

# Oxford Major Projects Leadership Academy Asia-Pacific

Oxford University, Saïd Business School | together with EY



# About the Oxford Major Projects Leadership Academy Asia-Pacific (MPLA APAC)

The design and delivery of the MPLA APAC centred in Sydney Australia, is a joint endeavour between EY Australia and Oxford University, Saïd Business School. It brings Oxford's world-leading academic research and executive education experience together with EY Australia's unparalleled major projects knowledge and experience. The shared ambition underpinning the MPLA APAC is to build further knowledge and insights, and to strengthen major project delivery performance and capability at an individual, organisational and system level.

EY and the Oxford University, Saïd Business School have been working closely together in this space since 2018, benefiting more than 170 major project leaders. These leaders represented projects collectively valued at over \$100 billion in fields as diverse as health care, education, information technology, emergency services, major events, and road, rail, and airport infrastructure

Participants in the MPLA APAC will experience transformational change, enhancing their capabilities and skills, and empowering them to positively impact the success of the projects under their responsibility. Through the program, participants will join the Oxford University Business Alumni Network and the global MPLA community. This network totals over 1000 graduates of the MPLA programs run by Oxford University in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong.

## Oxford MPLA APAC benefits

Research from Oxford University, Saïd Business School indicates that the status quo for major projects is that they run over time, over budget, and under deliver on their intended benefits<sup>1</sup>. The ambition at MPLA APAC is to work with major project leaders to address this problem and help them to deliver their projects 'On Time, On Budget and On Benefit' for their communities.

The program is designed with a focus on improving performance as a major project leader, providing participants with a space for learning, reflection and action that will be measured through an impact assessment. This impact assessment will enable participants and key stakeholders to understand in practice the effect this has on their work, their team, their organisation, and their project.

“  
Working alongside global thought leaders and practitioners from Oxford University, Saïd Business School, EY and your peer group, you will have an opportunity to put the best theory and thinking into practice, solving your most challenging adaptive problems in your program.”

Dr Atif Ansar,  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School.

<sup>1</sup> Flyvbjerg, Bent. (2013). "Over Budget, Over Time, Over and Over Again: Managing Major Projects." 321-344



“

You will develop a network of relationships with colleagues from across APAC who have a common purpose of delivering public value for their communities. These relationships will support you in your work during the program, and you will become part of a global Alumni network that will continue well beyond the lifeline of the program.”

Dr. Sonia Sharp, EY





## About EY

EY exists to build a better working world, helping create long-term value for clients, people, and society. Enabled by data and technology, diverse EY teams in over 150 countries provide trust, and help clients grow, transform, and operate. EY teams ask better questions, to find new answers for the complex issues facing our world today.

EY is a leading advisor to governments on major infrastructure projects, across the globe and in Australia. As a result, the senior EY practitioners in this space bring a unique global perspective, in combination with a deep local understanding.

Successful delivery of major projects requires a seamless integration of commercial and technical capabilities, with effective leadership and a genuine understanding of how people best work together. The shared purpose across EY Leadership and Program Management services sees us working with leaders who collaborate to effectively achieve the full potential of their major projects.

## About Oxford University, Saïd Business School

The Oxford University, Saïd Business School blends the best of new and old. It is a young, vibrant, and innovative business school that is embedded in an 800-year-old world-class university.

It is a place where we study how successful organisations appreciate the rules of the game – written and unwritten, and how they can create new games – through entrepreneurship, innovation, and transformational infrastructure programs.

As a part of the University of Oxford, we don't just talk about how organisations interact with the broader world, we experience it. We engage with Oxford Saïd colleagues from many other backgrounds and with broader communities.

We tackle world-scale problems, and this is demonstrated through our long-standing work and expertise in major projects. Major projects are more than just large projects, they are transformational and impact people, communities, and potentially whole countries, and regional and global systems. We work with the people who lead delivery of these major projects to fully realise their potential and the benefits of these major projects for them, their organisation and society.



