

Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

Meeting 5 Agenda

Tuesday 18 November 2025 3:00-4:30pm AEDT / 12:00-1:30pm AWST via MS Teams	
Attendees	Apologies
<p>Andrew Deeks Murdoch University Andrew Heap Geoscience Australia Cobie Rudd Edith Cowan University Fiona Stapleton University of New South Wales Gail Crimmins University of Sunshine Coast (Chair) Kate Huppatz Western Sydney University Kay Latham RMIT University Kumi de Silva University of Technology Sydney Zlatko Skrbis Australian Catholic University</p> <p>Rebecca Murray Board Chair, SAGE</p> <p>Janin Bredehoeft CEO, SAGE Tamzen Armer Director of Programs, SAGE</p>	<p>Melanie Fuller Defence Science Technology Group</p>

#	Item	Who	Notes
1	Welcome, Apologies and Acknowledgement of Country	Chair	<p>Apologies: Dr Mel Fuller (who provided thoughts and feedback on Items 4 & 5 in writing, which has been noted by SAGE and integrated into these notes).</p> <p>Dr Jessica Buck has stepped down from the committee due to health issues.</p> <p>Action: Committee to provide suggestions of sector colleagues who have relevant expertise and may be interested in joining the committee. Given the professional and lived experience of the committee members who</p>

Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

			have stepped down in the last 18 months, particular consideration should be given to colleagues from the MRI sector and to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander colleagues.
2	Welcome new SAGE Board Chair: Rebecca Murray	Board Chair	Rebecca Murray is an experienced Board Chair and director, and a former Vice-President on the leadership team of a Group of Eight research-intensive Australian university. As a strategic advisor to leaders, she has led and implemented new strategy in large, complex organisations. Rebecca has led new ventures offshore and has experience in navigating cross-cultural jurisdictions and teams.
3	SAGE updates and presentation	SAGE CEO	<p>Updates on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAGE 2025 Conference and Awards night - SAGE advice and support - Lived Experience Advisory Panel - Communities of Practice - SAGE Advocacy <p>Looking ahead to 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptations to SAGE AS - Partnering with government, e.g. Racism@Uni - Engagement with Senior Leaders - SAGE strategy development - Advocacy (NHMRC, ARC, MRFF) - Preparation for Horizon Europe <p>Conference highlights:</p> <p>Our five keynote speakers offered both critical provocations and visionary pathways for the sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Sandy O’Sullivan (Wiradjuri transgender/non-binary scholar at the Centre for Global Indigenous Futures, Macquarie

Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

		<p>University) opened Day 1 with a call to rebuild the academy from the ground up. They reminded us that equity, diversity and inclusion must not be afterthoughts, but the very foundations of a stronger, more relevant future for higher education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professor Chelsea Watego (Munanjahli and South Sea Islander woman and Professor of Indigenous Health, QUT) delivered a powerful Blackfulla feminist critique of equity frameworks, challenging us to confront systemic racism and foreground Indigenous sovereignty and intellectual traditions in research and education.• Professor Mustafa F. Özbilgin (Brunel University, London) gave a global perspective on embedding intersectionality in institutions. He argued for moving beyond compliance to structural, participatory models of accountability, emphasising co-design, reverse mentorship, and transdisciplinary collaboration as true drivers of systemic change.• On Day 2, Giridharan Sivaraman (Australia’s Race Discrimination Commissioner) confronted the limits of diversity rhetoric, urging us to look beyond representation to dismantle structural racism in our systems and policies.• Closing the keynote series, Professor Michelle Ryan (ANU) identified five common missteps in gender equality work—including “fixing women instead of fixing systems”—and offered research-based solutions for achieving sustainable, systemic gender equity. <p>The lunchtime screening of the UTS Multicultural Women’s Network’s Say Our Names Mini Documentary also generated a lot of discussion.</p> <p>Action: SAGE to explore options to provide conference bursaries for colleagues from the Pacific Island Universities that SAGE/WSU partner with</p>
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Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

			<p>on the Pacific Women Lead Project “Exploring Barriers to Women’s Leadership in STEM across Pacific Island Universities”</p> <p>SAGE reflection on Equity places:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAGE received funding from the NSW Office for Women to offer Equity Places for the conference. However, we struggled to find people to take the places up.
4	SAGE Engagement with Executive Teams 2026	Chair	<p>Key points from the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senior leaders are increasingly busy, including with legislative compliance. Engagement must demonstrate value, e.g. to support strategic/governance activities such as showing how SAGE Athena Swan integrates with and can be an enabler of legislative compliance. - Engage with senior leaders where they are - don’t make another forum. E.g. Universities Australia VC meetings and/or UA Solutions Summit; AAMRI convention. - For public sector organisations, avoid scheduling at the same time as Senate Estimates. - Visit individual organisations where the Head of Institution can bring relevant stakeholders together. - Engage with and provide tailored support to senior management who will take relevant matters up to governing bodies (i.e. don’t engage directly with the governance committees). - Connect with the Cooperative Research Centres Association (CRC), which brings together CEOs and other senior leaders of the CRCs. - Connect with University Networks, including Regional Universities Network, Australian Technology Network, etc.

Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

			<p>Action: SAGE to develop a draft 2026 engagement strategy incorporating the committee's advice and in alignment with SAGE resource capabilities and capacity.</p>
5	SAGE Athena Swan Evaluation: Recommendations and SAGE Response	SAGE CEO Tamzen	<p>Key points from the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting compliance obligations is taking up an increasing amount of resources in organisations. - SAGE is well positioned to support organisations to meet compliance requirements as it provides a framework and capability building that enables organisations to get a more granular understanding of, and to drive improvement in, the data that's reported for compliance purposes. - SAGE has an opportunity to support organisations to take an intersectional approach to GEDI work, lending depth to the work done. This is a key requirement of the new National Code to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. - WGEA reporting doesn't fit the higher education context well (e.g. definitions of 'manager' vs 'non-manager' don't match sector context), whereas SAGE Athena Swan is designed for the sector context. - Allowing organisations flexibility in where and how they overlap and differentiate various reporting requirements allows for differences in organisation type, size and maturity. <p>Action: SAGE to map the crossovers (and gaps) between the various sector compliance requirements, research funding requirements and broader equity and safety reforms.</p>
6	Connecting SAGE Frameworks to Current, Emerging, and Future National and Legislative Contexts	Gail Crimmins	<p>See presentation on Connecting SAGE Frameworks to Current, Emerging, and Future National and Legislative Contexts.</p> <p>Key points:</p>

Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SAGE is currently positioned as the sector’s primary equity governance mechanism and is well-placed to synthesise, interpret and guide institutions through the shifts in national reforms relating to GEDI. - To remain relevant, SAGE Athena Swan needs to integrate with sector compliance requirements, research funding requirements and broader equity and safety reforms, and to support the strategic convergence of equity, safety, culture change, integrity and compliance. <p>Opportunities:</p> <p>For the <i>National Higher Education Code to prevent and respond to gender-based violence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide national guidance on integrating gender equity and safety frameworks to increase coherence and reduce duplication - Create shared metrics, shared evaluation mechanisms, shared evidentiary language to allow national comparability <p>For Australia’s potential <i>Horizon Europe</i> association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a template aligning the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan requirements with Athena Swan - Position Australia as a global leader in gender-equity research governance - Support institutions to meet compliance obligations of <i>Horizon Europe, the National Code</i> (and <i>WGEA</i> and <i>CGEPS</i>) <p>Overall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a national, integrated model - Assist institutions with shared indicators, mutual data infrastructure, templates & guidance, common language/definitions for reporting, peer benchmarking, best practice EDI governance and communities of practice. - Map the crossovers (and gaps) between the various requirements
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Athena Swan Australia Advisory Committee

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a national expert advisory panel on integrating equity, safety and research governance (gender equity + GBV + anti-racism etc) - Proactively engage with relevant bodies in pursuit of an overarching equity plan that would satisfy all requirements.
7	<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions before the next meeting • Date/Time of next meeting 	Chair	<p>See below for actions.</p> <p>Next meeting May 2026 (date/time TBC).</p>

Actions Arising & Next Steps

Action	Who	Status
Committee to provide suggestions of sector colleagues who may have relevant expertise and interest in joining the committee.	All	Professor Sandy O’Sullivan has accepted an invitation to join the Committee.
Explore possibility of providing conference bursaries for colleagues from the Pacific Island Universities that SAGE/WSU partner with on the Pacific Women Lead Project “Exploring Barriers to Women’s Leadership in STEM across Pacific Island Universities”.	SAGE	Added to SAGE’s conference evaluation/future planning document.
Develop a draft 2026 engagement strategy incorporating the committee's advice and in alignment with SAGE resource capabilities and capacity.	SAGE	Complete – to be presented at June 2026 meeting
Update the mapping of the crossovers (and gaps) between the various sector compliance requirements, research funding requirements and broader equity and safety reforms.	SAGE	Mapping to compliance requirements complete – to be presented at June 2026 meeting