

## SCEAA Conference 2025

# Place, Democratic Participation, and the Futures of Citizenship Education

*In partnership with James Cook University*

June 27 & 28 2025 | James Cook University, Townsville QLD

## Conference Program

### Day 1 – Friday 27 June

11:30am Registration, lunch and networking

12:30pm Conference welcome

12:40pm **Citizenship in action in the Townsville community context**

**Community panel and Q&A**

In this session, staff and students from Enkindle Village School share how their community works as an independent democratic school in Townsville and provides a voice and choice for young people in their learning journeys.

Enkindle Village School  
*Further panellists TBC*

#### **Chairs**

Dr Bryan Smith, Associate Professor Peta Salter and Dr Kelsey Halbert, James Cook University

### Provocation

1:30pm Reimagining place, democracy and the futures of citizenship in schools and other sites of learning from democracy in anti-democratic times

Professor Stewart Riddle, School of Education at the University of Southern Queensland

2:15pm Roundtable discussions of provocation

3:00pm **Afternoon tea**

3:20pm **Stories of civics and citizenship engagement in diverse contexts and places**

**Panel discussion and Q&A**

This panel explores stories of civics and citizenship engagement across varied Australian and global contexts. Drawing on their research, panellists will offer provocations that invite participants to reflect critically on whose voices are included or excluded in citizenship education and practice. They ask how we can foster active, informed and inclusive citizenship - within schools and society and the implications of our reflections for the work we do in social and citizenship education. The session sets the stage for deeper critical discussions on Day 2.

Associate Professor Peta Salter, James Cook University  
Dr Kelsey Halbert, James Cook University  
Dr Neoh Jia Ying, University of Sydney  
Dr Caroline Ferguson, The Education University of Hong Kong

4:30pm *End day one*

6:00pm **Conference dinner at Shorehouse waterfront restaurant (optional ticketed event)**

## Day 2 – Saturday 28 June

9:00am Welcome

### Provocation

9:10am What matters to young Australians through turbulent times?

Professor Philippa Collin,  
Principal Research Fellow at  
the Institute for Culture and  
Society at Western Sydney  
University

10:20am Morning tea

### Workshops – 60 mins

10:45am **A - Fostering belonging and active citizenship:  
Intercultural understanding in action**

Dr Beau Hu, Together for  
Humanity

*Together For Humanity (TFH) is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting schools in combating prejudice and fostering a sense of belonging. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, TFH delivers student programs, teacher professional learning, and online resources aligned with the Intercultural Understanding and Civics and Citizenship capabilities of the Australian Curriculum.*

*This interactive workshop will showcase how TFH's high school programs bring to life key strands of the Years 7–10 Civics and Citizenship curriculum, with a focus on Citizenship, Diversity, and Identity. Participants will explore TFH's unique framework for navigating difference - eliminate, separate, tolerate, investigate, celebrate, integrate - and engage with strategies for encouraging critical thinking, civic participation, and non-violent communication in the classroom.*

*Program themes such as antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, First Nations perspectives, and peacebuilding will be discussed, highlighting how experiential learning can empower students to become active, informed, and inclusive citizens in a diverse and increasingly fragmented world.*

*Led by Dr Beau Hu, this session will include hands-on activities and reflective dialogue, offering practical tools and insights for educators seeking to deepen intercultural understanding and support democratic engagement in their schools and communities.*

OR

10:45am

**B - How do we reengage young people and address the decline in youth voting?**

Michael Fiddian, Victoria Electoral Commission

In Victoria, there is a trend of decreasing voter turnout among young people, not only during their first vote, but also in the ten years following. Understanding this decline is important for fostering a consistently engaged electorate. Michael analyses recent election data to explore this trend and lead discussions on how to reverse it. Key topics will include the impact of social media, direct enrolment, and civics education in engaging and educating young voters to encourage long-term participation in elections.

