



RMIT Forum on Frontier & Breakthrough Innovation



Today's Agenda

Time	Item	Duration
9:00 - 9:15	Arrival and Registration	0:15
9:15 - 10:30	Welcome and Opening Address Edward Podolski: Is Breakthrough Innovation Becoming Harder — and Why?	1:15
10:30- 11:00	Morning Tea	0:30
11:00 - 11:45	Innovator Insights - Keynote Luke Trickett: Backing the Bold: The Realities of Funding Big Ideas	0:45
11:45 - 12:30	Technology Leadership Insights — Keynote Louise Adams: Structural Barriers to Breakthrough Innovation	0:45
12:30 - 2:00	Lunch	1:30
2:00 - 3:15	Panel Discussion 1 How Asset Owners and Capital Markets Can Drive Innovation. Moderated by Philip Naylor. Panelists: Kate Misic, Rohan Workman and Sarah Worboys.	1:15
3:15 - 4:00	Panel Discussion 2 Is Gender Inequality Constraining Breakthrough Potential? Moderated by My Nguyen. Panelists: Irene Tsang, Joseph Chan and Roo Harris.	0:45
4:00- 5:00	Networking Reception	1:00



About the RMIT Finance & Frontier Innovation Cluster

About the Forum

The world faces mounting structural challenges, from slowing productivity and demographic shifts to environmental limits. While the pace of change remains high, emerging evidence shows that the foundational breakthroughs required to solve these complex problems have become exponentially harder to achieve. We can no longer assume that breakthroughs will emerge as a natural byproduct of current systems. Instead, they require a deliberate and renewed focus to overcome the rising costs and complexity of genuine discovery.

The RMIT Forum on Frontier & Breakthrough Innovation brings together leaders from industry and academia to examine the forces that shape the trajectory of breakthrough innovation. The Forum aims to deepen understanding of the technological, organisational, financial, and institutional conditions under which paradigm-shifting ideas emerge and scale. Its purpose is to foster informed dialogue and build shared insight into how breakthrough innovation can be more intentionally supported.

The Forum is intentionally curated and limited to around 70 participants who influence the direction of the innovation ecosystem, including industry leaders, distinguished academics and emerging university talent. Bringing together voices from across sectors, it is designed to encourage the exchange of diverse viewpoints and the thoughtful challenge of established thinking. By creating conditions where ideas can be debated, refined, and re-imagined, the Forum aims to act as a catalyst for new insights and sustained collaboration beyond the event itself.

Research Initiative

The world faces mounting structural challenges, from slowing productivity and demographic shifts to environmental limits. The RMIT Finance & Frontier Innovation Cluster is a ground-breaking new research initiative that sits within the RMIT Department of Finance in the School of Economics, Finance, and Marketing.

The Cluster brings together leading academics applying advanced data science and empirical methods, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, to better measure and explain patterns of technological change, with a particular focus on the conditions under which breakthrough discoveries emerge, scale, or stall. Drawing on large-scale datasets, subject-matter expertise, high-performance computing infrastructure, and dedicated data science capability, the Cluster seeks to advance understanding of the forces that influence frontier innovation and long-term productivity growth.

The Team

Behind The Forum



Philip Naylor - Industry Chair, Finance & Frontier Innovation Cluster — RMIT University

Philip Naylor is an Adjunct Senior Industry Fellow at RMIT University and Industry Chair of the Finance and Frontier Innovation Cluster. Philip is an investment leader in the superannuation sector, and has held a number of investment leadership roles, including Head of Portfolio Construction at CareSuper, Deputy Chief Investment Officer at Spirit Super, and Head of Capital Markets and Asset Allocation at Frontier Advisors. Philip also has extensive experience in global and domestic macroeconomic public policy, including as an Economic Advisor to the Treasurer of the Northern Territory, as an economic consultant to the World Bank in Washington D.C., and in various roles with the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) in both Sydney and New York, including as the RBA's representative on the G20 Investment and Infrastructure Working Group. Philip holds a Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Economics and Finance from RMIT University along with a Master of Public Administration (MPA) in Economic Policy Management from Columbia University in New York. He is also a CFA Charterholder.