# The Program



## The need

Governments across Asia-Pacific are investing at unprecedented levels in the services and infrastructure required to help their communities thrive into the future. This elevated level of activity is occurring at a time when the challenges facing the project industry have arguably never been greater. The long-term trend of falling productivity in the sector is now being fuelled by global factors such as supply chain constraints, and local factors such as skills shortages and increasingly complex stakeholder relationships.

The weight of these pressures falls squarely on the senior leaders accountable for project delivery. Because of the level of activity, many of these leaders need support to overcome new challenges they have not faced previously. Even the most experienced project professionals require new skills to operate in this new paradigm.

## Practical focus

Whilst the research is necessary for providing the evidence base for the program, it is not sufficient to impact project performance. The success of the MPLA APAC lies in taking the insights from the research and crafting a learning journey for project professionals to put the learning into practice in their daily leadership of major projects.

Sustainable learning is created when learners gain new knowledge, put the knowledge into practice, and then reflect on what they have learned as a result. The MPLA APAC incorporates structures for practical application and deep reflective practices.

A learning journey is best undertaken with like-minded colleagues who are travelling a similar path. This is another reason for MPLA APAC's success, with the program being structured to enable powerful peer-to-peer learning.







## Research basis

MPLA APAC, along with its sister programs internationally, distinguishes itself from other leadership offerings through its foundation in the research program that has been running at Oxford University, Saïd Business School for nearly two decades. The key tenet for this research program was to understand why major projects are so prone to failure; less than one mega project in two hundred simultaneously hits its cost, schedule, quality, and benefits targets. This makes it arguably the worst-performing category of human endeavour.

Based on academic citations, this research program is No. 1 in the world. The over-riding theme of the insights gained through research is that it is the human factors rather than the technical factors that are most significant differentiators in project performance. Creating the environment for humans to thrive within the project needs to be the primary objective of all project leaders.

## Thriving in complexity

There are many reasons major project leadership is so difficult. The word 'complexity' continually resonates through the research and in conversation with experienced leaders. Project professionals today are dealing with new levels of complexity in almost all aspects of their role.

The increased complexity manifests in the technical factors, but even more so in the human factors. Major projects are always a complex adaptive social system; a system that throws up 'wicked' problems. Wicked problems do not submit to technical solutions, instead requiring adaptive leadership skills. The MPLA APAC distinguishes itself in teaching these skills to leaders to enable them not just to cope with complexity, but to thrive in complexity.

## Methodology



The MPLA has enabled a better understanding of the role of leadership, technical delivery skills, and commercial capability required in project leadership across government and has developed the capability to set up projects for success”

Karina Singh

Head of Profession and sponsor for the MPLA Infrastructure and Projects Authority, UK Cabinet Office



The MPLA

APAC's content

and methodology is

based on five

key tenets

## 1 The leader as CEO of a temporary organisation

Leading a major project is a challenging role, requiring all the leadership attributes of a CEO, with the additional challenge of rapid mobilisation and then demobilisation. Central to the MPLA APAC program is the need to equip participants aspiring to, or operating in, this senior role.

## 2 The incomplete leader

People have a range of strengths and limitations, so it is understandable why it is difficult for any one individual to develop a complete set of leadership capabilities.

Appreciating this and building compensating strategies is a key focus for MPLA APAC participants.

## 3 Harnessing risk

Risks are not external, but internal to an organisation.

Major project leaders need to address biases that can lead them to underestimate negative events and overestimate positive events. MPLA APAC educates participants on how to better understand, manage and capitalise on project risk.

## 4 Good governance

There is no one right way to set up a major project.

A major project requires the structures, processes, staffing and objectives to be set to align with the project strategy.