**Paper sessions – 30 mins**

11:50am

**A1 - Bridging local and global: fostering inclusive global citizenship education in Nepal and Australia**

Dr Keith Heggart, University of Technology Sydney

This paper explores the intersection of global citizenship education (GCE), inclusivity, and Indigenous knowledge, through a collaborative initiative between educators from Nepal and Australia. Using an action research approach within the Australia Awards Fellowship program, the study examines how inclusive teaching practices and localized curricula can cultivate active global citizenship in diverse educational contexts. Drawing on workshops and site visits, the research highlights three case studies: a rural school integrating Indigenous knowledge to promote cultural awareness and two Kathmandu-based schools using an interdisciplinary curriculum to address global challenges like climate change. The findings emphasize the importance of contextualized pedagogy that empowers students as active participants in both local and global communities. By comparing approaches in the Global South and North, this study contributes to developing a more inclusive and culturally responsive framework for GCE, offering insights into bridging global competencies with local identities to prepare students for an interconnected world.

**A2 - Contemporary challenges and opportunities in civics and citizenship education**

Dr Zareh Ghazarian, Monash University

Building the political knowledge of young people has been a prominent goal of civics and citizenship education over recent decades. In Australia, the aim that young people are 'active and informed members of the community' is a key goal in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. However, the latest testing by the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship, reveals that proficiency levels have fallen. At the Year 10 level, just 28 per cent of students achieved the proficiency standard, which was significantly lower than 38 per cent achieved in 2019. This paper will present the voices of teachers to identify their experiences in designing and delivering civics and citizenship education. By highlighting their perspectives, the paper seeks to enhance our understanding of the existing barriers, and future opportunities, in civics education.

OR

11:50am

**B1 - Exploring students' ontologies of active citizenship: interconnections between beings, actions and contexts**

Education for Sustainability (EfS) within Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) plays a vital role in equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for active citizenship and democratic participation. This paper explores two key aspects of active citizenship that support democratic participation and sustainability: (1) how students conceptualize active citizenship and (2) how these conceptualizations align with three different ontological perspectives—realism, relativism, and relational ontology. Understanding these ontologies is essential, as they shape how students perceive their roles in democracy and sustainability. However, limited research has examined how students' conceptualisations reflect these diverse ontologies. Using Qualitative Thematic Analysis (QTA), this paper analyses data from two group interviews with students (Years 5 to 9) at an independent school in Victoria. The findings reveal a range of perspectives on active citizenship, from fostering critical thinking to participating in extracurricular initiatives and engaging in activism. Notably, students predominantly adopted a relational ontology, emphasizing the interconnections between individuals, actions, and contexts. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating relational perspectives in EfS and CCE to better align with students' conceptualisations of active citizenship.

Ismat Ara, James Cook University

**B2 - Eco-citizenship education: Natural laws and limits, natural rights and responsibilities**

Rights are central to citizenship and are fundamentally legal concepts (Janoski and Gran 2002). However, jurisprudence, the philosophy of law, distinguishes between positive law (laws made by humans), and natural law (laws discovered by humans). While jurisprudence posits the latter to be superior, it is the former which normally sanctions citizenship rights. Earth jurisprudence is a movement which aims to resolve this discrepancy by making natural laws the basis of positive laws. In this presentation I extend Earth jurisprudence reasoning by exploring the natural rights, and responsibilities, germane to a model of citizenship I call 'eco-citizenship', based on the natural laws of thermodynamics and the natural limits they set. Central to eco-citizenship is the natural right to impose collective limits on humans' use of resources for the purpose of sustaining natural environments. This natural right, and associated responsibility, is especially urgent at a time in earth's history when humans' collective use of material and energy resources far exceeds what ecosystems can sustain (Richardson et al. 2023). To make these natural laws and limits, and the natural rights and responsibilities they authorise, more commonly

Jason van Tol, University of Technology Sydney

known, I make some suggestions for eco-citizenship education, part of which expands on the conception of citizenship as a collection of rights and responsibilities, to include any human action that conduces to the collective imposition of limits on resource use.