My Nguyen - Associate Professor of Finance & Deputy Head, Finance Department — RMIT University

My Nguyen is Associate Professor of Finance and Deputy Head of the Finance Department at RMIT University. Her research spans banking, corporate finance, and entrepreneurial finance, with a focus on how financial systems interact with organisational behaviour, innovation, and social outcomes. Beyond academic contribution, her research informs policy and industry dialogue on financial resilience, governance, and inclusive economic growth. She has secured over \$600,000 in competitive research funding from academic and industry sources. She co-leads the Multicultural Inclusion & Organisations theme at RMIT's Centre for Organisations and Social Change, where she collaborates with colleagues and external partners to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in organisational and financial contexts.



Edward Podolski - Professor of Finance & Head of the Finance Department — RMIT University

Edward Podolski is Professor of Finance and Head of the Finance Department at RMIT University. His research focuses on how organisational design, leadership behaviour, and capital market forces shape firm performance and long-term value creation, with particular emphasis on the drivers of breakthrough innovation. Edward examines how governance structures, managerial incentives, and investor expectations influence the trajectory of technological innovation — including the conditions under which firms pursue transformative discoveries versus incremental improvements. His work has been widely cited and featured in international media. Through his research and leadership roles, Edward works at the intersection of finance, strategy, and innovation, seeking to better understand how breakthrough ideas emerge, scale, and create sustained economic impact.

Our Keynote Speakers



Luke Trickett - Chief Executive Officer & Director — Marmalade

Luke Trickett is Chief Executive Officer and Director of Marmalade, a technology-led finance company focused on delivering simple, empowering financial solutions. With over 17 years' experience in financial markets, Luke has built a career at the intersection of capital markets and innovative financial products.

A former member of the Australian national swim team, he brings to his work the discipline, resilience, and long-term performance mindset required both in elite sport and in building enduring businesses. Prior to joining Marmalade, Luke was a stockbroker at WilsonHTM and, in 2010, founded Blue Stamp Company, a listed equities managed fund.



Louise Adams - Chief Executive Officer — Aurecon

Louise Adams is Chief Executive Officer of Aurecon, leading a team of approximately 7,500 professionals across 31 locations throughout Australia, New Zealand, and Asia. A Chartered Civil Engineer with more than 25 years' international experience, Louise has led and delivered complex civil and multidisciplinary infrastructure projects across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North America. In addition to her executive leadership, Louise plays an active role in shaping infrastructure and innovation policy. She serves on the National Advisory and Fiduciary Boards of Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, is a member of the Champions of Change Coalition's STEM and Health Group, and is an elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences & Engineering (ATSE). Louise is Aurecon's first female CEO and a strong advocate for equality in STEM and leadership. She has received numerous industry honours, including Australian Civil Engineer of the Year (2023) and Australian CEO of the Year (2020). In December 2025, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by RMIT University.

Our Panelists

Panel 1

Kate Mistic - Acting Chief Investment Officer — TelstraSuper



Katie Misc - Acting Chief Investment Officer — TelstraSuper

Kate Mistic is Acting Chief Investment Officer at TelstraSuper, where she leads the investment management team responsible for overseeing approximately \$28 billion in retirement savings on behalf of members. She works closely with the Investment Committee to set investment objectives, develop strategy, and implement diversified portfolios across equities, fixed income, real assets, alternatives, and ESG-focused investments. With more than 24 years' experience in financial services, Kate has built a career in long-term capital allocation and portfolio construction. She joined TelstraSuper in 2010 as Head of Alternative Investments and was appointed Acting CIO in 2025.