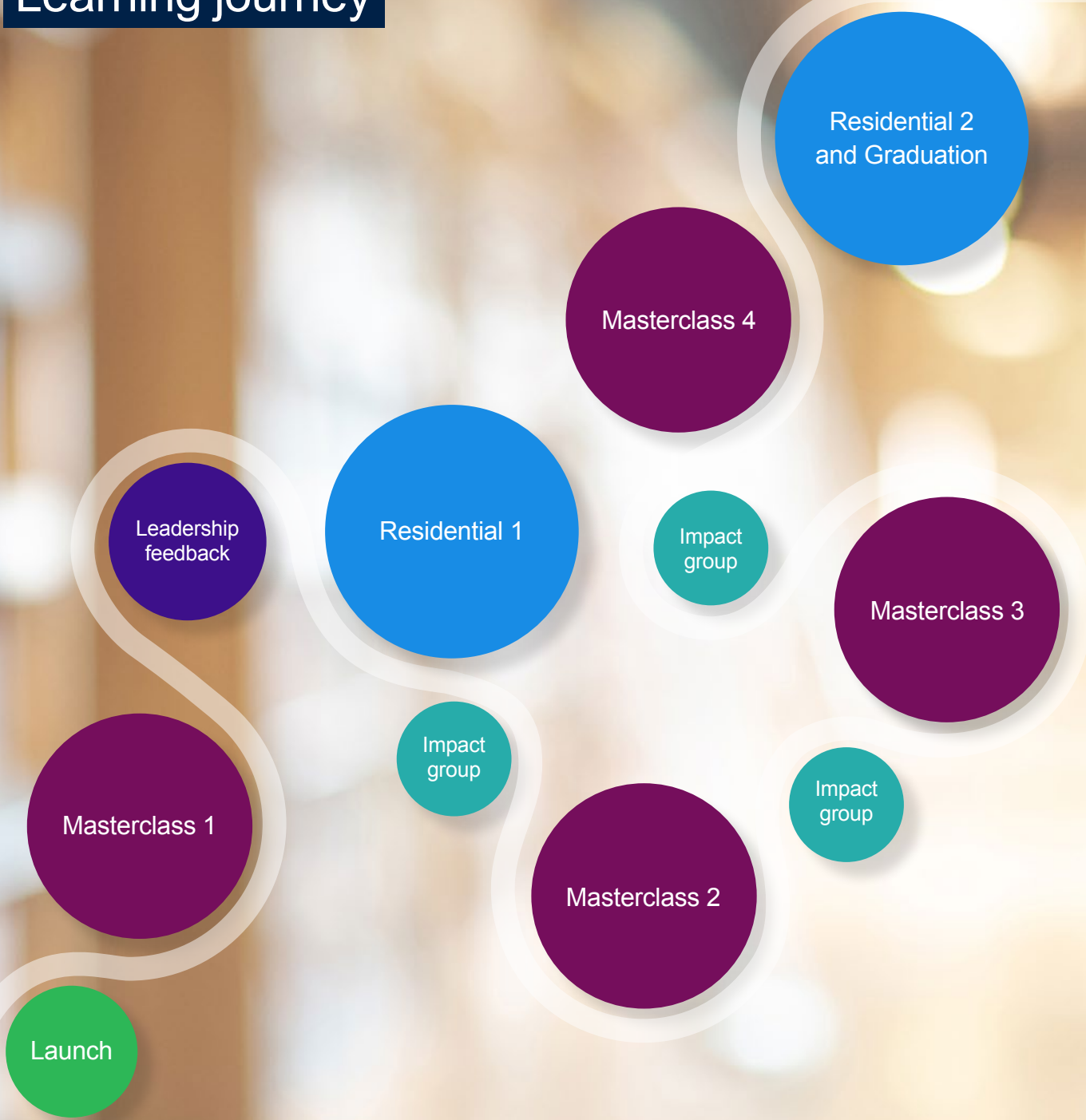
To navigate these negotiations, MPLA APAC helps project leaders learn how to shape and manage the power relations in their projects, and offers tools that help identify and engage stakeholders.

## 5 Infrastructure-enabled transformations

MPLA APAC explores the need to avoid prioritising delivery of the infrastructure asset as the focus. This is only ever the enabler; the real goal is the achievement of the intended outcomes of societal and economic impact. Through this lens, MPLA APAC supports participants to focus on delivering the maximum benefits from the major projects they lead.



