



## Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) Australia Forum 2025

PERTH, AUSTRALIA, 1-2 SEPTEMBER 2025

FINAL PROGRAM

### ‘Social License’ and Universities: Comparative Perspectives from Australia and Africa

CO-HOSTS



Curtin University

#### PROGRAM SUMMARY

**MONDAY 1 SEPT:** **AAUN Workshops & AGM**, ECU Joondalup Campus, 270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup

**TUESDAY 2 SEPT:** **AAUN Forum & Reception**, Duxton Hotel, 1 St George's Terrace, Perth CBD

**FORUM ORGANISING COMMITTEE:** David Mickler, Aldo Stroebe, Grace Liu, Sussy Munialo, Ruvi Goredema, Kwadwo Adusei-Asante, Wilson Msiska, Sashah Mutasa, Sean Van Elden, Yeshe Choden, Jacqueline Lo, Gordon O'Brien, Lee Baumgartner, Kadambot Siddique

# 2025 AAUN FORUM THEME

## ‘Social License’ and Universities: Comparative Perspectives from Australia and Africa

The AAUN Australia Forum 2025 explores the contexts, meanings and implications of applying the notion of ‘social license’ to the university sector by sharing and comparing perspectives from Australia and Africa. It will explore how universities demonstrate their value to society, including through education, research, research training, academic diplomacy and engagement with key external partners and stakeholders across government, industry, and diverse communities locally, nationally and globally.

A ‘social license’ or ‘social license to operate’ refers to the ongoing acceptance and approval of an organization's activities by its stakeholders and the general public, beyond what is legally required. It's not a formal license, but rather a measure of the trust and credibility an organization builds through responsible behaviour and engagement with the community. Traditionally a concept applied to mining operations, and linked to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards and obligations, recent political and media commentary in Australia has applied the concept of ‘social license’ to the university sector, with some claiming that Australian universities have ‘lost their social license to operate’. In similar ways, debates on the function and capacities of African universities to meet national development priorities and serve the needs of diverse communities have urged structural reforms to make universities more fit for purpose.

In her recent keynote address to the Engaging Australia Conference, Professor Deborah Terry, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland (an AAUN Member), explored “how engagement is crucial to upholding the core values of higher education and is central to the future of the sector...To succeed in our mission of delivering for the public good, universities must take an approach that reinforces and demonstrates our core purposes rather than focusing on our achievements and successes. In an era of growing public distrust in institutions, deep and genuine engagement is essential to maintaining our social license to operate.”

### Background reading

- Helen Sullivan, [‘Universities’ social contract matters just as much as their social license](#), *The Mandarin*, 3 June 2025.
- Shamit Sagar, [‘How do our universities get their social license back?’](#), *Australian Financial Review*, 13 October 2024.
- Goolam Mohamedbhai, [‘How engaged are Africa’s universities in their communities?’](#), *University World News: Africa Edition*, 3 October 2024.
- Tim Winkler, [‘Why social license matters to everyone in HE right now’](#), *Future Campus*, 31 January 2025.
- Amanuel Gebru Woldeargay, Samson Mekonnen, Yohanes Shiferaw and Elias Worku, [‘University social responsibility: Exploring policies and practices in flagship universities in Africa’](#), *Australasian Review of African Studies* 45(2) (2024): 129-149.
- Kende Kefale, [‘Africa’s universities are selling their future to pay for today’](#), *University World News: Africa Edition*, 21 August 2025.
- Deborah Terry, [‘Social license and the importance of partnering with communities’](#), VC speech to *Engagement Australia International Conference*, University of Queensland, 22 July 2025.

## Program, 1-2 September 2025

<b>AAUN WORKSHOPS &amp; AGM</b> <b>MONDAY, 1 September – <a href="#">ECU Joondalup Campus</a></b>	
<b>0845</b>	Non-WA participants meet at <a href="#">Duxton Hotel Perth CBD</a> , departing 0900 sharp on group coach.
<b>0900-1000</b>	One hour coach ride from Duxton Hotel via Indian Ocean scenic coastal route with drop-off at <a href="#">ECU Joondalup campus</a> , arriving at 1000.
<b>1015-1045</b>	<b><u>Welcome and outline of the day</u></b> Chair: A/Prof. Kwadwo Adusei-Asante, ECU AAUN Representative Venue: <a href="#">ECU Council Chamber (cap. 90)</a>
<b>1100-1300</b>	<b><u>Parallel Workshops (morning)</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>Australia-Africa Science Diplomacy</i> book project workshop</b>                Venue: <a href="#">ECU Council Chambers (cap. 90)</a></li> <li><b>PRDF project team workshops</b>                Venue: <a href="#">Room 31.311 (cap. 30)</a></li> </ol>
<b>1300-1400</b>	<b><u>Group Lunch with jazz by KelTunez</u></b> Venue: <a href="#">ECU Council Chambers Foyer</a>
<b>1400-1700</b>	<b><u>Parallel Workshops (afternoon)</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>AAUN ECR Group workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant Writing Workshop</li> <li>Science Communication Debate</li> <li>Networking Workshop</li> </ul>               Venue: <a href="#">Room 2.108 (cap. 45)</a> </li> <li><b><u>AAUN AGM 2025</u></b>  <i>Closed Business Session</i> (1400-1500: AAUN Board/Steering Group only)  <i>Open Strategic Planning 2026-30</i> (1500-1700: All participants invited)                Venue: <a href="#">ECU Council Chambers (cap. 90)</a> </li> </ol>
<b>1715-1915</b>	Group coach pickup from ECU Joondalup campus to <a href="#">Hillarys Boat Harbour</a> for evening casual refreshments/meals (at own expense/preference).
<b>1915-2000</b>	Group coach pick-up from Hillarys Boat Harbour and drop-off at Duxton Hotel (arriving 2000)

