perouse Aboriginal community, the report highlighted opportunities to strengthen Indigenous knowledge and improve the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge into environmental policy and practice.

> "This report is about moving from acknowledgment to action, creating clearer pathways for co-governance and ensuring Indigenous knowledge, authority and relational care for Country are embedded in the way environmental decisions are made.
>
> **Dr Mitch Gibbs**
> University of Sydney

Sustainable housing and the built environment

APPI worked with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and NSW Fair Trading to strengthen the evidence base underpinning the NSW Government's consultation on Minimum Energy Efficiency Rental Standards (MEERS). Drawing on lessons from jurisdictions that have already introduced similar standards, the work examined implementation approaches and equity considerations associated with them. The evidence developed through the project informed a NSW Government consultation paper and contributed to ongoing efforts to improve the efficiency of rental housing across the state.

APPI also supported a grants project examining the opportunities and barriers associated with the adoption of environmentally sustainable Modern Methods of Construction in Australia. The project, led by Dr Ehsan Noroozinejad from Western Sydney University, identified practical policy and regulatory changes to support wider uptake of these methods, including streamlined approvals processes, regulatory improvements and measures to support industry adoption while meeting Net Zero targets.

The project enabled substantial engagement between researchers and policymakers at all levels of government on housing delivery and construction innovation. The work was undertaken as momentum for Modern Methods of Construction continued to build nationally, with governments increasingly exploring and investing in innovative approaches to housing delivery and construction productivity while, at the same time, meeting their environmental objectives.

Several policy directions identified through the project were subsequently reflected in a NSW Government package supporting modular and prefabricated construction, including changes relating to approvals processes and the scaling of innovative construction approaches.

Building on this work, APPI awarded a new Policy Challenge Grant for a project led by Associate Professor Saeed Banihashemi from the University of Technology Sydney to investigate workforce capability and diversity to address housing supply in the modular construction sector.

> Modern Methods of Construction offer a real opportunity to build better homes faster. With the right policies and targeted support, they can help deliver faster, more predictable and lower-emission housing at scale across New South Wales and the country.
>
> **Dr Ehsan Noroozinejad**
> Western Sydney University

Energy transition and future infrastructure

Given the profound shifts caused by increased use of AI, APPI is supporting research exploring how NSW can establish a sustainable and community-inclusive data centre industry. As demand for digital infrastructure continues to grow, the project is examining how governments, industry and communities can balance economic opportunities with energy, environmental and social considerations.

The lead researcher, Dr Bronwyn Cumbo from the University of Technology Sydney, presented emerging findings to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into data centres in May 2026, providing an opportunity to contribute research insights to parliamentary discussion on digital infrastructure, sustainability and industry development. The work comes at a time of growing government focus on the role of data centres in supporting Australia's digital economy while managing their impacts on energy systems, water resources and local communities.

APPI also supported previous Policy Challenge Grant winners in disseminating their research in this area. This included the Local Aboriginal Land Council Powershift project led by Professor Heidi Norman, with the research team presenting its findings to an energy regulator to inform future regulatory approaches.

A second project funded through the 2025 Policy Challenge Grant round is exploring potential developments to safety inspection frameworks for household and SME energy upgrades, supporting the effective implementation of energy transition initiatives.

Another project explored how data-driven approaches can improve transport planning and support more sustainable and inclusive transport. Led by Professor Amelia Thorpe from UNSW Sydney, the project used anonymised mobility data from food delivery riders and stakeholder engagement with government and industry to identify opportunities to improve infrastructure planning, strengthen data-sharing and support active transport objectives.

> By using this data responsibly, policymakers can design safer infrastructure, improve efficiency for all road users and ultimately reduce emissions.
>
> **Professor Amelia Thorpe**
> UNSW Sydney

Highlights from *The Policymaker*

- *Supply chain crisis: how waste could drive sovereign manufacturing* – Professor Veena Sahajwalla and Stuart Snell (UNSW Sydney), 28 May 2026
- *Beyond freight support: Why Australia needs national coordination to prevent a wider crisis* – Professor Ben Fahimnia (University of Sydney), 2 April 2026
- *The cost of power: how can Australia build a resilient clean energy market?* – Mona Mashadi Rajabi, Christina Sklibosios Nikitopoulos and Martina Linnenluecke (University of Technology Sydney), 20 November 2025

Society and wellbeing

Expanding opportunity and strengthening communities.

Our model in action:

- 23 active projects aligned with government's social policy priorities
- 3 new Policy Challenge Grants awarded to support health and aged care policy development
- 32 contributors to *The Policymaker* exploring cross-sector approaches to social policy
- 700+ stakeholders engaged through consultations, webinars and other forums

Learn more

appi.org.au/policy-areas/society-and-wellbeing

APPI highlights from 2025-26

Australian governments are increasingly focused on improving social wellbeing through more integrated, preventative and community-centred approaches. Across areas including education, health, justice, higher education and regional development, policymakers are seeking new approaches to address underlying causes of disadvantage, strengthen community outcomes and improve long-term wellbeing.

Throughout the year, APPI supported government partners through policy development and applied research, stakeholder engagement and capability-building. By connecting policymakers with university expertise, APPI helped inform evidence-led social policy development while fostering collaboration between government, researchers, local communities and those with lived experience.

Housing and new models of ownership

Housing affordability, workforce shortages and rapid technological change are creating new challenges for Australia's education system. During the year, APPI supported projects examining how policymakers can strengthen educational opportunity while ensuring schools, universities and communities are equipped to respond to changing social and economic conditions.

