

# Strategic Foresight in Australia

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# Overview

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02 Futures work in Australia

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03 A Futures Triangle view

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04 Next Steps

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05 Discussion

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# 01

# FULBRIGHT FOCUS



# Fulbright Focus



- Aim to build strategic foresight partnership between the U.S. and Australia - people/agencies, methodology, enduring collaboration.
- Visiting Fellow at **CSIS Hess Center for New Frontiers** (4 months)
  - Build institutional connection with the NSC Futures Hub
  - Megatrends presentation & Global Foresight Course
- Key event: CSIS scenario planning workshop (Dec '24)
  - *Future-proofing the American-Australian Alliance: Exploring Opportunities & Challenges together in Southeast Asia & Pacific.*
    - Collaboration with CSIS Australia Chair and NSC Futures Hub
    - Delphi survey – U.S. & Australia
    - 4 Scenarios
    - 2 workshops – DC & Canberra
    - Publish insights - 2025



CSIS | HESS CENTER FOR  
NEW FRONTIERS



# USING STRATEGIC FORESIGHT TO PREPARE FOR INDO-PACIFIC CHALLENGES:

*Anticipating the future to ensure peace, prosperity & the international rules-based order*



**CSIS** | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**Australia-US strategic foresight partnership**

**Filling an analytical gap**

In the face of global complexity and uncertainty, there is an urgency to better prepare for the future. The field of strategic foresight – designed to explore, anticipate and shape the future in a structured and systematic way – is a necessary tool for public policy.

This project is an opportunity to build a **new** strategic foresight partnership, through the **Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) Hess Center for New Frontiers** focused on exploring the implications of megatrends that will shape the future of the Indo-Pacific.

This bilateral foresight relationship does not currently exist. Insights can be directly shared with the Australian Government Strategic Foresight Network (200+p).



## PROJECT OUTCOMES

01

Develop Indo-Pacific scenarios to support planning today

02

Apply and enhance foresight methods across Australia and the US

03

Build partnerships & share expertise across Australia and US think-tank/academic/government networks

04

Publish insights to enhance policy and planning and build capability in considering and preparing for the future



# My insights on US foresight community & work

- Passionate, diverse and resilient community of practitioners
- Well-coordinated despite not having a central/formal lead
  - No central foresight body (in or adjacent to government), but push to create one
- Incorporating futures into strategy development and change processes
- More developed futures capabilities in the intelligence/security community
- Adopt 'futures my stealth' where required
- An ability to move between government, consulting, think tanks to translate futures approaches and build expertise
- Less appetite for in-person and long events
- Some siloed aspects to working – particularly across Defence
- Frustrations with proving value/evaluating impact



# Does this resonate?

- What have I missed?
- For discussion soon...








# 02

# FUTURES WORK IN AUSTRALIA





# Futures work and training - Australia

Government /Parliament	Academia	Think Tanks	Industry/Private
			
<p>State &amp; Federal</p> <p><u><a href="#">The Australian Parliamentary Group for Future Generations</a></u></p> <p><u><a href="#">The Future Generations Policy Roadmap</a></u></p>	<p>No formal programs</p> <p>e.g. UNSW microcredential</p> <p>Previously had program at Swinburn (Joe Voros)</p>	<p>Some war gaming</p> <p>e.g Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)</p>	<p>Geopolitical risk and scenario planning</p> <p>e.g. finance sector, cyber advisory</p>
			

# The National Security College

- Established over 10 yrs go under former Australian Prime Minister, now US Ambassador, The Hon. Kevin Rudd, PhD.
  - Joint initiative between the Commonwealth Government and The Australian National University (ANU) to lift national capability and deepen debate about emerging security challenges and policy options.
- Led by Prof. Rory Medcalf, the **NSC** is defined by a trusted status, bridging the academic, government, industry and general communities in its work.
  1. **Academic** - Masters & PhD
  2. **Executive Professional Development** – 1-day to 4-week courses
  3. **Policy** and **Futures**
- Funded by 19 federal gov agencies + central gov grant + revenue from training programs.
- Staffed with ANU employees and government secondees.



