Situation 2026.

15 September
Canberra

Where development's boldest ideas meet the people who can act on them.

Development
Intelligence
Lab.

Development Intelligence Lab.

In partnership with

Australian Government

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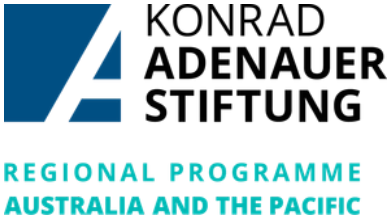

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At a glance

About the Lab

The Lab is a think tank working on development cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. We're convinced that great development cooperation comes from unusual collaborations, inspired leadership, good natured debate, and cracking analysis.

Join us for the latest debates on The Intel, where every fortnight we ask three experts one question that's top of mind for the development and foreign policy community. Stay up to date with rich insights on Australian development cooperation in the region through Our Analysis. And keep an eye out for our Situation Room, an off-the-record dialogue to test ideas, deepen understanding, and shape Australian policy and practice.

Stay in touch

Website devintelligencelab.com

Email hello@devintelligencelab.com

LinkedIn /development-intelligence-lab

X (Twitter) @devintellab

Sign up to our email list to stay up to date with the Lab's work and upcoming events.

About Situation 2026

Situation 2026 is the Development Intelligence Lab's flagship annual event run in partnership with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Canberra Innovation Network, this year's event brings together pitchers, showcasers and adopters around one challenge:

What Indo-Pacific development challenge could AI solve by 2031?

The challenge was launched on 24 June by DFAT's Deputy Secretary Jamie Isbister and the Lab's CEO Bridi Rice.

Be in the room where development's boldest ideas meet the people who can act on them.

Tuesday, 15 September, 10:30am–5:30pm

Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), Woden, 36 Bradley St, Phillip ACT

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which The Lab listens, thinks and does its work. We pay respect to the First Nations Peoples and their elders, past, present and future.

At a glance

Situation 2026 agenda

Time	Session
10:30–11:00am	Registration opens.
11:00–11:20am	Welcome to Country by Aunty Violet Sheridan, and Bridi Rice, Lab's CEO, welcome.
11:20–11:40am	Opening address by Minister for International Development, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP.
11:40am–12:00pm	Opportunity to meet with showcasers.
12:00–1:00pm	Panel: 'What does AI mean for development? The good, the bad and the unknown'. Moderated by Geordie Fung, Lab's Director of Analysis and Advising. Panellists: - Saeed Uri, Principal AI and Product, Chemonics International. - Natalie Cohen, acting Deputy Secretary, Development, Multilateral and Europe Group, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. - Dr Tiara Marthias, Senior Lecturer, the Nossal Institute for Global Health, University of Melbourne
1:00–1:45pm	Opportunity to meet with showcasers, networking and lunch.
1:45–2:15pm	Fireside chat with Dr Sania Nishtar, CEO, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Moderated by Bridi Rice, Lab's CEO.
2:15–2:35pm	Showcase presentations (round one).
2:35–3:05pm	Opportunity to meet with showcasers, networking and light refreshments.
3:05–3:25pm	Showcase presentations (round two).
3:25–3:45pm	Bridi Rice, Lab's CEO, recap and introduction to the pitch competition.
3:45–4:30pm	Pitch competition.
4:30–5:00pm	Opportunity to meet with showcasers and meet the pitchers.
5:00–5:30pm	Awards ceremony and wrap up. Awards presented by Aedan Whyatt, acting First Assistant Secretary, Development Policy and Equality Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Prize pool of $15,000 AUD.
5:30pm onwards	Keep talking at The Southern Pub. Food and drinks at your own cost.

At a glance

Showcasers (in alphabetical order)

- Adimi
- Claim
- Dragonfly Thinking
- Empathos x Wone Consulting
- EthicAI
- Folktale
- Frontier Tech Hub - DT Global
- HardLook
- Heidi
- KONEKSI - Cowater International
- NAXA x Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT) x EPFL
- Nolia

Pitchers (in alphabetical order)

- Asaria Sokove (TokPeles AI)
- Connor Floyd (The Outrigger Project)
- Dan Woods (amoeba)
- Fachrizal Sinaga x Rendra Saputra (Simulacra Team)
- Jessica Pollock (Hold the Line)
- Joleen Ngoriakl (Palau Digital Citizenship Initiative)
- Kariuki Waweru x Morgana Ryan (CARE Australia)
- Michael Nunan (BES International)

With special thanks to...