Through its Policy Challenge Grant program, APPI supported research examining the relationship between housing affordability and the teacher shortage. Led by Professor Scott Eacott from UNSW Sydney, the project expanded the evidence base on how housing pressures affect teacher attraction and retention, particularly in regional and high-cost communities, and identified practical policy options to strengthen workforce supply.

The research team engaged regularly with government policymakers, providing evidence and advice on potential policy responses and helping to strengthen understanding of the workforce impacts of housing affordability. The findings were also presented to a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry examining options for essential worker housing, as part of the Committee's deliberations, published in June 2025.

> Treating teacher housing as essential infrastructure, expanding supply in areas of greatest need and improving data used to guide investment decisions will strengthen workforce sustainability over time.

Professor Scott Eacott
UNSW Sydney

Education and skills

As governments and universities grapple with issues ranging from student safety and inclusion to emerging technologies, APPI supported the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) of the newly established Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) to design and deliver a structured national consultation on proposed changes to the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards).

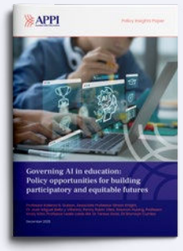
The project involved designing and facilitating six consultation sessions across priority focus areas including racism, disability inclusion, governance and transparency, emerging technology risks and dedicated sessions for First Nations Peoples and students. APPI also undertook a systematic qualitative analysis of submissions and stakeholder feedback, identifying areas of consensus and divergence and providing policy-relevant insights to inform consideration of potential changes.

APPI supported research led by Dr James Deehan from Charles Sturt University examining opportunities to strengthen STEM education outcomes in regional, rural and remote Australia. The project brought together evidence from educators, researchers and policymakers to identify place-based approaches that build on regional strengths, reduce educational inequities and strengthen pathways into the skilled jobs of the future. By elevating regional perspectives, the research is helping advance practical solutions to local priorities such as workforce development and emerging industries.

The rapid emergence of AI is raising new questions about teaching, learning and student safety in schools. APPI supported research examining the implications of AI for school education. Led by Professor Kalervo Gulson from the University of Sydney, the project developed a roadmap for participatory approaches to AI in schools, highlighting the importance of involving students, teachers and communities in decisions about the adoption and governance of emerging technologies. The project contributes to growing discussions about how education systems can respond to technological change while supporting safe, inclusive and effective learning environments.

> With commitment and collaboration, the vision of a world-class non-metropolitan STEM education system can be realised.

Dr James Deehan
Charles Sturt University



> With the global AI education market forecasted to reach US$22 billion by 2028, proactive governance and policy tools to ensure safety and equity have become more critical. Participatory methods elevate critical implementation issues, equity considerations, and broaden participation of groups often left out of decision-making, to ensure AI is leveraged with the chance of being effective and fair.

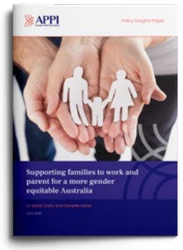
Professor Kalervo Gulson
University of Sydney

Health and wellbeing

Decisions about health services, family policy and community infrastructure shape how people participate in work, family and community life. APPI supported projects that examined how evidence-informed policy can improve outcomes for family, strengthen community wellbeing and support more inclusive participation.

APPI supported the NSW Ministry of Health to undertake an engagement process relating to maternity services planning, including capability uplift for an ongoing consultation program. Delivered in partnership with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), the project helped strengthen approaches to stakeholder engagement and consultation in an area of significant importance to families and communities.

APPI also supported research led by Dr Sarah Duffy, APPI Policy Fellow from Western Sydney University, examining parental leave policy and its role in supporting workforce participation, gender equality and family wellbeing.



> Our report outlines various policy opportunities to build a more inclusive paid parental leave system for the benefit of all families.

Dr Sarah Duffy
Western Sydney University

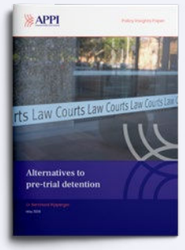
Justice, equity and social inclusion

During the year, APPI supported research examining how earlier intervention, greater inclusion and evidence-based policy developments can improve outcomes for vulnerable people while reducing long-term social and economic costs.

Through its Policy Fellowship program, APPI supported research led by Dr Archie Thomas (University of Technology Sydney) and Dr Samara Hand (UNSW Sydney) examining the links between school exclusion, educational disadvantage and long-term social outcomes. The report explored practical alternatives to school suspension and highlighted opportunities for schools to adopt approaches that keep students engaged in learning while addressing behavioural challenges.

> By working together across schools, communities, and government, we can strengthen inclusion, support teachers and ensure all students can remain engaged in learning.
>
> **Dr Archie Thomas**
> University of Technology Sydney

APPI also supported research examining alternatives to pre-trial detention in NSW. Led by Dr Bernhard Ripperger as part of his APPI Policy Fellowship, the project explored evidence-based approaches to improving justice outcomes while addressing the growing social and economic costs associated with rising rates of remand.



> With remand numbers at record levels, there is a clear opportunity to introduce practical alternatives, drawing on international best practice, that can reduce pressure on the system while ensuring community safety. Alternatives to pre-trial detention can strengthen the system's effectiveness and integrity through smarter policy design.
>
> **Dr Bernhard Ripperger**
> APPI Policy Fellow

One year on: Supporting children and families to flourish in NSW

One year after its release, APPI's report on embedding relational care in the child protection system continues to inform discussions about the future of child safety and wellbeing.

Developed in partnership with the Centre for Relational Care and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, the report identified practical opportunities to strengthen relationships between children, families, carers and frontline workers through policy, workforce and services reform.

During the year, the report continued to contribute to government policy processes, including a formal review of the child protection system. Its inclusion in ongoing reform discussions highlights the role that evidence-informed research can play in shaping how complex challenges are understood and addressed over time.

