

Agenda

Inaugural U.S.-Australia Innovation Dialogue Sponsored by Charles Kiefel AM

Thursday, 24 July 2025

8:00 am – 2:30 pm

12-Micron

Barangaroo
Level 2, International Tower 1,
100 Barangaroo Ave,
Barangaroo NSW 2000
<https://thevenuesco.au/12-micron/>

Co-Hosts: The Council on Competitiveness
The Australian Advisory Board on Competitiveness

Co-Chairs: The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness
Mr. Charles Kiefel AM
Chairman, Australian Advisory Board on Competitiveness

8:00 am: *Registration, Networking, and Continental Breakfast*

8:40 am: *A Fireside Chat: Putting Competitiveness into Context —
The Challenges AND Opportunities for 2025*

Dialogue leadership will share perspectives on the global economic, political, and social and realities facing the United States and Australia.

Opening Remarks:

Mr. Charles Kiefel AM ([bio](#))

Chairman

Australian Advisory Board on Competitiveness ([about](#))

The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith ([bio](#))

President and CEO

Council on Competitiveness ([about](#))

9:00 am: *Higher Education: Optimizing Its Role as a Lynchpin of U.S. and Australian Competitiveness*

In the face of shifting demographic, structural, and political realities, along with increasing global competition, advanced economies need colleges and universities to meet their urgent research, knowledge creation, and talent development needs.

And, increasingly, towns, cities, states, and territories are turning to academic institutions as key drivers in regional innovation ecosystems. This session will examine the complex roles colleges and universities must play in an ever more complex world.

Key questions to consider:

1. In what ways can universities better position themselves as leaders in research and innovation, not only contributing to academic knowledge but also driving — and commercializing — technological advancements and solutions to societal challenges?

2. How can higher education institutions strengthen their partnerships with communities and industries to foster regional innovation ecosystems, and what role does this play in overall national competitiveness?
3. With the rapid evolution of industries and job markets, how should universities rethink their role in ensuring Australia and the United States have the workforce needed for the next economy?
4. What is the future of U.S.-Australia international academic collaboration – and key areas for joint research to advance competitiveness?

Panelists:

Mr. Jim Cooney ([bio](#))
Non-Executive Chairman
TCI Renewables ([about](#))

Dr. Peter Dorhout ([bio](#))
Vice President for Research
Iowa State University ([about](#))

Dr. Suresh Garimella ([bio](#))
President
University of Arizona ([about](#))

Ms. Colleen Harkin ([bio](#))
Director, IPA Schools Program and Research Fellow
Institute of Public Affairs ([about](#))

Moderator:

Mr. Arun Abey AM ([bio](#))
Executive Chairman
Walsh Bay Partners ([about](#))
-and-
Chairman, External Advisory Board
College of Business and Economics
Australian National University ([about](#))

9:40 am:

Global Healthcare Competitiveness

Better health is both a result and a driver of competitiveness. This conversation is grounded in the belief that everyone deserves the chance to flourish.

Key questions to consider:

1. How can we make aging healthier? What would be the economic, personal, and societal implications of a shift from lifespan to healthspan?
2. What life science and medical innovations are in the pipeline to support healthier, more prosperous societies? Are there clear avenues where greater bilateral collaboration between Australia and the United States can accelerate innovation?
3. Are there new, different funding models necessary – or available – to support tackling healthcare challenges?

Panelists:

Dr. Geoff Brooke ([bio](#))
Senior Partner
BioScience Managers ([about](#))

Mr. Paul Davies ([bio](#))
Director, Government Affairs for Australasia
Abbott Australia ([about](#))

Dr. Steve Gourlay ([bio](#))
Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
Actinogen ([about](#))

Dr. Michael Wolf ([bio](#))
Senior Vice President
Hevolution ([about](#))

Moderator:

Dr. Rachel Swift ([bio](#))
Executive Director
Future Securities AI ([about](#))

10:20 am:

***National Laboratories and National Research Organizations:
Providing a Strategic Roadmap for Competitiveness and Security***

In an era of disruption and discontinuity, the United States and Australia hold significant advantages in the global pursuit of new opportunities: the 17 national laboratories of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), more than 40 federally funded R&D centers in the United States, and the expansive research capabilities of institutes like CSIRO (the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation), which have among the world's most highly skilled, mission-driven multidisciplinary workforces and advanced scientific infrastructure.

How can the two nations best leverage these assets – domestically and in partnership – to enhance economic competitiveness while still fulfilling the laboratories' research and/or security missions?

Key questions to consider:

1. The breadth of these labs and research organizations' missions and the critical role they play in society are not always well understood. Given the global innovation imperative, what role must these labs and research organizations play within their respective national innovation ecosystem and in strategic, bilateral engagements?
2. What is needed to enhance collaboration among these labs and research organizations with academia and industry to speed the deployment of cutting-edge technologies to the marketplace?
3. How can we ensure a balance between research security with advances in scientific user facilities and workforce development?