<b>AAUN AUSTRALIA FORUM</b> <b>TUESDAY, 2 September 2025 – <a href="#">Duxton Hotel</a>, Perth CBD</b>	
<b>0830</b>	<b>Registration &amp; arrival coffee/tea</b>
<b>0900</b>	<b>Session 1: Introductions and Keynote</b> Chair: A/Prof. David Mickler, AAUN Co-Chair (Australia), Curtin University
<b>0900-1000</b>	<b>Welcome to Country</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Karen Jacobs, Principal, Indigenous Economic Solutions</li> </ul> <b>Welcome Remarks</b> (3 mins each): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prof. Aldo Stroebe, AAUN Co-Chair (Africa), DVC Research, Innovation and Internationalisation, University of Mpumalanga</li> <li>Lara Nassau, Assistant Secretary, Africa Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia</li> <li>H.E. Joe Tapera Mhishi, Ambassador of Zimbabwe and Dean of African Diplomats Group in Australia</li> <li>Mr Jake Garman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor International, ECU (co-host)</li> <li>Prof. Xiaotian Zhang, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global, Curtin University (co-host)</li> </ul> <b>Keynote address:</b> “The Global Value of Universities and Networks” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr Marie Joseph Ayissi, Secretary, UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Geneva.*</li> </ul>
<b>1000-1030</b>	<b>Group photo and morning tea break</b>
<b>1030-1130</b>	<b>Session 2: Social License: University-Government Engagement</b> Chair: A/Prof. Janet Dzator, AAUN Deputy Co-Chair, University of Newcastle
	<b>Speakers</b> (7 min each) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H.E. Mrs Wassane Zailachi, Ambassador of Morocco and Deputy Dean Africa Group</li> <li>H.E. Leilani Bin-Juda PSM, Australian High Commissioner to Nigeria</li> <li>Hon. Prof. Matthew Neuhaus, College of Law, Australian National University</li> </ul> <b>Discussant</b> (5 mins): Dr Françoise Kayitare Tengera, DVC Finance, University of Rwanda  <b>Q&amp;A discussion</b> (30 min)
<b>1130-1230</b>	<b>Session 3: Social License: University-Industry Engagement</b> Chair: Dr Kenneth Yakubu, The George Institute for Global Health/UNSW