Rudd



Medcalf

# The Futures Hub



Ash



Melissa

Small team that blends ANU staff with  
government secondees



Ryan



Owen



Dayle



Paul

# The Futures Hub



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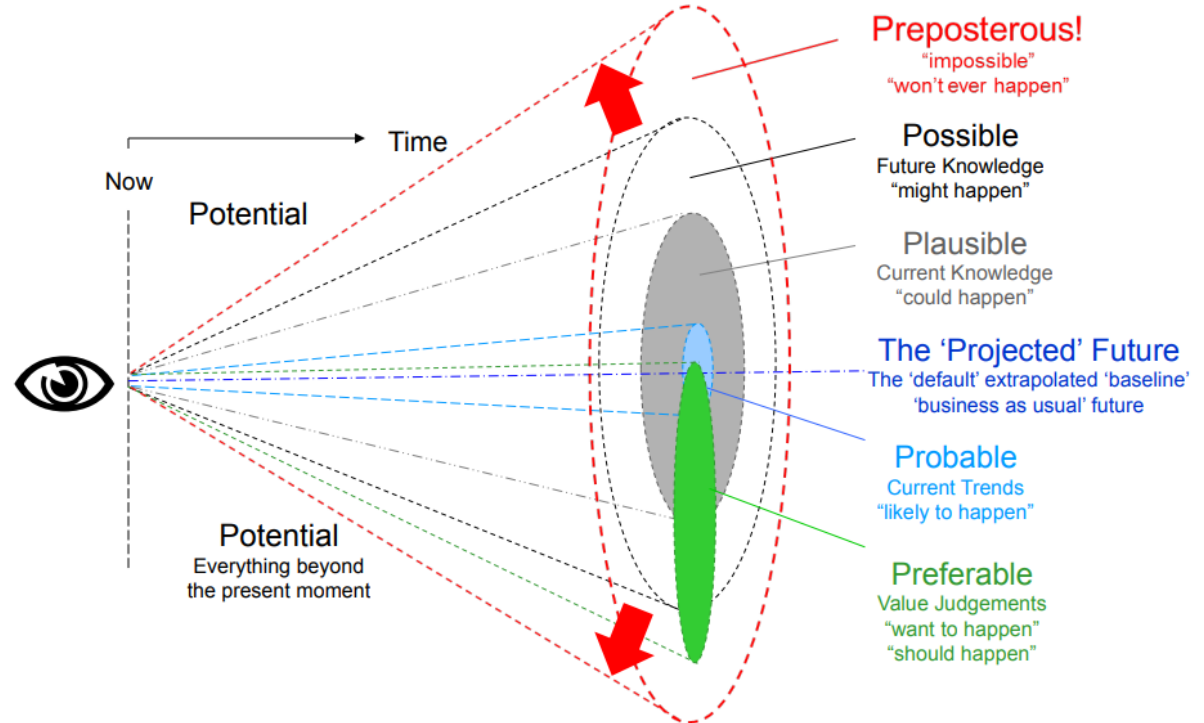
- Established over 5 yrs ago with inspiration from the UK's Defence Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) now Defence Futures (secondment model).
- We are a **whole-of-government and whole-of-nation resource** to support thinking, planning and policy work through examining strategic futures.
- We work with **individual teams through to head of agency level**, to provide support for tricky policy issues, where Government is seeking to stretch thinking beyond just the next 12 months.
- We design and deliver **bespoke roundtables, workshops, symposiums and training courses**.
- We lead an **APS Futures Network** with 200+ members.
- We have a **Futures Council** of globally renowned futures experts.



# Types of alternative futures



Dr Joseph Voros



Dr Joseph Voros

Source: Voros (2003, 2017); <https://thevoroscope.com>



# The Futures Hub



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- Professional development training
  - Introduction to Futures Analysis
  - Advanced Futures
  - Analytical Techniques for Policy Makers
  - Futures into Strategy (new)
- Scenario development
- Workshop design and delivery + war/policy gaming
- Research and report writing
- Specialized advice and capability building
- We do not specifically track trends/signals in a database – recommend the [NSW Gov Trends Atlas](#) now used as [case study by the OECD](#).



# 2024 recent work

## Bespoke

- Public Service Reform - Long-term Insights Briefs & Capability Reinvestment Fund
- Future of Education
- Future of Agriculture Trade
- Future of the Blue Pacific (Fiji)
- Futures training (Cambodia)
- Undersea cables workshops in Asia
- ASEAN leadership training
- Senior Executive futures workshop (Austrade)
- UK Defence Futures GST7 Indo-Pac launch
- Support to Gov interest in future of democracy and national resilience