Sarah Worboys - Chief Operating Officer — Saniel Ventures

Sarah Worboys is Chief Operating Officer at Saniel Ventures, a private investment group with exposure across venture capital, private equity, public markets, and property. In this role, she oversees finance and operational governance across the group and works closely with founders and boards across a diversified private portfolio to support disciplined growth and long-term sustainability. Her background spans fintech, listed and private businesses, professional services, and strategy. She has been involved in strategic acquisitions, direct investments, and portfolio construction discussions alongside external investment advisers, and has worked with boards through periods of scale, restructuring, and transition. Sarah is a Chartered Accountant and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Rohan Workman - Co-Founder — Skalata Ventures

Rohan Workman has played a significant role in the Australian startup ecosystem for more than a decade as a founder, investor, advisor, and director. He is Co-Founder of Skalata, where he is responsible for fund strategy, portfolio construction, and overall investment performance. He also serves as a Director of the Skalata Ventures board and subsidiary companies, a Responsible Manager under Skalata's Australian Financial Services Licence, and a member of the Investment Committee. Before co-founding Skalata in 2018, Rohan co-founded RosterCloud, a B2B SaaS company providing HR solutions to hospitality businesses, which was later acquired by an ASX-listed company. He has also led a number of entrepreneurial initiatives at the University of Melbourne, including serving as the inaugural Director of the Melbourne Accelerator Program (MAP). Rohan is a graduate of the University of Melbourne, where he completed a Bachelor of Commerce.



Our Panelists

Panel 2

Kate Misic - Acting Chief Investment Officer — TelstraSuper



Irene Tsang - Chief Executive Officer & Founder — LiftWomen

Irene Tsang is Chief Executive Officer and Founder of LiftWomen, Australia's first female-focused crowdfunding platform. Established in 2021, LiftWomen provides non-dilutive funding, mentorship, and a national community designed to support women entrepreneurs in building sustainable, growth-oriented businesses. With more than 20 years' experience in strategy, sales, and partnerships across Fortune 500 companies in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, Irene brings deep expertise in scaling ventures and forging commercial partnerships. Backed by the Victorian Government and international partners, Irene's mission is to advance financial inclusion and amplify the impact of women-led enterprises.



Joseph Chan - Joseph Chan — AsiaPay

Joseph Chan is Founder and Chief Executive Officer of AsiaPay, a leading digital payment services and technology company operating across 16 countries in Asia. Since establishing the company in 2000, Joseph has led its strategic development and product innovation, building AsiaPay into one of the region's prominent FinTech platforms. Prior to founding AsiaPay, Joseph held senior management roles at Barings, Citibank, Bank of America, and Dah Sing Bank. He holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Economics from Monash University and has received multiple industry honours, including EY Entrepreneur of the Year (2014).



Roo Harris - General Partner — Scale Investors

Roo Harris is a General Partner at Scale Investors, a venture fund manager backing high-performing, women-led startups in Australia and New Zealand. With a focus on the "Gender Innovation Gap," Roo invests in founders leveraging lived experience to solve critical market failures in health, climate, and the care economy. She is passionate about the combination of "impact meets returns". Her investment approach is informed by 15+ years in international commercial law, including advising the ruling family of Qatar on cross-border venture deals. This background brings institutional rigor to Scale Venture Fund 1, which has to date raised \$35m, and is backed by cornerstone investors including the Minderoo Impact Fund, Breakthrough Victoria and the family of Carla Zampatti. A specialist in gender-lens investing, Roo serves as an Australian Ambassador for 2X Global, the global gender finance metric. She is also an advisor to the T-EDI standards of the Tech Council of Australia, and has been an active participant in the development and implementation of Equity Clear, which was co-founded by Scale Investors.



Attendee List



Alex Adams
Philanthropy Business
Partner – RMIT

Alex Adams is a philanthropy relationship manager focused on supporting social impact organisations and the broader for-purpose ecosystem. She specialises in fundraising, stakeholder engagement, and philanthropic strategy, working across higher education and the not-for-profit sector. She collaborates with corporate, government, and community partners to strengthen impact-driven initiatives and build sustainable networks.