# Learning journey



Residentials	Masterclasses	Leadership feedback	Impact groups	Impact assessment
Five-day, deep immersion events with participants staying at a venue selected to provide a highly focused learning environment.	Virtual sessions run over a three-week period with pre-work and post-work.	360-degree feedback designed specifically for major project leaders and a Hogan personality assessment.	Group work with fellow participants to reflect on the application of concepts into the work environment.	Assessment of interventions learned through the program, which will be presented at the closing ceremony.



# Program elements

The program is delivered through a combination of face-to-face and virtual learning. The physical residentials allow participants to develop deeper networks and learn with their peers in an environment that removes distractions and allows for focused development. The master classes are delivered virtually and support a continuous connection to peers and faculty throughout the program, allowing participants to maintain momentum through their learning journey. The Impact Groups and Impact Assessment support transfer of learning into the leader's daily work.

## ● Residential

The two five-day residentials are immersion events where participants engage and network with their peers and world-leading experts face-to-face.

One residential each will be held in NSW, Australia and QLD, Australia and take participants away from distractions of work and day-to-day life, and allow them to collectively learn together from faculty and each other.

The residential week consists of deep dives into relevant topics, networking events and guest speakers such as industry experts.

## ● Masterclasses

Masterclasses are the virtual component of the MPLA APAC. Masterclass topics help leaders understand and address some of the most significant challenges facing Major Project Leaders today.

Masterclasses are conducted over a three-week period comprising individual pre-work, a two-hour live virtual session led by the Oxford Saïd Major Projects, or EY faculty and a period of post-work where learnings are applied to their everyday practice.

## ● Leadership assessments

Participants will complete two leadership assessments as part of the program to help develop self-awareness of their impact as a leader.

Participants will complete the Hogan Personality Inventory and the MPLA 360 assessment, and conduct a one-on-one debrief of both assessments with accredited faculty.

## ● Impact groups

Working with a group of fellow participants, you will reflect on the application of concepts into the real work environment.

Participants are divided into groups of five to six, where they have a chance to discuss their leadership challenges in greater detail, and strengthen their relationships with a smaller core group.

Impact groups are facilitated by a dedicated faculty member to ensure the group is set up for success.

## ● Impact assessment

As participants work through the program, they will apply the lessons learned in their day-to-day roles. They will work with their peers through their Impact groups to discuss progress, deriving solutions from course content and shared experiences. This will be written up and presented to peers as part of the closing ceremony.



# Timetable

Below are indicative dates for the program. To complete the course, participants are expected to engage with all session content. Where unforeseen circumstances prevent participants from attending the sessions, there will be a requirement to catch up and provide evidence of learning.

Participants will be allocated to cohort 1 or 2 prior to the beginning of the program.

Program Element	Format	Duration	Dates	
			Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Launch Event and Masterclass 1	Virtual	4 hours	25 June 2024	26 June 2024
Leadership Assessments	Individual	1 hour	25 June 2024 – 17 July 2024	
Leadership Assessment Debriefs	Individual	1.5 hours	5 August 2024 – 23 August 2024	
Masterclass 2	Virtual	2 hours	7 August 2024	8 August 2024
Residential 1	Face-to-face	5 days	2 September 2024 – 6 September 2024	
Masterclass 3	Virtual	2 hours	22 October 2024	23 October 2024
Masterclass 4	Virtual	2 hours	26 November 2024	27 November 2024
Residential 2 and close	Face-to-face	5 days	3 March 2025 – 7 March 2025	
Action Learning Sets x 6	Virtual 4 Facilitated 2 Unfacilitated		June 2024 – March 2025	



# The Faculty



# Learning Specialists

## Program Directors



**Nicholas Conigrave**

Principle Leadership Facilitator  
EY Australia

Role on project: Program Director

Nicholas is a subject faculty expert in human development. As Program Director on the MPLA APAC and member of the teaching faculty, Nicholas brings over 35 years' of business experience and knowledge in adult development, organisation development, and business and marketing to the program. Nicholas was Program Director on AMPLA for four years and was an integral part to the development of the program.