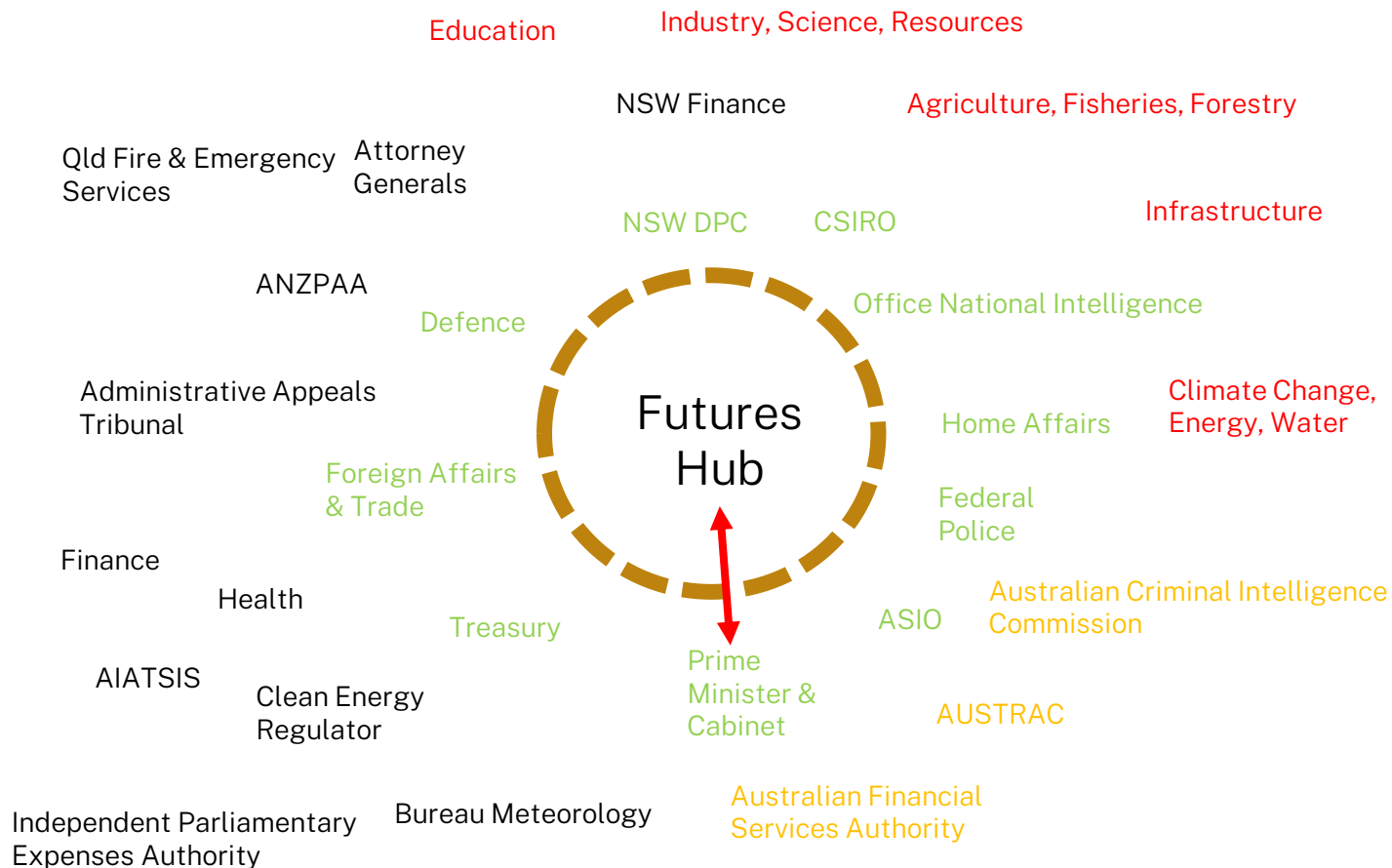
# A government futures partnership

- Launched in 2024 with PM&C Policy, Projects & Taskforce Office with Futures Hub
- Public service capability reinvestment fund
- Virtual launch - over 400p + 2800 downloads in 2hrs
- Great practical guide - horizon scanning, visioning and scenario planning.



# The Futures Network

- 200+ members
- Approx 50 dial in to quarterly meetings
- High turn out for in person events