Jack Aquilia
Barrister

Jack Aquilina is a barrister specialising in tax and revenue law, with experience across commercial and public law disputes. He previously worked as a Managing Associate at Dentons, advising clients on tax risk, disputes, and regulatory engagement, and is recognised as a "One to Watch" in Australia for tax law. Alongside his legal practice, he contributes to legal education and research in taxation and innovation policy across leading Australian universities.



Lenae Crichton
Senior Manager Planning
and Operations – RMIT

Lenae Crichton is the Senior Manager, Planning and Operations for the School of Economics, Finance and Marketing at RMIT University. She is an experienced operations leader with over 20 years of experience in strategic financial planning and management across the education sector. She specialises in process optimisation, resource management, and project delivery, with a strong focus on service excellence and leadership development.



Anthony Curtin
Co-Founder and Managing
Partner – Merton Lawyers

Anthony Curtin is Managing Partner at Merton Lawyers, where he leads the firm's Corporate Group. He advises startups, scale-ups, and established businesses on capital raising, mergers and acquisitions, and corporate governance, with a strong focus on venture capital and private equity transactions. He works closely with founders and investors across sectors and brings a commercially focused approach to cross-border investments and strategic partnerships.



Justyna Dabrowska
Vice Chancellor's Research
Fellow – RMIT

Dr Justyna Dąbrowska is a Vice Chancellor's Research Fellow in Innovation Management at RMIT University, with over 15 years of experience across academia, corporate, and consulting environments. Her work focuses on open and collaborative innovation, organisational renewal in the digital era, and the adoption of emerging technologies, including AI.



Mohammad Fard
Professor – RMIT

Mohammad Fard is a Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Intelligent Systems at RMIT University. He leads research on advanced technologies, including AI-driven pattern recognition, human bio-signals, and intelligent monitoring systems, with applications in areas such as road safety and high-performance engineering. With experience spanning both industry and academia, including work with Nissan, he brings a strong applied focus to technology development and innovation.



David Gatt
Team Leader Economic Development – Wyndham City Council

David Gatt is an economic development leader at Wyndham City, where he leads growth and stakeholder engagement initiatives supporting over 35,000 local businesses. He specialises in driving investment, precinct development, and ecosystem collaboration, with programs that have attracted significant private capital and boosted local economic activity. He brings over 30 years of experience across government and the private sector, including senior roles in brand strategy and communications.



Igor Gonda
Co-Founder and Chief Science Officer – GonGlobal

Igor Gonda is Co-Founder, Chief Scientific Officer, and Executive Chair at GonGlobal Pty Ltd, with extensive experience in the biopharmaceutical and life sciences sectors. He has held senior roles across industry and advisory organisations, specialising in drug development, technology transfer, and R&D. He brings deep expertise in translating scientific innovation into commercial applications across global markets.



Adam Harvey
Founder – RePrint Biology Australia

Adam Harvey is a biotechnology professional with expertise in cell culture, molecular biology, and laboratory operations. He has supported research projects across academic and industry settings, delivering high-quality experimental outcomes in collaborative environments. He is currently Founder of RePrint Biology Australia, where he focuses on research development, compliance, and advancing applications in regenerative medicine and biotechnology.



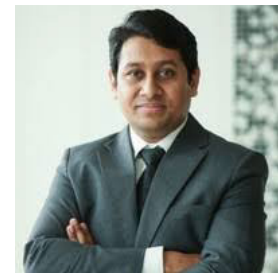
Xiaolu Hu
Associate Professor – RMIT

Xiaolu Hu is an Associate Professor in Finance at RMIT University, with prior industry experience as a portfolio manager and credit rating analyst. Her work focuses on capital markets, including corporate finance, asset pricing, and fixed income, with applications in areas such as machine learning and emerging markets. She collaborates with financial institutions and brings a strong industry-informed perspective to market analysis and investment decision-making.