Highlights from *The Policymaker*

- *Bridging the digital health gap in regional Australia,* Dr Shakeel Mahmood (Charles Sturt University), 26 March 2026
- *Getting employment services back to work,* Cliff Eberly and Ryan Martin (Centre for Policy Development), 11 June 2026
- *Why Australia needs a healthier information ecosystem, not just fact-checks* – Francesco Bailo, Rob Nicholls, Daniel Gozman (University of Sydney), 19 January 2026
- *Onvesting in prevention: a stocktake of Australian health policy,* Dr Cristy Brooks (Western Sydney University) and Hannah Lobb, 12 September 2025

> *The Policymaker* plays an important role in Australia's health policy and research landscape by translating complex health and medical evidence into clear, policy-relevant insights that can inform public health decision-making and system reform. Its strength lies in timely research translation on pressing health issues, helping to bridge the gap between health research, government policy and public understanding.
>
> **Dr Shakeel Mahmood**
> Charles Sturt University

Partnering with government for evidence-based policymaking

APPI supports government to access evidence and expertise in Australia's universities while building strong capabilities and networks to enable long-term pathways for collaboration.

Deepening our partnership with governments

In 2025-26, APPI strengthened its role as a trusted policy partner, working with governments at all levels to shape practical solutions by mobilising university research expertise. Towards this aim, we facilitated hundreds of engagements that connected policymakers across portfolios with research experts, promoting ongoing exchange across departments and jurisdictions. These efforts reflect our commitment to building public sector capability and fostering evidence-based policymaking for the public good.

270+

Direct engagements with government policymakers

11

Active policy projects tailored to support government policymakers

6

Bespoke strategic policy capability-building sessions to support live policy work

Highlights

- **The 2025 APPI Oration was delivered by Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor**-General of Australia, before an audience of policymakers, researchers, university leaders and students at Western Sydney University.
- **APPI hosted *The Policymaker* Summit** at the University of Technology Sydney, bringing together leaders from government, universities and industry under the theme ***What's working in public policy?***. Speakers included Professor Andrew Parfitt, Vice-Chancellor and President of UTS, Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science, the Hon Patrick Gorman MP, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Assistant Minister for the Public Service; and the Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Minister for Rural and Regional Health; .
- **Dr Bernard Ripperger completed his Policy Fellowship (Public Service Stream)**, exploring evidence-based approaches to improving justice outcomes while addressing the growing social and economic costs associated with rising rates of remand.
- **Meagan Kanaley joined APPI as a Senior Policy Fellow (Public Service Stream)** in June 2025, bringing 15 years of NSW public sector experience, to lead research on how heritage conservation areas affect development and housing supply in NSW.
- **Lisa Przhedetsky completed a Policy Fellowship (Open Stream)** to conduct research on making automated decision-making technologies fairer for renters, with a report scheduled for publication in the second half of 2026.

Throughout the year, APPI expanded its work with government partners at both the state and Commonwealth level. New projects with the Higher Education Standards Panel and AgriFutures Australia broadened the Institute's engagement with the Australian Government, while longstanding partnerships across the NSW public sector continued to grow. We regularly engage with a range of other state governments and look to build on this momentum in years to come.

Building policy capability

Access to evidence is only one part of effective policymaking. Public servants also need the skills and knowledge to navigate uncertainty, work across institutional boundaries and deliver innovative solutions for Australia's most intractable policy challenges.

APPI expanded its strategic policy capability offering through tailored programs developed with government partners. This included a Strategic Policy Capability Clinic delivered in partnership with The Cabinet Office of NSW, and a bespoke capability-building program for teams within the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The programs focused on practical policy skills, including systems thinking, stakeholder engagement, strategic communication, partnership building and anticipatory policymaking. Participants applied these approaches directly to live policy challenges, creating opportunities to test new ideas and strengthen effective working across teams.

APPI also delivered a three-part clinic for central policy teams within The Cabinet Office of NSW, focused on evidence-scanning methodologies and policy analysis techniques. Participants reported increased confidence in defining policy problems, assessing evidence and synthesising insights, with many indicating they would apply the approaches in their ongoing policy and advisory work. The program helped strengthen evidence-informed policymaking capability across participating teams.

The clinics create space for policy teams to step back from immediate pressures, think more systematically about evidence and build approaches they could take straight back into their day-to-day work.

Connecting policymakers with expertise

Throughout the year, the Institute created opportunities for policymakers, researchers and practitioners to exchange ideas, examine emerging challenges and share best practice.

The 2025 Policymaker Summit brought together leaders from government, universities and industry under the theme *What's working in public policy?* Discussions focused on issues central to APPI's mission, including evidence-informed policymaking, public sector capability, collaboration across sectors and the role of research in policy reform and action. The participation of senior Commonwealth ministers, senior public servants and researchers reflected APPI's growing role as a national forum for policy dialogue and exchange.

APPI also continued its Policy Talks series in partnership with the NSW Policy Community of Practice. The series provides a platform for discussion of emerging policy issues and enables policymakers to engage directly with researchers working on contemporary policy challenges in an informal setting.

> I always enjoy working with APPI. They bring academic rigour to the fast pace and busyness of government work in ways that are useful and practical. They care deeply about outcomes and are always looking to improve themselves and the quality of policy thinking across governments.
>
> **Ryan Young**
> Australian National University

One Policy Talks event brought together researchers, policymakers and practitioners to explore evidence-informed approaches to promoting equity in school education. The discussion focused on two issues relating to equity in school education: rising school exclusion and STEM education in non-metropolitan communities. Across both themes, a consistent message emerged: collaboration and participatory approaches, early intervention and stronger use of evidence – and availability of data – are essential to improving outcomes for all learners.