Special guests and panellists

- The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for International Development
- Dr Sania Nishtar, CEO, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance
- Saeed Uri, Principal AI and Product, Chemonics International
- Natalie Cohen, acting Deputy Secretary, Development, Multilateral and Europe Group, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Dr Tiara Marthias, Senior Lecturer, the Nossal Institute for Global Health, University of Melbourne
- Aedan Whyatt, acting First Assistant Secretary, Development Policy and Equality Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Ngunnawal Elder Aunty Violet Sheridan

Judges (in alphabetical order)

- Petr Adámek, CEO, Canberra Innovation Network (CBRIN)
- Saeed Uri, Principal AI and Product, Chemonics International
- Sarah Goulding, Australian Country Consultant for SEEK Development, advising the Gates Foundation

Mentors (in alphabetical order)

- Andrew Erbs, Digital Systems and Partnerships Advisor
- Cindy Schwartz, Founder, Executive Excellence
- James Happell, AI Strategic Lead, Infoxchange
- Petrarca Karetji, Team Leader, SKALA Program
- Sam Porter, Director, Development Economics and Finance, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Seema Chandra, Director, Development Policy, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Situation 2026.

Special guests and panellists

Special guests and panellists

Natalie Cohen

Natalie Cohen is the acting Deputy Secretary for Development, Multilateral and Europe Group in the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Her career has included leadership roles on international development strategy and programming, foreign and economic policy in the Pacific, global health and human rights. An experienced multilateral negotiator, Ms Cohen has served twice at the Australian Mission to the UN in New York and was a member of the UN High-level Expert Panel on Small Island Developing States.

She has led the implementation of development and humanitarian programs in the Indo-Pacific, including during a posting to Indonesia. Having first trained and worked as a clinical microbiologist, Ms Cohen previously held advisory positions on public health in the Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Health. She holds tertiary qualifications in Biomedical Science, Communications, and Humanitarian Leadership.

Dr Tiara Marthias

Dr Tiara Marthias is a Senior Lecturer in Global Health at the Nossal Institute for Global Health, University of Melbourne.

A medical doctor by training, she has worked across global health and international development in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Her work focuses on health systems, health financing, equity, and translating research into policy and practice.

She co-leads an Australia -Indonesia project developing AI-assisted tuberculosis screening - the first initiative of its kind in Indonesia to be domestically developed and managed.

Her work explores how locally led AI can strengthen health systems, advance inclusive and equitable development, address GEDSI considerations, and contribute to greater AI sovereignty.

Special guests and panellists

Saeed Uri

Saeed Uri leads AI and product at Chemonics International.

He spent more than a decade on conflict and stabilisation work in Iraq, Syria and Palestine, including helping launch an early warning system that gave civilians advance notice of incoming airstrikes.

He now builds AI tools for humanitarian response, health supply chains, and data-driven decision-making, while supporting AI adoption across the firm.

Dr Sania Nishtar

Dr Sania Nishtar is the Chief Executive Officer of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

A trained medical doctor and most recently a Senator in her home country of Pakistan, Dr Nishtar has built an outstanding career over 30 years as a national and global leader.

In Pakistan's national government, she served between 2018 and 2022 as Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, a role with the status of a Federal Minister.

She founded the NGO think tank Heartfile, and was the inaugural Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Independent Accountability Panel for women's and children's health.

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Showcaser line-up

Showcaser line-up

Adimi

Adimi is an AI EdTech team building a creativity focused learning app that helps young learners develop artistic thinking without letting AI take over the creative process.

Through short art lessons, guided reflection, offline drawing, and learner decision-making, Adimi uses AI to ask, observe, and support while the learner interprets, creates, and decides.

Their team brings together expertise in education, AI, learning design, and technology to explore how human centred AI can strengthen creativity, agency, and meaningful learning.

Find out more adimi.net

Claim

Claim is a free AI tool designed to make grant funding more equitable.