Shaoib Iqbal
CEO – Esper Satellite Imagery

Shaoib Iqbal is Co-Founder and Team Lead at Esper Satellite Imagery, a space startup focused on developing satellites for hyperspectral imaging. He combines technical and commercial leadership, overseeing product development, strategy, and operations across a growing team. He works at the intersection of advanced technology and business, bringing innovative space-based solutions to market.



Emdad Islam
Senior Lecturer – Monash University

Emdad Islam is a Senior Lecturer in Finance at Monash University, having completed his PhD at UNSW Business School. His work focuses on corporate governance, corporate finance, and innovation, with applications to areas such as managerial incentives, entrepreneurship, and corporate responsibility. His research has been featured in leading academic and practitioner outlets, including Harvard Business Review and the Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance.



Khadija Islamova
Investment Manager –
Invest Victoria

Khadija Islamova is an investment professional with experience across foreign direct investment, management consulting, M&A, and private equity. She is currently an Investment Manager at Invest Victoria, where she leads international investment projects across technology, sustainable energy, and health sectors. She brings a combination of industry and academic experience, with prior roles at Deloitte and PwC and teaching positions at ANU and the University of Melbourne.



Robert James
Senior Quantitative
Researcher – NGS Super

Robert is a senior quantitative researcher at NGS Super, managing the development of systematic strategies and investment signals. He holds a PhD in financial economics from the University of Sydney and has an affiliated research position with the university. Robert maintains an active research profile and has published in leading academic finance journals.



Tick Jiang
Founder - NUVC

Tick Jiang is the Founder of NUVC — 16 AI agents, zero employees — an intelligence platform for high-risk investment decisions that has mapped 4,900+ investors across 35 countries. She is also building Monol, focused on disciplined execution in real-world systems. A speaker, community leader, and connector in Australia's Asian investor and founder.



Zlatan Kapetanovic
Founder and MD – Global
Investment Institute

Zlatan is the Founder and Managing Director of Global Investment Institute, a leading platform connecting institutional and family office investors through conferences and media. He has over 15 years of experience working with senior investment decision-makers across superannuation funds, sovereign and government funds, and private wealth. He specialises in facilitating capital allocation insights and building networks across the global investment community.



Drew Konarik
Student - RMIT

Drew Konarik is a final-year Economics and Finance student at RMIT University with a strong interest in corporate finance and investment banking. He was a Runner-Up in the CFA Institute Research Challenge (Melbourne/SA) and is currently competing in the Nash Advisory x FMAA Investment Banking Case Competition. As a member of the Future Finance Leaders Program, he is exploring opportunities in equity markets and broader corporate finance roles, with a strong interest in investment analysis and corporate strategy.



Dragan Krsta
Entrepreneur/Masters
Student - RMIT

Dragan Krsta is a former science entrepreneur with 15 years of experience in commercial chemistry and in scaling a contract research organisation. He focuses on bridging complex scientific innovation with capital allocation, with expertise in data-driven valuation and quantitative analysis. He is currently completing a Master of Finance at RMIT and was part of the team that won the CFA Research Challenge VIC/SA finals.



Kenny Lee
Head of Engineering –
Fluency

Kenny Lee is Head of Engineering at Fluency, with experience leading software development and scaling complex product platforms. He combines technical depth with strategic leadership, having previously led engineering efforts at Beyond Zero Technologies. He focuses on building high-performing teams and translating innovative ideas into reliable, scalable software solutions.



Ellysia Lee
Student - RMIT

Ellysia is a final-year Finance student at RMIT University and a participant in the university's Future Finance Leaders Program. She competed in the 2025 CFA Institute Research Challenge (Melbourne/SA Finals), where she contributed to equity research, valuation, and presenting the team's investment thesis. She is interested in wealth management, portfolio construction, and equity research, and enjoys discussing markets, investment strategy, and opportunities within the financial industry.