Supporting evidence-informed policy development

APPI's Policy Fellowship program enables experienced public servants to investigate a particular policy challenge, drawing on APPI's academic network, research translation and public engagement capability to identify and disseminate practical solutions.

During the year, Dr Bernhard Ripperger and Meagan Kanaley undertook Public Service Fellowships examining challenges in justice and housing policy. The program creates dedicated time for policy inquiry, supports engagement opportunities and contributes new evidence to policy debates.

> The APPI Fellowship provided me an all-too-rare opportunity for intensive thinking and strategic engagement to address a major policy challenge. All too often as a senior executive in the public service the pressure of time and budget to solve complex problems means responses can be reactive and based on limited evidence. The support provided by APPI allowed me to investigate innovative and evidence-based responses to one such problem. The Fellowship allowed me to draw on a broad range of research and to form critical partnerships with academia and other stakeholders that will support our agency in meeting its strategic priorities in the future.
>
> **Dr Bernard Ripperger**
> APPI Policy Fellow

Key collaborators in FY2025-26

- NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- NSW Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport
- Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Australian Tertiary Education Commission
- The Cabinet Office of NSW
- NSW Ministry of Health
- NSW Department of Education
- Australian Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
- NSW Treasury Department

APPI's work with government extends beyond individual projects, events and programs. Research supported by the Institute informed parliamentary inquiries, government reviews and major policy development processes across areas including housing, digital infrastructure, higher education, justice and environmental management. These engagements illustrate APPI's role in helping governments access expertise and evidence at critical points in the policymaking process.

Mobilising the expertise for national impact

Universities play a vital role in shaping better policy outcomes. Connecting research with real-world impact requires strong, deliberate partnerships. In 2025-26, APPI worked closely with university partners to build skills, awareness and pathways that researchers need to inform public policy.

Deepening our partnership with universities

Over the past year, APPI expanded and deepened its partnerships with universities to raise awareness and build skills for public policy engagement and impact. These collaborations have helped strengthen the evidence base for practical, long-term policy solutions. APPI remains committed to developing new opportunities for researchers to contribute meaningfully to public policy development.

250+

Direct engagements with university researchers and other experts

620+

Hours of editorial and policy translation support provided to researchers

550+

University experts involved in APPI projects and initiatives

530+

Researchers involved in 2026 grant round

120+

Researchers shared research insights in reports and opinion articles

Highlights

- In 2026 we launched **Engaging and Influencing Government Policy training series**, a dedicated program for 80 early career researchers across APPI's eight partner universities, building practical skills to engage with government and enhance their policy impact.
- **Dr Archie Thomas from University of Technology Sydney and Dr Samara Hand from UNSW Sydney** completed their joint Policy Fellowship (Academic Stream), focusing on breaking the school-to-prison nexus and improving educational outcomes for all students.
- **Dr Sarah Duffy from Western Sydney University** completed her Policy Fellowship in June 2025 examining parental leave policy and its role in supporting workforce participation, gender equality and family wellbeing.
- **Dr Claire Wilkinson from UNSW Sydney joined APPI as a Policy Fellow**. Dr Wilkinson's project will explore the implications of gambling reform for the role of social clubs in NSW communities.
- **Dr Jo Orlando from Western Sydney University began her APPI Policy Fellowship**, developing a Panoramic EdTech Policy Framework to bring together the often disconnected and competing emerging needs in education technology governance.
- As part of their **joint Policy Fellowship, Dr Mia Harrison and Anna Cain from UNSW Sydney,** are conducting policy research on how housing conditions, socioeconomic factors and lived experience shape the uptake and benefits of consumer energy resources, and where current policy settings fall short.
- ***The Policymaker*** **now features 175+ articles** from leading experts addressing Australia's biggest 'grand challenges' in building a resilient economy, creating a fairer society and managing systemic change.
- Following the **2026 Policy Challenge Grants launch**, the APPI team ran a webinar for interested researchers from partner universities and ran several in-person sessions to take researchers through the application process.

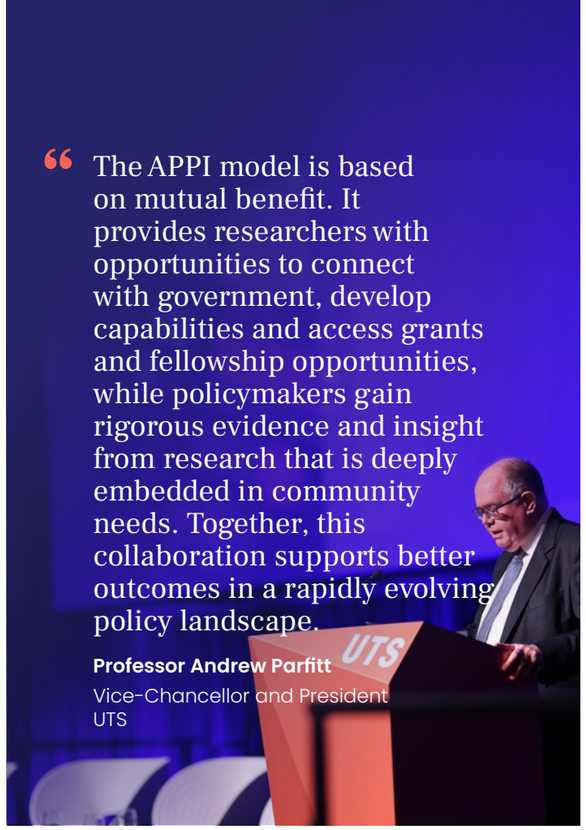
> APPI provided excellent support to our project. The school-prison nexus is a complex arena that touches many areas of government and policymaking, and with APPI's advice and connections we have been able to reach a varied audience of stakeholders. This has been, and will continue to be, crucial to our goal of shifting the conversation on school exclusion to inclusive and just solutions.
>
> **Dr Archie Thomas**
> University of Technology Sydney

