



# Politics in Action 2026

*Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam in transition:  
What it means for Australia*

Thursday, 14 May 2026

6:00pm–8:00pm (registration from 5:30pm)

Lecture Theatre 4002 (Messel)

Sydney Nanoscience Hub (A31)

Physics Road, University of Sydney

Sydney Southeast Asia Centre and  
School of Social and Political Sciences



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

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Sydney Southeast  
Asia Centre

## Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

The Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) is Australia's leading multidisciplinary research centre focused on Southeast Asia. Since its establishment in 2012, SSEAC has been pivotal in developing the University of Sydney's reputation for research excellence across the 11 countries of Southeast Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam). SSEAC's strengths lie in its disciplinary breadth, multidisciplinary collaborations and comprehensive coverage of Southeast Asia.

With more than 500 academics across all faculties and schools working on and in Southeast Asia, the University of Sydney has one of the highest concentrations of regional expertise in the world.

*We recognise and pay respect to the Elders and communities – past, present, and emerging – of the lands that the University of Sydney's campuses stand on. For thousands of years they have shared and exchanged knowledges across innumerable generations for the benefit of all.*

## Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam in transition: What it means for Australia

Politics in Action is SSEAC's flagship annual forum delivering timely political insights on Southeast Asia. Now in its eleventh year, the event brings together leading experts to unpack the political transitions shaping the region and what this means in practice for Australian researchers, policymakers and business leaders.

This year's forum focuses on three countries undergoing significant political transitions with direct implications for Australia's research, policy and people-to-people relationships: Singapore (navigating a generational political transition following the May 2025 general election); Indonesia (Southeast Asia's largest economy managing growth under President Prabowo Subianto); and Vietnam (implementing the most sweeping institutional reforms since Doi Moi, following the 14th Communist Party National Congress in January 2026).

Our expert speakers will examine what these shifts mean for ASEAN cohesion, Australia's regional positioning, and the practical realities of research, business and diplomatic engagement in 2026. Building on these expert insights, the speakers will come together for a dynamic geopolitical panel discussion, drawing these national trajectories together to assess their collective implications for Australia.

Politics in Action 2026 is jointly presented by the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre and the School of Social and Political Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, at the University of Sydney.



Associate Professor Sandra Alday  
Deputy Director, Partnerships  
Sydney Southeast Asia Centre



Professor Greg Fox  
Director, Sydney Southeast  
Asia Centre



Professor Gaby Ramia  
Interim Head, School of Social  
and Political Sciences



Professor Kathy Belov  
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global and  
Research Engagement)

## Program

Time	Session	Details
5:30pm–6:00pm	Registration and networking	
6:00pm–6:05pm	Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	Professor Greg Fox Director, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre
6:05pm–6:10pm	Opening remarks	Professor Gaby Ramia Interim Head, School of Social and Political Sciences
	SESSION 1: Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam in transition	MC: Professor Greg Fox Director, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre
6:10pm–6:20pm	Politics in Singapore: Life after Lee 2.0	Associate Professor Michael Barr Flinders University
6:20pm–6:30pm	Global fuel crisis forcing politically perilous trade-offs in Indonesia	Dr Sana Jaffrey Australian National University
6:30pm–6:40pm	Vietnam's post-political transition in 2026: Continuity and changes	Dr Nguyen Khac Giang ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore
	SESSION 2: Panel discussion and Q&A	Moderator: Professor Justin Hastings School of Social and Political Sciences
6:40pm–7:10pm	What do these transitions mean for Australia and ASEAN	Panel: Professor Michael Barr, Dr Sana Jaffrey and Dr Nguyen Khac Giang
7:10pm–7:15pm	Closing remarks	Professor Kathy Belov Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global and Research Engagement)
7:15pm–8:00pm	Networking drinks and nibbles	

## Speakers

### Associate Professor Michael Barr



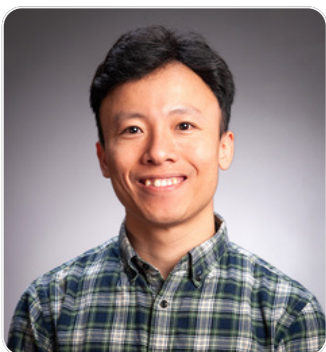
Michael Barr is Associate Professor of International Relations at Flinders University, South Australia, the Head of the Asian Studies Section of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and a former Editor of *Asian Studies Review*. He is a regular commentator on Singapore politics in Australian, UK, US, European and Asian media outlets, having published six books and dozens of journal articles and book chapters on Singapore politics and history. His next book, *The Ruling Elite of Singapore: Leadership beyond Lee*, is scheduled for publication in November.

### Dr Sana Jaffrey



Sana Jaffrey is a Research Fellow in the Department of Political and Social Change at the Australian National University, Canberra, and a non-resident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She has over 15 years of experience conducting research on Indonesian politics. During her appointment at the World Bank from 2008 to 2013, she led the implementation of Indonesia's National Violence Monitoring System. She later served as director of the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict in Jakarta from 2021 to 2022. Her research has been published in academic journals including *Comparative Politics*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, and the *Journal of East Asian Studies*. Her co-edited volume, *The Jokowi Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Authoritarian Revival*, published in 2025, examines the political legacy of Joko Widodo's presidency.

### Dr Nguyen Khac Giang



Dr Nguyen Khac Giang is a Visiting Fellow at the Vietnam Studies Programme, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore. Previously, he led the Political Research Unit at the Vietnam Institute for Economic and Policy Research (VEPR) in Hanoi. His work has appeared in the *Asian Journal of Political Science*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Constitutional Political Economy*, and *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*. Giang holds a PhD in Political Science from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and has held visiting or affiliated positions at the University of Oregon and the Vietnam Center for Economic and Strategic Studies. He is a widely cited analyst on Vietnamese politics, featured in *The Economist*, *Financial Times*, Reuters, BBC, and other major outlets, and writes regularly for *Fulcrum*, *East Asia Forum*, *The Diplomat* and *The Straits Times*.

### Professor Justin Hastings (Moderator)



Justin Hastings is Professor in International Relations and Comparative Politics in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, where he is also affiliated with the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, the China Studies Centre, the Sydney Cyber Security Network and the Centre of International Security Studies. His research is focused on gray and black markets, rogue states, and the structure and behaviour of clandestine non-state actors, such as terrorists, maritime piracy, smugglers, organised criminals, insurgents and nuclear weapons proliferators, primarily in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

**For more information**

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