Sha May Lim
General Manager, Finance –
CareSuper

May has over 15 years' experience as a finance professional and has held CFO and senior leadership roles across superannuation, retail, mining, construction, and utilities. May is the current General Manager, Finance at CareSuper.



Michael McQueen
General Manager – Prime
Super

Michael leads the Investment team at Prime Super, overseeing investment strategy and portfolio management across all investment options. He has over 17 years of experience across superannuation, wealth, and funds management, including senior roles as Chief Investment Officer and Head of Investment Strategy. He specialises in asset allocation and manager selection, with a focus on delivering strong long-term risk-adjusted returns for investors.



Simon Milne
CFO - Grollo Co.

Simon Milne is currently Chief Financial Officer at Grollo Co. and Chief Executive Officer of Australian Corporate Treasury Association (ACTA) with over 20 years of senior finance leadership experience across multi-disciplinary businesses, funds management, and investment banking in Australia, Asia, and the US. His expertise spans financial risk management, strategic stewardship, and investment decision support, with a strong track record of influencing strategy and driving high-impact financial decisions.



Di Mo
Senior Lecturer and
Consultant – RMIT and
Frontier Advisors

Di Mo is a Senior Lecturer in Finance at RMIT University and a Consultant at Frontier Advisors, where she contributes to capital markets and asset allocation research. Her expertise spans financial markets, derivatives and alternative investments, with a focus on market dynamics and risk. Di's work integrates academic research with industry practice to inform investment strategy and decision-making.



Andrew Nash
Co-Founder and CEO –
Austral Impact

Seasoned global executive with over 35 years of experience across public and private companies, including CEO, President, and senior leadership roles. He has also served as a Global Partner in a Big Four consulting firm, with extensive experience across Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Americas. He specialises in digital transformation, enterprise technology, and corporate strategy, with a strong track record in growth, M&A, and international operations leadership.



Bob (Chew Wai) Ngu
Masters Student – RMIT

Final year Master of Finance student with over four years of experience in digital platforms, including leading digital transformation initiatives and implementing MarTech solutions within a major telecommunications firm. He brings strong technical and strategic expertise in data-driven environments. In 2025, he represented RMIT as part of the CFA Research Challenge team, winning the VIC/SA local finals.



Angela Nguyen
Senior Advisor - Australia
Vietnam Policy Institute
and RMIT

Angela is a Senior Advisor at RMIT University, working across Asia Strategy and Impact and the Australia–Vietnam Policy Institute, and a Teaching and Research Scholar in the College of Business and Law. With over 18 years of experience spanning academia, business, and international engagement, she focuses on digital transformation, AI, and innovation in business and healthcare. She brings a strong cross-sector and cross-border perspective, with extensive experience building partnerships between Australia and Vietnam.



Tien Nguyen
Student - RMIT

Tien is a Finance and Accounting student at RMIT University, passed CFA Level I, and Runner-Up in the CFA Institute Research Challenge (Melbourne/SA). With hands-on experience in financial modelling, accounting, and risk analysis, along with over a year in real estate consulting, Tien brings a strong analytical foundation and commercial perspective. Deeply interested in investment strategy, macro-driven opportunities, and portfolio management, Tien is actively seeking to engage with industry leaders and contribute to high-impact investment environments.



Ausrine Norvilaite
Masters Student - RMIT

Ausrine Norvilaite is a final-semester Master of Finance student at RMIT University. She brings prior experience in management consulting and financial analysis, with a strong focus on analytical and problem-solving capabilities. In 2025, she was part of the RMIT team that won the CFA Research Challenge at the regional chapter level.