> Through this project, we have built strong relationships with key stakeholders in the education sector and established connections that are already generating new opportunities for collaboration and impact.
>
> **Dr Samara Hand**
> UNSW Sydney

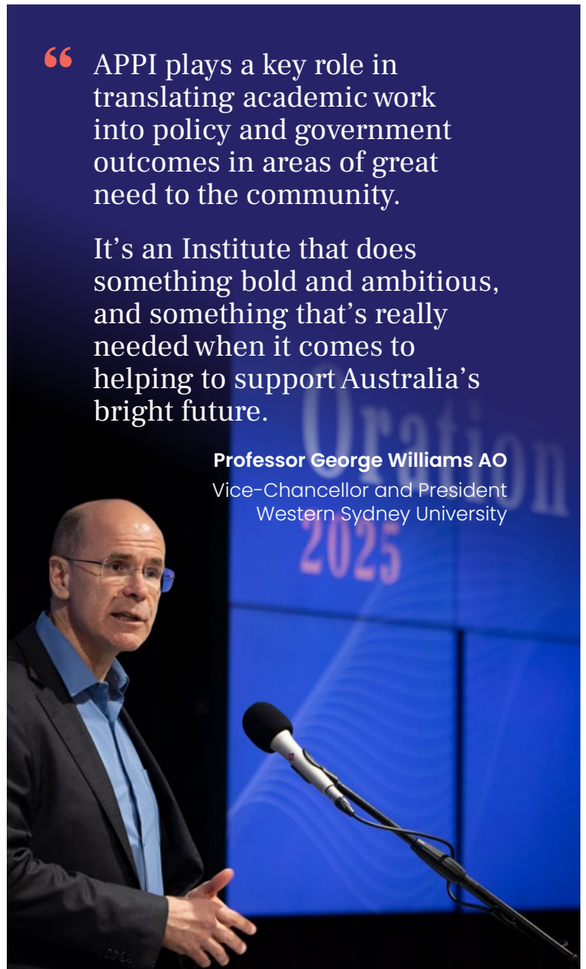
Universities generate a wide range of evidence to support government action across policy portfolios. Translating that expertise into policy impact requires capability uplift in the foundations of government, strong institutional partnerships and practical pathways for engagement.

Throughout the year, APPI worked with its university partners to strengthen those connections. The Institute expanded opportunities for researchers to engage with policymakers, build engagement skills and contribute directly to contemporary policy debates and government priorities.

> The APPI model is based on mutual benefit. It provides researchers with opportunities to connect with government, develop capabilities and access grants and fellowship opportunities, while policymakers gain rigorous evidence and insight from research that is deeply embedded in community needs. Together, this collaboration supports better outcomes in a rapidly evolving policy landscape.
>
> **Professor Andrew Parfitt**
> Vice-Chancellor and President
> UTS



> APPI plays a key role in translating academic work into policy and government outcomes in areas of great need to the community.
>
> It's an Institute that does something bold and ambitious, and something that's really needed when it comes to helping to support Australia's bright future.
>
> **Professor George Williams AO**
> Vice-Chancellor and President
> Western Sydney University



Advancing solutions to public policy challenges

The 2025 Policy Challenge Grants attracted strong interest from researchers across APPI's university network and resulted in the selection of six projects addressing some of Australia's most pressing policy issues.

The 2025 grant recipients include projects examining how modular construction could address housing supply constraints; how NSW can establish a sustainable and community-inclusive data centre industry; reforms to support household and small business energy upgrades; the development of a systems-based approach to falls prevention; the use of frailty indicators to inform aged care policy; and strategies to address the social determinants of justice involvement among vulnerable children.

The program occupies a distinctive place in Australia's research and policy landscape. While many research funding schemes prioritise academic discovery, the Policy Challenge Grants are specifically designed to support research translation and applied policy research in practical, timely solutions. Projects are selected for their potential to inform policy development, with researchers working closely with the APPI team and government policymakers throughout the project lifecycle.

> The Policy Challenge Grants are spectacular. They are mission-led, collaborative and directly geared to solving real-world problems that matter right now. The findings from those projects are all the more impactful thanks to your partnerships with the university sector, the NSW Government and more recently the Australian Public Service Commission.
>
> **Senator The Hon Tim Ayres**
> Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science

> The Policy Challenge Grants program is a great example of the power of collaboration between universities and government. By working together and drawing on the best available evidence, we can deliver targeted policy solutions and stronger outcomes for the people of NSW.
>
> **The Hon Steve Whan MP**
> NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education

The projects reflect the breadth of expertise across APPI's university network and the range of complex policy challenges confronting governments. Each combines academic research with a clear focus on policy application, stakeholder engagement and implementation.

Interest in the program continued to build during the year. The 2026 Grant round, which will conclude in August 2026, attracted 139 applications involving more than 530 researchers from universities across Australia. The strong response highlights growing demand for opportunities to connect university research expertise with public policy challenges and reinforces the Policy Challenge Grant program's role as a distinctive mechanism for supporting applied research with real-world impact.

Opposite page left: 1) Dr Archie Thomas, Dr Samara Hand and Dr James Deehan at the APPI Policy Talks 2026: Research & Policy Trends in Education, moderated by Marianna Brungs, 3 March 2026. Photo credit: APPI. 2) Top right: Professor Andrew Parfitt delivers an address at the APPI Policymaker Summit, 22 September 2025. Photo credit: APPI. 3) Bottom right: Professor George Williams AO delivers the APPI Oration, 20 October 2025. Photo credit: APPI. This page 1) Top right: The Honourable Steve Whan delivers an address at the APPI Policy Challenge Grant Winners Reception, 5 November 2025. Photo credit: APPI.