	<p><b>Speakers</b> (7 min each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A/Prof. Rochelle Spencer, Development Studies and Sustainability, Murdoch University</li> <li>• Prof Kanayo Ogujiuba, Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator, University of Mpumalanga</li> <li>• Prof. Kadambot Siddique, Director, Institute of Agriculture, University of Western Australia</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussant</b> (5 mins): Prof. Victor Gekara, Co-Director, Centre for African Engagement, RMIT University</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A discussion</b> (30 min)</p>
<b>1230-1330</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>
<b>1330-1430</b>	<p><b>Session 4: Social License: University-Community Engagement</b> Chair: Dr Marian Makkar, Centre for African Engagement, RMIT University</p>
	<p><b>Speakers</b> (7 min each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Noël Zihabamwe, Director, African Australian Advocacy Centre (AAAC), Sydney</li> <li>• Prof. Farida Fozdar, Dean Global Futures, Curtin University</li> <li>• Dr Dinesh Surroop, PVC Planning and Resources, University of Mauritius</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussant</b> (5 mins): A/Prof. Kwadwo Adusei-Asante, ECU AAUN Representative</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A discussion</b> (30 min)</p>
<b>1430-1515</b>	<p><b>Session 5: Social License: Perspectives from Early Career Researchers</b> Chair: Dr James Boafo, Murdoch University</p>
	<p><b>Panel discussion with AAUN ECR Group representatives</b> (30 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Deirdre Rule, University of Cape Town</li> <li>• Dr Gloria Odo, Murdoch University</li> <li>• Dr Sussy Munialo, University of Pretoria</li> <li>• Ruvi Goredema, Curtin University</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A discussion</b> (15 min)</p>
<b>1515-1530</b>	<b>Refreshment break</b>
<b>1530-1615</b>	<p><b>Session 6: AAUN PRDF Research Showcase</b> Chair: Prof. Frans Swanepoel, University of Pretoria</p>
	<p><b>Progress reports from AAUN 2024-25 PRDF Research Project PIs</b> (5 mins each)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Jessika Bohlmann, University of Pretoria</li> <li>• Dr Josh Matanzima, University of Queensland</li> <li>• Dr Aneeshta Gunness, Curtin University</li> <li>• Dr Terri Trireksani, Murdoch University</li> </ul> <p><b>Announcement and presentation of AAUN PRDF 2025-26 Grant Winners (15 mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Nehemiah Latolla, Nelson Mandela University</li> <li>• Dr Sashah Mutasa, Edith Cowan University</li> <li>• Dr Theogene Dusingizimana, University of Rwanda</li> <li>• A/Prof. Manickam Minakshi, Murdoch University</li> <li>• Dr Naadhira Seedat, University of Pretoria</li> <li>• A/Prof. Elizabeth Thomas, Curtin University</li> <li>• Dr Deirdre Rule, University of Cape Town</li> <li>• Dr Gloria Odo, Murdoch University</li> </ul>
<b>1615-1700</b>	<p><b>Closing Session</b> Chair: Prof Aldo Stroebe, AAUN Co-Chair (Africa), DVC Research, Innovation and Internationalisation, University of Mpumalanga</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum summary (5 mins)</li> </ul> <p>Introduction and welcome to new AAUN members (5 mins each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Charles Sturt University</b> (Australia) - Dr Lee Baumgartner, Director, Gulbali Institute</li> <li>• <b>Walter Sisulu University</b> (South Africa) - Prof. Nosisi Feza, DVC Research and Internationalisation (by video)</li> <li>• <b>Mekelle University</b> (Ethiopia) - Dr Fana Hagos Berhane, President (by video)</li> <li>• <b>RMIT University</b> (Australia) - Prof. Mathews Nkhoma, Associate DVC Strategy, International &amp; Engagement (*pending formal membership approval at AGM)</li> </ul> <p>Announcements (20 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AAUN <i>Emerging Leaders in Australia-Africa Diplomacy (ELAAD) Program 2 Fellows</i></b> - Prof. Chris Isike, University of Pretoria</li> <li>• <b>Annual AAUN John Hearn Memorial Lecture</b> - A/Prof. Janet Dzator, AAUN Deputy Co-Chair (Australia), University of Newcastle</li> <li>• <b>Annual AAUN John Hearn-Cheryl de la Rey ECR Prize</b> - Dr Sussy Munialo, AAUN ECR Group</li> <li>• <b>Host of AAUN Africa Forum 2026: Nelson Mandela University, South Africa - (<a href="#">campus overview video</a>)</b></li> </ul>
<b>1700-1800</b>	<b>AAUN Forum reception for registered participants</b>

## REGISTRATION

Please refer to the AAUN website for updated program information: [www.aaun.edu.au](http://www.aaun.edu.au)

- The Forum is designed as an *in-person* event. Those participating in Perth (100 capacity) and watching online (audience only) are requested to **register by 29 August 2025** at:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/aaun-annual-australia-forum-and-agm-1-2-september-2025-perth-tickets-1541014809779?aff=oddtcreator>
- Forum contact: A/Prof. Grace Liu: [aaun@unsw.edu.au](mailto:aaun@unsw.edu.au)

## ACCOMMODATION

- We recommend the **Duxton Hotel, 1 St Georges Terrace, Perth CBD**, which will offer a discounted room rate for AAUN delegates of AUD 225 Superior Room and AUD 245 Deluxe Room, as well as a reduced breakfast rate of AUD 38. The coach pickup for the workshops at ECU Joondalup campus on Day 1 will be to and from Duxton Hotel, and the Day 2 Forum will be held at this hotel.
- Please make your room reservations directly via this exclusive link:  
<https://www.perth.duxtonhotels.com/book/dates-of-stay?identifier=AAUN>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- AAUN Members ECU and Curtin University for co-hosting the Forum.
- Student ambassadors and volunteers assisting the Forum.
- The Forum Organising Committee, and the Boards of AAUN Africa and Australia for their support.
- Knowledge partners and sponsors, including the National Research Foundation of South Africa.
- A post-Forum report will be circulated to partners and media and posted on the AAUN website and social media.
- \*Dr Ayissi's visit has funding support from both Curtin University's Centre for Australia-Africa Relations and the Australian Research Council Future Fellowship Project #FT210100759, held by Professor Bina D'Costa of the Australian National University and Chair of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD).

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