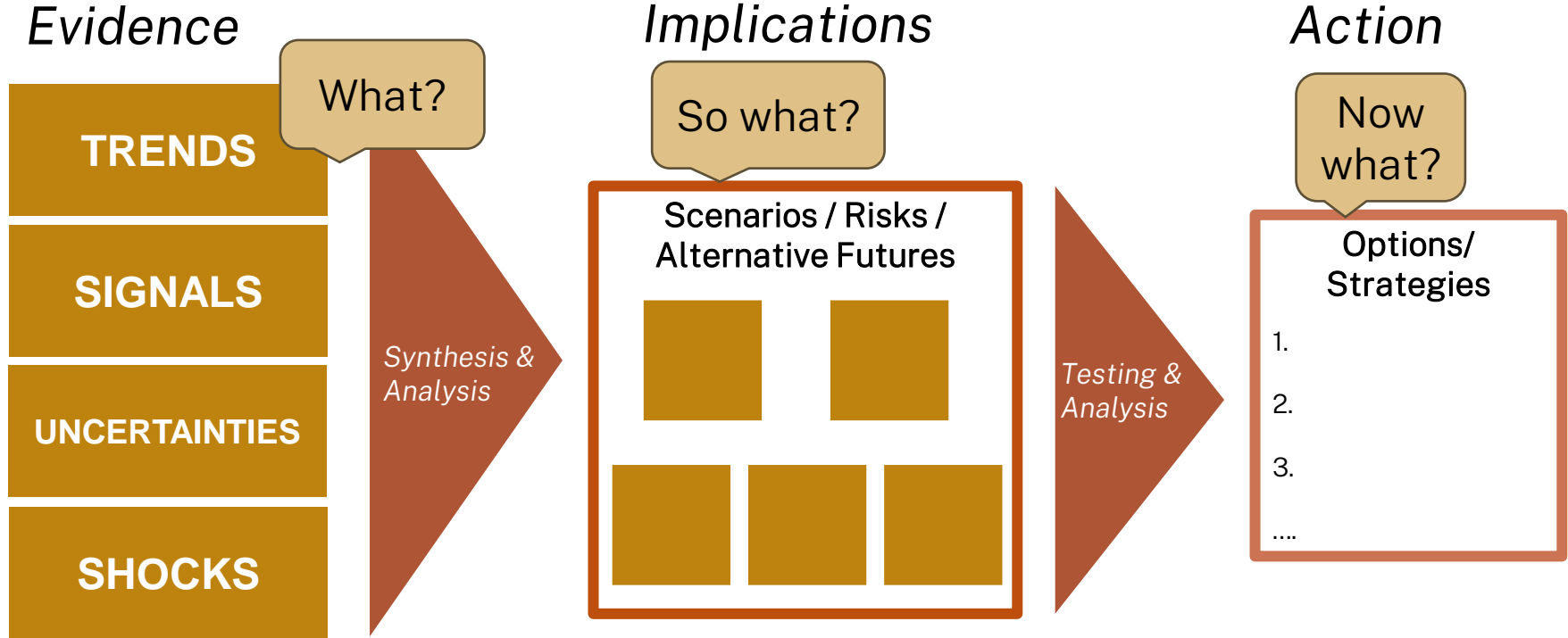
# International connections

- US Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI)
  - *Global Trends*
- UK MoD Futures (previously Development, Concepts & Doctrine Centre (DCDC))
  - *Global Strategic Trends*
  - *Australian Army officer embedded in team*
- Singapore Defence and Centre for Strategic Futures
- Policy Horizon's Canada
- German Bundeswehr
- NATO Policy & Planning & NATO ACT
- EU Commission & EU Parliament
- OECD Strategic Foresight Unit
- European Space Agency
- Oxford Scenario Programme
- School of International Futures
- UK Government Office of Science (GoScience)



# Our method

*The structured analysis of current trends and events to better anticipate what could realistically happen and use that for better decision making today.*