Equipping researchers for policy impact

APPI is committed to supporting the next generation of policy-engaged researchers. This year, we launched a dedicated training program for early career researchers on Engaging and Influencing Government Policy. Delivered across APPI's university partnership, the program brings together 80 researchers from the Institute's eight partner universities to develop practical skills in policymaking, understanding government decision-making, communicating with policymakers and enhancing the policy impact of their research.

Across five interactive sessions, participants explore how policy is developed, how evidence is used and how researchers can engage more effectively with government. Participants apply these concepts directly to their own research through structured activities and networking between sessions through APPI's online community platform, creating opportunities to share experiences, test ideas and learn from peers.

The program reflects growing recognition across the university sector that policy engagement requires a distinct set of capabilities. By helping researchers better understand how government is structured, how policy is developed and where evidence can make the most difference, APPI is strengthening the capability of universities to contribute to public policy over the long term.

APPI also launched the 2026 James Martin Policy Pitch Essay Prize, encourages emerging researchers to engage directly with contemporary policy debates while developing the skills needed to communicate research beyond academic audiences. The inaugural competition attracted 48 submissions from Higher Degree by Research students across all eight APPI partner universities, reflecting strong interest in translating insights into practical policy ideas. Entries spanned a diverse range of disciplines and policy challenges, including artificial intelligence, health, disability policy, education, housing, climate adaptation and water sustainability.

APPI also participated in induction and engagement activities at the University of Technology Sydney, the University of Wollongong, the University of Sydney and Charles Sturt University. These sessions provided opportunities to introduce emerging researchers to public policy engagement and showcase the Institute's workstreams.

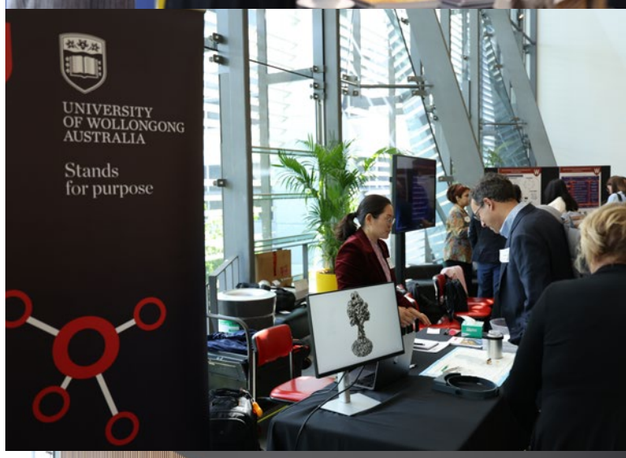
Collaboration with APPI's University Key Contacts remains central to this work, helping to identify early-career researchers, facilitate access to policy networks and create pathways for students and academics to contribute to real-world policy development.

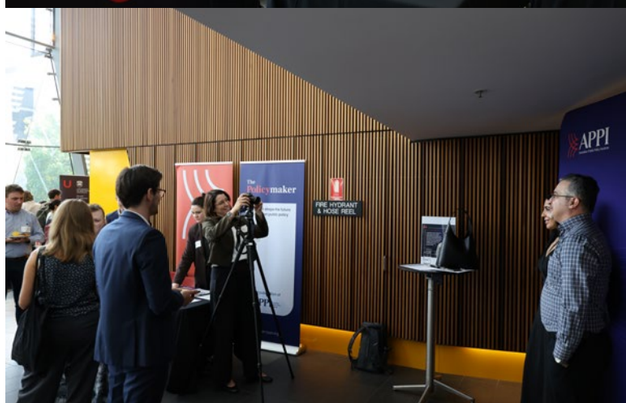
> "APPI pushed me to think about my research in ways I genuinely had not before, learning to frame pollinator science as a policy problem and not just an ecological one. This has changed how I communicate my work, and I think that will stay with me long after the internship ends.
>
> **Adekunle Ademikanra**
> APPI Research Associate / University of Sydney

Showcasing policy-relevant expertise

APPI also created opportunities for university research centres and institutes to engage directly with policymakers and other stakeholders. At the 2025 Policymaker Summit, the Policy Impact Exhibition showcased pioneering research centres from across APPI's university network, including UTS' Robotics Institute and Domestic and Family Violence Research Network, Western Sydney University's Centre for Smart Modern Construction, UNSW's Smart Cities and Infrastructure Cluster, the University of Wollongong's Molecular Horizons Institute and the University of Sydney's Centre for AI, Trust and Governance.

The exhibition highlighted how university research is contributing to policy discussions and government initiatives across areas including AI, infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, community safety and emerging technologies. It also provided a platform for researchers to engage directly with policymakers and demonstrate how specialised research expertise can help address complex national challenges.





Opposite page: Opposite page: APPI's Luke Henderson and Gillian Smith attend the UTS HDR Graduate Research School Induction Exhibition, 13 August 2025. Photo credit: APPI.

This page (top to bottom): The UTS Robotics Institute; The UTS Domestic and Family Violence Research Network; Molecular Horizons from the University of Wollongong and APPI's photo booth at The Policymaker Summit exhibition, 22 September 2025. Photo credit: APPI.

Reflections from Policy Challenge Grant winners

APPI hosted a reception at The Mint in November 2025 to celebrate the six winning project teams. The event brought together one hundred project stakeholders and partners from government and the university sector.