**Graeme Findlay**

Associate Fellow  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School

Role on project: Program Director/Facilitator

Graeme is an Associate Fellow of Saïd Business School and subject faculty expert in project delivery, specialising in teaching, research, and practice. As the current MPLA APAC Program Director and member of teaching faculty, Graeme artfully brings together his practical experience in project management, having delivered major projects for some of the world's largest companies, with his academic study of the social sciences and the practice of leadership development. Graeme was Program Director on AMPLA for four years and an integral part to the development of the program.

# Faculty



## Dr Alexander Budzier

Fellow in Management Practice  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Academic Director/Program Faculty

Alex has subject faculty expertise in project delivery, specialising in research, teaching, and practice. Alex will be accountable for the MPLA APAC curriculum design and teaching. Alex's research focuses on the challenges of managing projects in hard and soft infrastructure, energy, mega events, and organisational change. Currently, he teaches modules on the MSc for Major Program Management, the MBA, is Program Director Hong Kong MPLA, and the Program Director of a project program for a large multinational private sector client.



## Leasil Burrow

Associate Fellow  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Leasil is a subject learning expert in project delivery, specialising in teaching and practice. Leasil is currently Program Director for the UK's Orchestrating Major Projects (Permanent Secretaries & Director Generals), UK MPLA Cohort Manager, lead on Hong Kong's MPLA and previously taught on AMPLA. At one time she was Program Director for the MSc in Major Program Management; having previously graduated from this program herself. Furthermore, Leasil brings more than twenty years' experience in managing major change programs in industry.



## Dr Atif Ansar

Senior Teaching Fellow  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Atif brings to the program subject faculty expertise in project delivery, specialising in technology research, teaching and practice. For five years, Atif was the Program Director on the MSc in Major Program Management, he currently teaches on the MSc and UK MPLA and taught on AMPLA for four years. He is a visiting scholar at Stanford University's Global Projects Centre and Tsinghua University. Atif is the Executive Chairman of Foresight Works – an Oxford based technology firm developing artificial intelligence and machine learning approaches to transform project construction industry performance.



## Loretta Hudson

Major Projects Assurance Leader  
Partner, EY Australia

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Loretta has a highly accomplished 20+ year career of combined international industry and consulting experience in major infrastructure across the private and public sectors. Working for globally leading owners and operators, Loretta has herself both delivered and advised leading executives on critical aspects of operational and project delivery, controls, governance, assurance, stakeholder management and productivity. Loretta is a learning professional in project assurance, governance and delivery with globally recognised business and program management qualifications. Loretta was a member of the AMPLA Faculty and led the Assurance Based Leadership Master Class.





## Dr Eleanor Murray

Associate Dean for Executive Education and Senior Fellow in Management Practice  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Eleanor has subject faculty expertise in organisational resilience, specialising in research, teaching and practice. Eleanor is the Associate Dean for Executive Education at Oxford University, Saïd Business School. Eleanor teaches Major Project Leaders from private and public sector about personal resilience, team resilience and systemic resilience. Prior to her move to academia and teaching, she had extensive experience in the health sector: a 20-year career in health services management including 10 years in senior manager and executive director roles.



## Darrin Grimsey

Procurement and PPP Leader  
Partner, EY Australia

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Darrin is a subject learning professional focusing on strategic project commercial structuring. Having taught on AMPLA, Darrin is experienced in commercial strategy that considers the overarching risk profile for the full project lifecycle. Darrin also has a wealth of experience of innovative contract approaches including Alliances and Public Private Partnerships (PPP). His experience encompasses projects in the United Kingdom and across Australia. He has also published several papers in leading academic journals and books dealing with various issues relating to PPP implementation.



## Irwin Turbitt

Associate Fellow  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Irwin is a subject learning expert in adaptive leadership, specialising in teaching and practice. Building on his personal experience of policing in Northern Ireland during ‘the troubles’, Irwin is one of the most engaging and popular speakers on the practice of adaptive leadership in the world. Irwin’s teaching and advisory work focus on the importance and challenges of exercising “adaptive leadership” in order to make progress on “wicked problems”. He teaches on Hong Kong MPLA, and at Harvard University and Warwick University, and previously taught on AMPLA.