Someone can describe a problem their community is facing in the language they speak, and Claim turns it into a proposal in the format funders expect. It then shows them which grants in their region they're eligible for.

Claim is an early-stage prototype built by two co-founders working in the environmental and international development space, created to ensure communities can access funding without needing English fluency or professional grant-writing support.

Get in touch: elliedrenth@gmail.com; sangbanakar@gmail.com

Showcaser line-up

Dragonfly Thinking

Dragonfly Thinking is an AI-enabled strategic intelligence company that combines domain expertise, structured analytical methodology, and AI-native workflows to help organisations make better decisions under uncertainty.

Find out more: dragonflythinking.com

Empathos x Wone Consulting

Empathos and First Nations led Wone Consulting are adapting Trust Intelligence™ as a monitoring, evaluation and learning tool for First Nations engagement in international development.

The collaboration combines Empathos' trust measurement platform with Wone Consulting's First Nations leadership and culturally informed systems change expertise.

Together, they reveal gaps between the trust leaders intend and the trust people experience, translate findings into practical action, and track change over time. At Situation 2026, they are seeking early pilot partners to help design and test a culturally safe approach for the sector.

Find out more: empathos.com.au / woneconsulting.com.au

Showcaser line-up

EthicAI

EthicAI is a Sydney-based responsible AI consultancy working with public sector, health and community organisations to adopt AI safely and sovereignly. Their clients are institutions with the most to lose from getting AI architecture wrong: ombudsman offices, child protection agencies, legal aid services and government policy teams operating under statutory data obligations that make sending records to offshore frontier models legally untenable.

Selma is their answer to that constraint. It moves organisations off frontier model dependency onto a small language model architecture they own and operate, fine-tuned to their own protocols and legal context. It runs on modest infrastructure at a fraction of frontier cost, which matters in settings where budgets are contracting and data cannot leave the country.

Find out more: ethicai.au

Folktale

Folktale is a Canberra-headquartered, Australian-backed technology company working across the Indo-Pacific. They help organisations gather timely, grounded evidence from the people most affected by programs and policies.

Field teams capture voice, video, photos and short responses on a phone, in any language, online or offline, with consent recorded at capture. Their AI transcribes, translates and analyses this material against each program's framework, while keeping every finding traceable to the person who shared it.

Folktale helps decision-makers hear directly from communities, verify impact, adapt programs earlier, and strengthen accountability to the people development efforts are intended to serve.

Find out more: folktale.ai/hello

Showcaser line-up

Frontier Tech Hub - DT Global

The Frontier Tech Hub works with UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) staff and global partners to understand the potential for innovative tech in the development context and then test and scale their ideas. It enables FCDO to invest in early-stage ideas and radical technology solutions, build capacity to develop, use and govern technology responsibly and support locally led innovation.

DT Global is shaping a future where sustainable development and innovation empower individuals, communities, and nations. They work in partnership with local stakeholders to foster inclusive prosperity, social equity, and environmental stewardship.

Find out more: dt-global.com / frontiertechhub.org/pilot-portfolio/ruralwaterschemes-nepal

HardLook

HardLook is an independent assurance platform for complex reports. It analyses the underlying evidence, then tests the draft against it — flagging omissions, weak reasoning and unsupported claims before publication.

HardLook was founded by Chris Roberts, a former UK diplomat and evaluator who spent more than a decade leading research and evaluation projects for governments, international organisations and development programmes.

HardLook makes rigorous, evidence-based assurance available to every organisation.

HardLook flags. Humans decide.

Find out more: hardlook.ai

Showcaser line-up

Heidi

Heidi is an AI Care Partner built to expand clinical capacity across every stage of care delivery. Heidi listens to consultations and generates the documentation clinicians would otherwise complete after hours. Heidi has also introduced Evidence, bringing trusted clinical guidance to the point of care. Today, Heidi supports more than 2.7 million patient interactions each week across 190 countries and 110 languages.

Founded in Melbourne, Australia, Heidi aligns with leading international healthcare, privacy and security standards, including the Australian Privacy Principles. Heidi also maintains security and AI governance certifications, including ISO 27001, SOC 2 Type II and ISO 42001.