> We were drawn to the APPI Policy Challenge Grant because it focuses on a complex and real-world challenge. The program provides an opportunity to work closely with policymakers, industry leaders and communities to explore pathways towards a more sustainable and inclusive data centre industry in New South Wales.

Dr Bronwyn Cumbo UTS

> We are looking forward to building genuine partnerships with policymakers. Together, we can develop practical solutions to reduce falls and improve healthy ageing. APPI's expertise in policy communication and engagement will help ensure our research can inform policy and achieve the goals of this project.

Dr Marina Pinheiro University of Sydney

> We're really hoping to strengthen connections with policymakers and practitioners so that our findings can inform aged care policy and practice and support better decision-making.

Professor Ping Yu University of Wollongong

> We're really looking forward to collaborating with the APPI team to examine barriers to early intervention and identify evidence-informed approaches to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Associate Professor Ruth McCausland UNSW Sydney

> We chose the APPI Policy Challenge Grant because of its strong focus on creating real-world impact.

Associate Professor Saeed Banihashemi UTS

> APPI provides an important opportunity for us to engage directly with policymakers. The partnership creates opportunities to share evidence and support implementation from the earliest stages of policy development.

Professor Vivian Tam Western Sydney University

Public discourse on research impact

- Institute staff moderated an online webinar discussing research findings from **UTS** and **UNSW** highlighting a new path to home ownership through nascent build-to-rent-to-own schemes.
- APPI contributed to an expert roundtable hosted by the **University of Melbourne** on the latest research findings on truck pollution.
- The Institute contributed to a **Western Sydney University** event centred on research-driven models for increased digitalisation in the construction industry.
- APPI participated in the **University of Wollongong Early Career Researcher Conference** discussing the public impact of applied research.
- APPI participated in the **'Let's Talk Research'** masterclass hosted by **Charles Sturt University** for the benefit of university researchers interested in public impact for their applied research.
- Executive Director Anthony Dursi joined national leaders at the **Universities Australia Solutions Summit 2026** on issues facing the higher education sector. APPI also contributed to a roundtable hosted by the **University of Melbourne** on higher education policy in Australia.
- Former APPI CEO Libby Hackett delivered a keynote address at the **UWA Public Policy Institute Higher Education summit** exploring how higher education can better serve national priorities through structural reform, stronger accountability and a renewed emphasis on public value and policy impact.
- Institute staff contributed to the **ACOLA Accelerate 2035 Summit,** alongside Australia's most influential environment leaders to help collectively shape the national energy research priorities needed to support Australia's energy transition towards Net Zero.
- APPI Executive Director Anthony Dursi addressed the network UK-based **National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education** on university engagement. He also participated on a panel on international perspectives on research translation at the **Advancing Research Impact in Society (ARIS) Summit.**
- APPI Executive Director Anthony Dursi participated in the **SXSW Sydney** program as a mentor to emerging leaders..
- Executive Director, Policy and Projects, Marianna Brungs participated in a **University of Sydney initiative on Skills Horizons**.

Recipients of the 2025 APPI Policy Challenge Grants at the Grant Winners Reception at the Mint, 5 November 2025. Photo credit: APPI.

Governance

APPI is an independent, non-partisan policy institute with charitable status. It operates under a robust governance framework that encompasses an independent Board of Directors, a formal Constitution, independent advisory groups including a Research Advisory Group and Policy Advisory Committee, and the governing and reporting structures in place with our government and university partners.

These structures and agreements ensure clear processes, integrity, accountability, and the pursuit of excellence in research, analysis and policy engagement. APPI remains committed to upholding the highest standards of governance and fostering collaborations that contribute to informed decision-making and positive societal impact.

Constitution

APPI operates under a constitution that outlines the principles, objectives, and governance structure of the organisation. It delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors, ensuring transparency, accountability, and adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Board of Directors

APPI is governed by an independent Board of Directors, which is responsible for providing strategic guidance and oversight to ensure the effective operation and fulfillment of APPI's mission.

Peter Varghese AO
Chair of the Board
since September 2025

Jillian Kilby
Government-appointed
until May 2026
CEO and Founder,
The Infrastructure Collaborative

Professor The Hon Verity Firth AM
University-appointed Deputy Chair
Deputy Chair, Vice-President Societal Impact, Equity and Engagement, UNSW

Peter Duncan AM
Government-appointed
Chair, WaterNSW

Professor Deborah Sweeney
University-appointed
until August 2025
Provost, Western Sydney University

Professor Kirsten Andrews
University-appointed
since August 2025

Amy Persson
University-appointed
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice and Inclusion), UTS

Joseph Rizk AM
Independent
CEO and Managing Director,
Arab Bank Australia

Committees and Advisory Groups

Finance, Audit and Risk (FA&R) Committee provides expert advice to the Institute in developing appropriate financial, audit and risk mechanisms, process and methods. On behalf of the APPI Board, the FA&R oversees critical reporting systems and checks, including the risk register.

The **University Partners Advisory Panel** is a subcommittee of the Board, designed to maximise the contribution of university partners to the work and shared mission of APPI.

The **Research Advisory Group** provides expert advice to APPI regarding the quality and governance of the Institute's research activities with a focus on public policy impact. The Research Advisory Group also provides expert advice to the Executive on the shortlist of applications for the Policy Challenge Grant program. The Group is made up of 3 university research-policy experts, 3 government research-policy experts, and 3 independent research-policy experts, including an independent Chair.

The **Policy Advisory Committee**, formed of ministerial advisors and public servants, provides advice on government priorities and areas for collaboration.

Government partnerships

APPI has a Funding Agreement as well as a MOU with the NSW Government. The Funding Agreement defines the reporting requirements and performance indicators for the Institute until 2024.