## Dr Ruth Murray Webster

Associate Fellow  
Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Ruth has subject faculty expertise in risk and organisational change, specialising in research, teaching and practice. Currently Ruth is Program Director for Senior Responsible Owners Fundamentals Program, Cohort Manager on UK MPLA and previously taught on AMPLA. Ruth held appointments as Director, Change Portfolio and Group Head of Risk for a major port operator and Director, Risk in the Boardroom practice for KPMG LLP. Ruth is a published author of multiple books on the subjects of risk, project management, complexity and disruption.



## Professor Paolo Quattrone

Associate Fellow

Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Paolo has subject faculty expertise in project governance and reporting, specialising in research, teaching and practice. Paolo is an Associate Fellow at Saïd Business School and Professor of Accounting, Governance and Social Innovation at the University of Manchester Business School. Paolo teaches, consults, and researches in the area of major program management on reporting, governance and leadership practices to address issues of risk and uncertainty in complex organisations. Paolo teaches on the UK MPLA and the MSc in Major Program Management, and previously taught on AMPLA.



## Dr Allison Stewart

Associate Fellow

Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Allison is a subject faculty expert in major project strategy and infrastructure-enabled transformation. In 2012, Allison completed her Doctorate in Major Project Management at Oxford University focused on the international performance of Olympic and Commonwealth Games projects. Subsequently, she has played a major role within the Victorian Government on Infrastructure investment and delivery through her roles as Deputy CEO of Infrastructure Victoria and as an Executive General Manager at the Suburban Rail Loop Authority. She combines excellence in generating insights with the understanding of the strategic role of infrastructure and the challenges of project delivery.



## Adam Canwell

Leader Workforce Advisory

Partner, EY Australia

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Adam is a subject learning professional in leadership effectiveness and Accelerated Planning. Adam leads the Oceania Workforce Advisory team at EY and is a key member of the global leadership service. Furthermore, Adam was part of the original team that worked with Oxford University, Saïd Business School to help establish the MPLA in the UK. Recently he led EY and Oxford University, Saïd Business School's global research into transformational leadership.



## Professor Marc Stears

Associate Fellow

Oxford University, Saïd Business School

### Role on project: Program Faculty

Marc Stears is a subject learning expert in ethical leadership and politics, specialising in teaching and practice. Building on his foundational studies in classical philosophy, Marc is shaped by his practical experience as campaign advisor to a Prime Ministerial candidate as well as running Public Policy labs at University of Sydney and most recently University College London. Marc creates an extraordinary experience for participants and leaves them with deep insights into ethical leadership.

\* Faculty subject to change



# MPLA APAC participant eligibility

The MPLA APAC program is intended for public sector executives and the executives of contractor organisations working on public sector projects. Participants will have significant responsibilities within project organisations or executive responsibilities that encompass significant project activity. We value diversity in our cohorts and welcome participants outside of 'core' project management disciplines and beyond infrastructure projects. Past participants (when including international MPLA) have come from executive positions in finance, legal, procurement, communications, IT, HR and community relations. They have represented projects as diverse as building nuclear submarines, delivering new social security systems and overhauling the Country Fire Service.

# Applications process

To apply for the 2024 MPLA APAC please complete this [form](#), and a member of the team will be in touch with you, or contact the team at [MPLA.APAC@au.ey.com](mailto:MPLA.APAC@au.ey.com).

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## Fee structure

Total price per participant for the 2024 MPLA APAC program is AUD\$41,000.

This price is inclusive of two five-day residentials, during which four-nights' accommodation and all meals will be provided. Travel to and from the residentials and any additional accommodation are not covered.

## Information and contact

For more information on the program or to organise a time to further discuss MPLA APAC, please contact the team at [MPLA.APAC@au.ey.com](mailto:MPLA.APAC@au.ey.com).