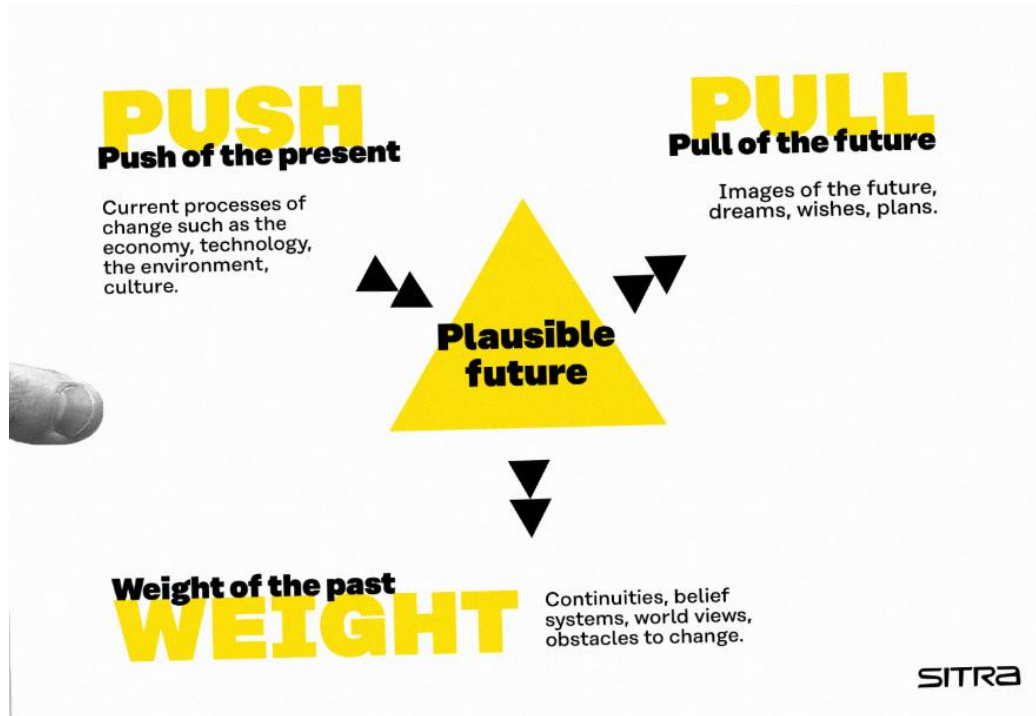


# 03

# FUTURES TRIANGLE VIEW



# A Futures Triangle view to futures work in Australia



Dr Sohail Inayatullah

# Plausible Future

An expanded/resourced Futures Hub at the ANU...

connected to ...

An established, collaborative partnership with a developed futures capability in central government





# Push of the Present

**Where is the world now heading and how can we make a difference?**

**What processes of change are underway?**

**What is currently pushing us to change ourselves or to change things around us?**

**These include trends and other changes in society and people's lives.**



# Push of the Present

- **WoG challenges** – complexity of the domestic and international pressures
- **Collaboration** – to ensure budget efficiency with a focus on national interest
- **Public Service Review** – need for foresight & ‘stewardship’ added to APS Act
- **APS Futures Project & Primer** – big, positive response from across government
- **Demand for futures work** - consistently high without having to advertise
- **Upcoming election in 2025** – opportunity and risk for foresight work
  - Incoming Gov wants to know more about the future
  - Machinery of Government changes impact on futures teams



# Pull of the Future

**What are our images of the future?**

**What is the best thing that could happen?**

**Here, you can consider different dreams, plans, visions.**



# Pull of the Future

- A recognition that we need to **think and work differently** to succeed in the future
- Policy processes and proposals explicitly adopting a **multi-generational approach**
- Foresight is core element of **policy training and processes** in government
- Departments conduct their own **environmental scans** and adjust planning
- Foresight is incorporated annually into **Gov & Ministerial strategic planning**
- Public servants have the **skills & time to think about the future explicitly**
- Large and developed futures team in **central government** who publish futures work for key government stakeholders and the public
- **Chief Futures Office in Government/Ministerial level** to oversee policy development (Welsh-type model)
- Greater opportunity to move in and out of Gov to do this work



# Weight of the Past

**What kinds of limitations and obstacles does the past impose on us?**

**What prevents us from moving forward?**

**These may include different commitments, persistent beliefs and unsustainable worldviews, values or ways of thinking.**



# Weight of the Past

- Culturally **short-term** thinkers
  - Public service incentivised for immediate delivery at expense of long-term thinking
  - A struggle with our **history of colonialism** and recognition of indigenous history, experience and traditional approaches to preparing for the future
- Short election cycles (3 years)
- **No legislative requirement** for futures analysis in government
- Longer-term analysis sits in intelligence community and insights not widely shared
- Tradition of re-inventing futures functions from scratch every 5yrs or so
- Senior advocates for futures work move on
- Entrenched academic ways of working have constrained relationships between government agencies and academia



# Does this resonate?

- For discussion soon....





# 04

# NEXT STEPS



# Next Steps – for me

- Future of the Alliance workshop – Canberra Feb 2025
- Mapping foresight work - US and Australia
- Connecting FFCOI with Public Service Futures Network
- Connecting US futures practitioners with colleagues in Australia



# Next Steps – for us

## How can we work together?

- We have very similar challenges and areas where we can share ideas and lessons learned.
- Connect via our Public Service Futures Network – [FuturesHub.NSC@anu.edu.au](mailto:FuturesHub.NSC@anu.edu.au)
- Be a guest speaker, connect with colleagues in similar departments and industries
- Come and spend some time with us in Canberra
- Let's collaborate!



# 05

# COMMENTS, QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION WELCOME



# Contact Us

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