APPI has a MOU with the Australian Public Service Commission.

University partnerships

APPI has either a Funding Agreement or Partnership Agreement in place with each of its university partners. These partnerships enable APPI to leverage the expertise and resources of its university partners, fostering a vibrant environment for collaboration and knowledge exchange at various levels.

University Key Contacts

Each of our universities provide APPI with a 'key contact' with dedicated time to support the Institute. Our University Key Contacts play a crucial role in helping APPI to identify and access research expertise, professional advice and facilities in support of our mission.

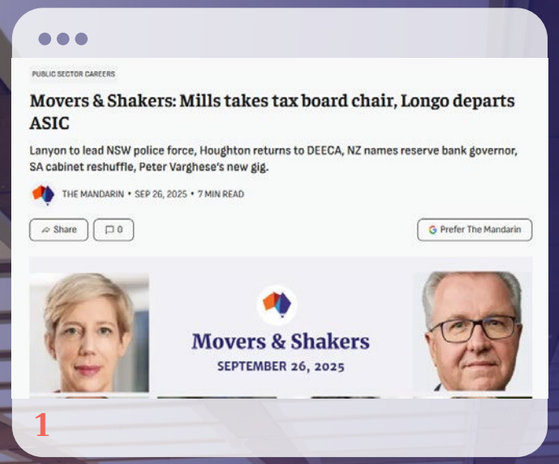
Our key contacts are currently:

- **Shoshana Fogelman**
  Industry Theme Lead – Critical Resources, Infrastructure and Technologies, University of Sydney
- **Anne Irvine**
  Senior Manager-Government Relations, UNSW
- **Kris Kathiravel**
  Deputy Director International Research Partnerships and Programs, Monash University
- **Jordan Matthews**
  Associate Director, Government and Community Relations, University of Wollongong
- **Dr Anette McLaren**
  Director of Operations - Office of the Provost, Western Sydney University
- **Kim Pascoe**
  Executive Officer to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), University of Sydney
- **Monique Smith**
  Executive Officer, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Charles Sturt University
- **Leah Subijano**
  Manager, Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy, UTS
- **Carlene Wilson**
  Executive Director, Policy and Government Relations, University of Melbourne

APPI Chair Peter Varghese with APPI Research Advisory Group Chair Professor Paul Wellings CBE and former Chair Peter Shergold at the APPI Policymaker Summit, 22 September 2025. Photo credit: APPI.

Media highlights

APPI has been featured in several major media outlets in the last 12 months:



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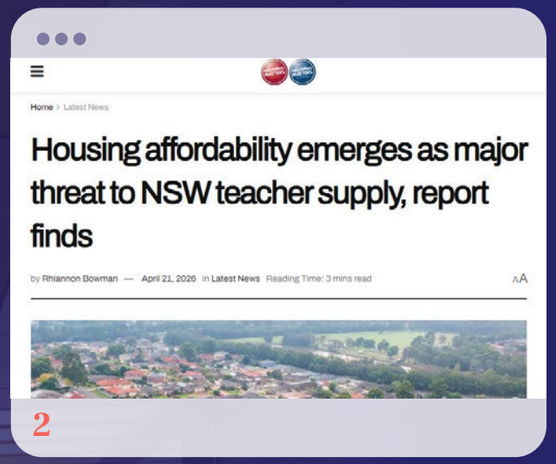

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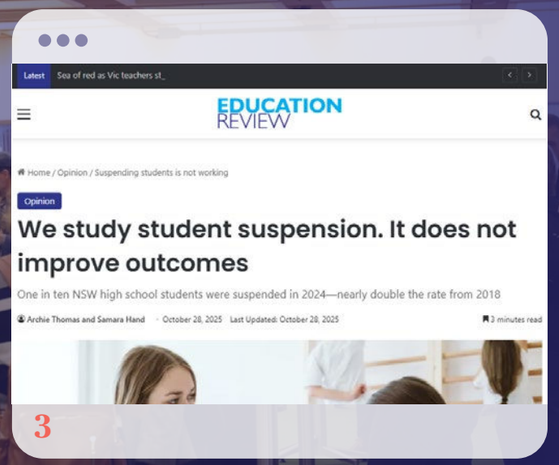

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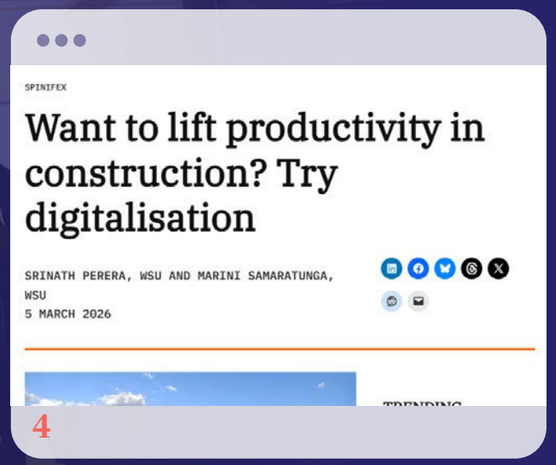

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1. The announcement of Peter Varghese as Chair of APPI was covered by *The Mandarin*.
2. The report of the grant project led by Professor Scott Eacott (UNSW) was featured in several articles, including on Education Matters, *Open Forum and Education Today*.
3. Research of the fellowship project led by Dr Archie Thomas (UTS) and Dr Samara Hand was covered in a range of articles, including on *Education Review*.
4. Research of the grant project led by Professor Srinath Perera (Western Sydney University) was presented in an article on *The Fifth Estate*.
5. Research of the grant project led by Dr Bronwyn Cumbo (UTS) was presented in an article on *The Conversation*.

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Sydney NSW, 2000

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