Cameron Perrett
Managing Director –
Allcap Securities

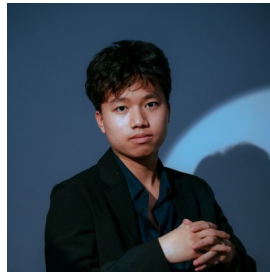
Cameron is a capital markets professional with over 20 years of experience across major financial institutions, including Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Royal Bank of Scotland, and PwC, as well as in founding his own corporate finance ventures. He specialises in structured and corporate finance, securitisation, and complex capital solutions, and currently leads private capital strategy and capital raising at Allcap Securities. He is also Co-Founder and Director of a boutique corporate finance firm and is actively involved in philanthropic initiatives supporting education, and a RMIT Business and Law College Advisory Board member.



Anh Pham
Senior Lecturer – RMIT

Anh is a Senior Lecturer in Finance at RMIT University, with prior experience at the University of Newcastle and a PhD from Monash University.

His work focuses on corporate finance and asset pricing, with a growing emphasis on venture capital and the innovation ecosystem. He collaborates with industry partners on applied projects, particularly in the superannuation sector, bringing academic insight into real-world financial decision-making.



Ryan Phung
Student – RMIT

Final-year Bachelor's student majoring in Finance, with a strong interest in equity and macroeconomic research.

Lubna Rahman
Senior Lecturer – Monash University

Lubna Rahman is a Lecturer in Finance at Monash University, holding a PhD from UNSW Business School. Her work focuses on corporate finance and governance, with a particular emphasis on how ownership structures, labour dynamics, and stakeholder relationships shape firm behaviour. She brings insights that are relevant to both corporate decision-making and broader policy discussions around firm performance and accountability.



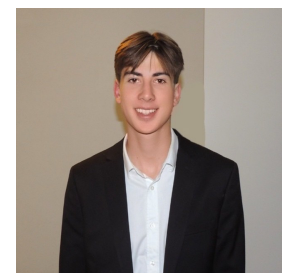
Sohail Raza
PhD Candidate – Deakin University

Sohail Raza is a PhD candidate in Finance at Deakin University and a Graduate Researcher Teaching Fellow. He holds a master's degree in economics and finance from Xiamen University and has prior experience as a data analyst and research writer on industry-focused projects. His research focuses on the intersection of capital market dynamics and corporate sustainability, with an emphasis on linking theory to real-world financial decision-making.



Connie Ren
Co-Founder and Director – Asian Investor Club

Connie Ren is an angel investor and venture partner, with experience across fintech, property development, and education in both Australia and China. She is actively involved in early-stage investing through Aussie Angels and Imprint Capital Partners, with a focus on next-generation technology ventures. As Co-Founder of the Asian Investor Club, she connects investors across Asia and Australia, with a strong emphasis on supporting women-led startups and scaling innovative businesses globally.



Clyde Smithers
Student – RMIT

Clyde is a fourth-year Law and Business student at RMIT, majoring in Finance. I'm drawn to finance for the stories behind it, the deals, the decisions, and the people that move markets. He is currently part of RMIT's Future Finance Leaders Program, and I'm here to connect with people who share a genuine passion for the financial world.



Ky Snyder
Entrepreneurial & Innovation Program Lead - RMIT

Ky Snyder is the Entrepreneurial and Innovation Program Lead at RMIT Activator and Founder of his own consulting practice, where he works directly with founders and innovation teams. He specialises in applying design thinking and systems thinking to identify commercial opportunities and accelerate early-stage ideas to market. He collaborates with startups, researchers, and industry partners to develop scalable solutions to complex challenges.



David Soderstrom
Partnership Lead – RMIT Business and Technology Studio @ SPARK

David Soderstrom is a strategic transformation leader focused on helping organisations navigate the intersection of technology, business, and society. He works with stakeholders across industries and regions to drive innovation and deliver outcomes through collaborative, systems-based approaches. His work centres on connecting people, technology, and ideas to shape sustainable and forward-looking solutions.