OR

11:50am

**C1 - Teaching and learning for global citizenship education challenges and opportunities: A comparative analysis of approaches in Australia, Colombia and Mexico**

Dr Bernard Brown, University of Canberra

The presentation examines Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in the contexts of three different countries Australia, Colombia and Mexico based on a research collaboration during 2024 and 2025. The approach to the research is comparative and has a focus on teaching and learning approaches used in GCE and the discourses associated with them. The investigation includes dialogue between the Global South (represented by Colombia and Mexico) and Global North (represented by Australia), which examines the academic literature, education policies, programs and curriculum in these three countries. The objective is to advance the understanding and practices of GCE across different national educational contexts, focusing on effective pedagogical methods and reflections on teaching practice in schools and universities. To conduct this analysis of pedagogical discourses we adopt a critical perspective focused on issues such as critical interculturality, Indigenous perspectives and student activism. The presentation critically examines teaching methodologies that can be employed to foster critical GCE based on democratic principles, through active engagement and relevant contextual learning. These teaching and learning experiences can enable students to develop a critical awareness of the issues faced in their communities, regions, countries and the wider world.

12:50pm

Lunch

**Workshops – 60 mins**

1:30pm

**A - Global citizenship education on context: Exploring practical applications of the new ACER-APCEIU toolkit for systems, schools and teachers**

Rachel Parker, Global Playlab  
Dr Karena Menzie-Ballantyne, Australian Council of Education Research and University of Queensland

On the surface, the term 'global citizenship' appears context free, suggesting it is our common status as humans that connects us globally and affords us the rights and responsibilities to value and protect all life on the planet. Ideologically, there is agreement that educating for peace, human rights and sustainable development is integral to our survival, but how do we enact such ideals whilst honouring our diverse intersecting national and cultural identities, values and

priorities? The answer may lie in tools and frameworks that support both deep critical engagement with global citizenship concepts, skills and values, and contextual adaptation to meet the needs of individual settings. Reflecting three years of research undertaken in partnership with schools, systems and teachers in Australia, Laos, Philippines and South Korea, the ACER-APCEIU Global Citizenship Education Monitoring Toolkit was designed for just this purpose. The Toolkit maps an evidence-based pathway for creating contextualised global citizenship definitions, enacting and evaluating action-focused inquiry cycles for global citizenship education, in ways that honour individual identities and contexts.

In this workshop, Rachel Parker and Dr Karena Menzie-Ballantyne will share the Toolkit and engage participants in practical activities and discussions that support and strengthen their understanding of global citizenship in context.

OR

1:30pm

### **B - Empowering student voice for democratic futures**

Mitchell Sprague, Australian Council for Student Voice

This session explores how student voice, agency, and leadership serve as key pillars for democratic education. Drawing from the Australian Framework for Student Empowerment, this interactive session provides educators with practical strategies to foster participatory school cultures where students actively shape decision-making.

Participants will analyse real-world case studies, engage in democracy mapping exercises, and develop school-specific action plans to strengthen student participation in governance. By bridging research, policy, and practice, this session highlights how student-led initiatives contribute to democratic renewal at local and national levels. Educators will leave with concrete strategies to enhance student empowerment in their schools, ultimately supporting broader democratic engagement.

Session Objectives:

- Understand the role of student voice and agency in democratic education.
- Explore the Australian Framework for Student Empowerment and its application in schools.
- Identify barriers to student participation in decision-making and co-design solutions.
- Develop school-based action plans for embedding democratic practices.

Intended Audience: Educators, school leaders, policymakers, and researchers interested in student empowerment and democratic participation.

- 2:35pm **What's next for civics and citizenship and youth voice and agency in diverse contexts? What futures can we envision?**  
Conference plenary
- 3:15pm *End conference*

**Contact:** [sceaahheadoffice@gmail.com](mailto:sceaahheadoffice@gmail.com)

**Information:** <https://www.sceaa.org.au/2025-conference.html>

*Program version 2 published 13 April 2025. Program is subject to change.*