Find out more: heidihealth.com

KONEKSI - Cowater International

KONEKSI (Knowledge Partnership Platform Australia–Indonesia) is Australia's flagship knowledge and innovation program in Indonesia, strengthening collaboration between Indonesian and Australian organisations.

Backed by the Governments of Australia and Indonesia, it supports research, innovation, and evidence-based solutions to shared development challenges through multidisciplinary partnerships.

KONEKSI promotes inclusive and sustainable policies, technologies, and practices by emphasizing local knowledge, capacity building, and Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI).

The program is managed by Cowater International, who delivers major donor-funded development programs across Asia and the Pacific, working alongside governments, markets, and communities to strengthen institutions and build partnerships that support resilient and prosperous societies.

Find out more: koneksi-kpp.id/en / cowater.com

Showcaser line-up

NAXA x Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT) x EPFL

The Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT), NAXA and EPFL are collaborating to develop and pilot a locally adapted GeoAI approach for rapid post-disaster damage assessment in Nepal. The project combines high-resolution drone imagery, computer vision, locally generated training data and human annotation to identify and classify building damage.

Through HOT's open GeoAI platform, fAIr, on-the-ground mapping communities can train, fine-tune and validate AI models for their own regions. The longer-term ambition is an open-source, locally adaptable AI-enabled loss and damage assessment approach that can support disaster response and recovery across multiple hazards and geographies.

Find out more: naxa.com.np / hotosm.org / epfl.ch/en/

Nolia

Nolia is an AI-enabled platform that helps implementing agencies and borrowing governments navigate multilateral development bank procurement faster.

Nolia drafts and validates procurement documents, and assesses bids to produce evaluation reports, compressing work that typically takes months into days.

Every year, over US$250 billion is disbursed through multilateral institutions to developing countries, yet procurement delays remain one of the biggest barriers to turning committed funds into delivered outcomes. Nolia closes that gap, giving teams more confidence and less rework, so approved funding reaches the people it's meant for, faster.

Founded in New Zealand, Nolia is working with development banks and government agencies internationally.

Find out more: getnolia.io

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Pitcher line-up

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Asaria Sokove (TokPeles AI)

Asaria Sokove hails from Lufa in Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea, and has long envisioned using technology to preserve PNG's languages, as younger generations lose their native languages while elders pass on with knowledge of languages, legends, traditional songs and culture.

After studying Mathematics and Computer Science, she spent over a decade in the oil and gas industry before completing a Bachelor's degree in Business Management.

Her idea, TokPeles AI, is a community-powered AI platform for preserving PNG's 800+ languages, while making language preservation engaging for younger generations and inspiring them to learn, contribute and carry their languages forward.

Contact Asaria: asokove@gmail.com

Connor Floyd (The Outrigger Project)

Connor Floyd is an international development consultant and former diplomat who managed DFAT development programs, including in Cambodia. He is a lifelong tinkerer, systems thinker and self-taught technologist.

Years of working with local partners without the time or resources to build systems led Connor to found The Outrigger Project. It is a First Nations-owned social enterprise building Open Outrigger: a free and open-source AI-enabled platform to help NGOs and locally led organisations develop and maintain organisational systems, from governance to safeguarding.

His aim is for AI to arrive in the region's development sector on terms that strengthen local organisations.

Contact Connor:
outriggerproject.org
connor@outriggerproject.org

Pitcher line-up

Dan Woods (amoeba)

Dan Woods is the founder of amoeba, an independent strategic practice building public-data platforms to make government data usable.

Dan has over twenty years of experience across strategic design, public policy, and technology for development, including with DFAT and the UN.

His recent work focuses on integrating agentic AI over curated public data, creating tools for tracking UN voting patterns, analysing procurement data, and understanding international development spending.

His pitch seeks to broaden access to accurate, useful analysis and apply lessons from past programs.

Contact Dan:
scrittle.us
danwoods@gmail.com

Fachrizal Sinaga (Simulacra Team)

Fachrizal Sinaga is a Master of Complex Systems student at The University of Sydney and an LPDP–Australia Awards scholar.

With years of experience in the Indonesian development sector as a participatory mapping practitioner, advocating for agrarian reform.