Tim Stroh
Strategic Projects - RMIT

Serial entrepreneur with trade sale exits, company Director and Head of Innovation for ASX-listed companies, and PhD on the psychological factors that determine the adoption of innovation. Currently on a mission to increase evidence-based policy, support programs, and decision-making that increase the successful translation of research to impact within Australian universities and reduce the unbelievably high failure rates of innovation initiatives within Australian enterprise, technology-based startups, and attempts to translate research to impact.



Teik Heng Tan
Executive Director – Investment Innovation Institute

Teik Heng Tan is the Founder and Executive Director of the Investment Innovation Institute [i3], a platform focused on education and thought leadership for investment professionals. He has over 25 years of experience across the Asia-Pacific region in financial markets, events, and media, including senior roles with global organisations such as Euromoney and Conex Financial. He specialises in connecting investment professionals with insights, networks, and industry-leading perspectives on capital markets.



Ha Truong
Lecturer – RMIT

Dr Ha Truong is a Lecturer in Finance at RMIT University, with prior experience in tax and investment banking. She specialises in corporate finance, financial modelling, and capital markets, with a focus on practical applications in areas such as treasury and debt markets. She brings a combination of industry experience and academic insight to inform financial decision-making and analysis.



Stamatios Tsigos
Data Scientist – RMIT

Data Specialist in the School of Economics, Finance, and Marketing at RMIT University and holds a PhD in financial economics. He specializes in building novel datasets and applying advanced analytics, including econometrics, machine learning, and natural language processing, to address complex problems in finance and corporate settings.



Madhujith Venkatakrishna
Director - ANZ

Madhujith Venkatakrishna is a growth strategist focused on helping organisations unlock new sources of value through innovation and strategic transformation. He specialises in bridging business and technology, leveraging data, machine learning, and AI to solve complex problems and drive decision-making. He brings a cross-disciplinary approach to strategy, with expertise in market entry, innovation management, and commercial analysis.



Matthew Vitale
Executive Director - New Dialogue

Matthew Vitale is Co-Founder of New Dialogue, a firm focused on enabling enterprises to deploy secure, compliant AI solutions using open-source large language models. He works with organisations navigating data privacy, governance, and regulatory challenges in adopting AI at scale. Previously, he co-founded Birchall, helping build Australia's leading equity crowdfunding platform and supporting startups in raising over \$200 million.



Md Abdul Wasi
Lecturer - RMIT

Wasi is a finance academic with a PhD from the University of Adelaide and degrees from Monash University, and he holds a CPA designation. His work focuses on banking, financial stability, and corporate finance, with research informing areas such as credit markets and policy. He brings expertise across corporate finance, banking, and analytics, linking academic insight with real-world financial systems and decision-making.



Simon Wilkins
Co-Founder & Partner - Austral Impact

Simon Wilkins is Co-Founder and Partner at Austral Impact, where he focuses on bridging innovation and entrepreneurship with real-world commercial outcomes. He works with universities, corporates, and investors to translate research and early-stage ideas into scalable ventures and high-impact programs. He brings extensive experience supporting founders and researchers in turning innovation into market-ready businesses.



Maria Wilton
Independent Chair and Director

Maria Wilton is an experienced investment professional with over 30 years in investment management, with a strong track record in the superannuation industry and governance. She currently serves as an Independent Director at HESTA, Director at Brandon Capital, Chair of the QIC State Investments Committee, and Chairperson of Growth Farms. She brings deep expertise in investment strategy, governance, and long-term capital allocation.



Gaoping Zheng
Senior Lecturer - RMIT

Gaoping Zheng is a Senior Lecturer in Finance at RMIT University, with international experience across Australia, New Zealand, and China. Her work focuses on corporate finance, governance, and investor behaviour, with projects examining retail investors and market dynamics that have attracted industry attention and external funding. She engages closely with industry and public audiences, with her research featured across financial media and practitioner platforms.