Panelists:

Dr. Kate Evans ([bio](#))
Director, Office of Institutional Strategic Planning
Oak Ridge National Laboratory ([about](#))

Dr. Mark Peters ([bio](#))
President and CEO
MITRE ([about](#))

Ms. Anna-Maria Arabia OAM ([bio](#))
Chief Executive
Australian Academy of Science ([about](#))

Moderator:

The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President and CEO
Council on Competitiveness

11:00 am: ***Special Snapshot: State of the Workplace — Australia, the United States, and Global Trends***

Ms. Claire De Carteret ([bio](#))
Managing Director
Gallup ([about](#))

11:20 am: ***Innovation Anywhere, Opportunities Everywhere:
Accelerating the Frontiers of Science and Technology***

Out innovating our global competitors is essential for the future of the United States and Australia. Both nations are today at the forefront of developing and commercializing technologies that will shape the long-term trajectory of their economic and productivity growth, prosperity and national security. This conversation focuses on exploring how both nations can unleash the innovation and commercialization necessary to establish themselves as global tech leaders.

Key questions to consider:

1. Why is U.S. and Australian leadership in next-generation technology such an important competitiveness issue – and where is the need the greatest in both nations?
2. What key challenges do leaders in both nations need to address and overcome to be global pacesetters in the research, development, and commercialization of new technologies?

Panelists:

Professor Russell Boyce [\(bio\)](#)
Managing Director
Mission Assurance

Dr. Peter Dorhout
Vice President for Research
Iowa State University [\(about\)](#)

Dr. Brett Goldstein [\(bio\)](#)
Special Advisor to the Chancellor on National Security and Strategic
Initiatives and Research Professor, School of Engineering
Vanderbilt University [\(about\)](#)

Mr. Phil Morle [\(bio\)](#)
Partner
Main Sequence [\(about\)](#)

Mr. Rick Wylie [\(bio\)](#)
CEO
KeyOptions [\(about\)](#)

Dr Katherine Woodthorpe [\(bio\)](#)
ATSE
President [\(about\)](#)

Moderator:

Mr. Chad Evans ([bio](#))
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Council on Competitiveness ([about](#))

12:00 pm: **Lunch**

12:50 pm: ***Natural Resources as a Defence Partnership: Is There a Better Way Forward to Strengthen the US-Australian Defence and Security Alliance?***

Australia is a resource rich country. Could there be a more productive and bi-lateral use of Australia's natural resources: gas, uranium, and precious minerals, and utilisation of uninhabited land?

A competitive use of Natural resources, including uranium, gas, precious minerals, and energy transition issues including AI and data centres is a subject that requires healthy debate.

Key questions to consider:

1. America needs more resources for its own defence program, and Australia needs a stronger alliance with the United States. Is there a way to bridge these requirements?
2. Is Australia's ban on uranium mining insurmountable? Can it and will it be challenged by future governments?
3. Can the strategic use of Australia's natural resources be a win-win for U.S.-Australia relations?

Panelists:

Mr. Saul Kavonic ([bio](#))
Head of Energy Research
MST Financial ([about](#))

The Hon. Arthur Sinodinos AO ([bio](#))
Partner and Chair of the Australia Practice
The Asia Group ([about](#))

Prof. Stephen Wilson ([bio](#))
Adjunct Professor, Energy Management,
School of Mechanical & Mining Engineering
The University of Queensland Australia ([about](#))

Moderator:

Mr. Charles Kiefel AM
Chairman
Australian Advisory Board on Competitiveness

1:30 pm:

Moving Beyond Policy and Creating a New U.S.-Australia Strategic Innovation Alliance for the 21st Century

Leaders will discuss the next chapter in America's and Australia's innovation economies – and concrete ideas to advance mutual economic and productivity growth, prosperity, and security.

Key questions to consider:

1. To what degree can Australia's natural resources be leveraged as a strategic asset to trade for increased Defence and Security.
2. What would a Capital Free Highway mean for the U.S.-Australian alliance and future productivity gains?
3. What assets do Australia and the United States have on hand to leverage in advancing innovation and enhancing the bilateral relationship?
4. What does it take to spark a new direction in U.S.-Australian innovation alliance? What would be concrete, first steps?
5. What new models for collaboration, resource sharing, and funding can the two countries explore to accelerate a bilateral innovation partnership?

Panelists:

Mr. Bill Calcraft ([bio](#))
Senior Advisor
Denham Capital ([about](#))

Mr. Mal McComas ([bio](#))
Private Investor -and-
Lawyer -and-
Public Company Director
Actinogen Medical ([about](#)) -and-
Director
Core Lithium ([about](#))

Ms. April Palmerlee ([bio](#))
CEO
AmCham Australia ([about](#)) -and-
Chairman
AmChams of Asia Pacific ([about](#))

Dr. Mark Peters
CEO
MITRE

The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President and CEO
Council on Competitiveness

Moderator:

Mr. Charles Kiefel AM
Chairman
Australian Advisory Board on Competitiveness

2:10 pm:

***Signing Ceremony and Release of:
“A Compact for a Strategic U.S.-Australia Innovation Alliance”***

Dialogue leadership will sign and release a set of core recommendations and initiatives to advance a next-generation, non-partisan, private-sector driven innovation alliance between the United States and Australia.

The Hon. Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President and CEO
Council on Competitiveness

Mr. Charles Kiefel AM
Chairman
Australian Advisory Board on Competitiveness

And Key Members of the U.S. Delegation and
Senior Australian Partners

2:30 pm:

Dialogue Close