His interest focuses on institutions and decentralisation, exploring how systems, governance, and local dynamics drive equitable development.

Contact Fachrizal: fachrizal.sng@gmail.com

Pitcher line-up

Rendra Saputra (Simulacra Team)

Rendra Saputra is a Master of Public Policy and Management student at the University of Melbourne and an Australia Awards scholar. With experience as a political consultant for legislative candidates. Rendra has successfully guided candidates he advised to secure DPRD (Regional House of Representatives) seats across various regions in eastern Indonesia.

Rendra also has been actively involved in advising regional heads across Indonesia, particularly in Kendal Regency, Central Java, as well as providing media support for politicians, institutions, and regional leaders. His areas of focus include political strategy, public communication, and local governance, with a particular interest in how media and communication shape the effectiveness of local leadership.

Contact Rendra: blogrendraspt@gmail.com

Jessica Pollock (Hold the Line)

Jessica Pollock is an Australian lawyer who has spent seven years living and working across the Indo-Pacific alongside governments and international institutions.

Recent visits to Tuvalu and Kiribati left her fascinated by what happens when rising seas begin to test international law's assumptions about sovereignty and statehood.

A recent course at the Hague Academy of International Law renewed her belief in what international law can achieve. Deeply curious by nature, Jess is drawn to big questions and to the possibilities that emerge when law and technology collide. AI has become both a tool and a balm for that curiosity.

At Situation 2026, Jess is exploring whether AI can help Pacific states preserve something profoundly analogue: the legal lines that define a nation.

Pitcher line-up

Joleen Ngoriakl (Palau Digital Citizenship Initiative)

Jo Ngoriakl is an indigenous Palauan policy practitioner and civic-tech leader with over a decade of experience designing and implementing governance and online safety initiatives.

As the founder of Palau Digital Citizenship Initiative (DCI), she has consulted government and international development partners on the intersection of socio-economic development, online harms, and digital safety for the past 9 years.

She has a passion for participatory democracy and justice. In 2018, she was awarded the One Young World and European Union Peace Award for her work as an emerging leader in the digital space. Jo has pivoted in the last three years into AI safety research where she focuses on AI governance, safeguarding vulnerable users, and the inclusion of Global South researchers and perspectives in AI safety, ethics, and governance.

Kariuki Waweru (CARE Australia)

Kariuki Waweru is Country Office Support Lead at CARE Australia, supporting organisational effectiveness and program delivery across the Indo-Pacific.

He brings more than 20 years of international development experience across Africa, Australia and the Asia-Pacific, spanning program leadership, public policy advocacy, organisational development and renewable energy financing.

He holds qualifications in Public Policy and Management and Business Information Systems. Originally from Kenya and now based in Canberra, Kariuki is known for building trusted partnerships and turning complex strategies into practical results. He is particularly interested in how digital innovation can strengthen organisations and improve development outcomes.

Pitcher line-up

Morgana Ryan (CARE Australia)

Morgana Ryan is Chief Executive Officer of CARE Australia, where she leads an organisation dedicated to advancing gender equality and improving the lives of women and children globally.

An experienced CEO, Chair and Non-Executive Director, she has held leadership roles spanning the commercial and international development sectors, including as Asia Pacific Director of Accenture Development Partnerships.

Morgana has led major organisational, digital and technology transformation programs that strengthened organisational performance and expanded reach and impact. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and co-author of two books on strategy, technology and organisational change in International NGOs.

Dr Michael Nunan (BES International)

Michael is a health systems specialist with 18 years experience working in the Pacific, Asia and Africa, and is CEO of BES International, which works across the Pacific supporting countries to strengthen their health information systems.

Disease detection in the Pacific mostly relies on weekly, manually-reviewed syndromic surveillance. The speed a country detects an outbreak, let alone responds, can be more than 7 days, limiting capacity for effective early response. BES International works across the Pacific supporting countries to strengthen their health information systems.

At Situation 2026, Michael will pitch an AI layer scoped specifically to support earlier outbreak detection by leveraging existing tools and data. Authorities can be alerted to disease threats in near real-time, enabling earlier detection, and thereby, notification, and response.

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