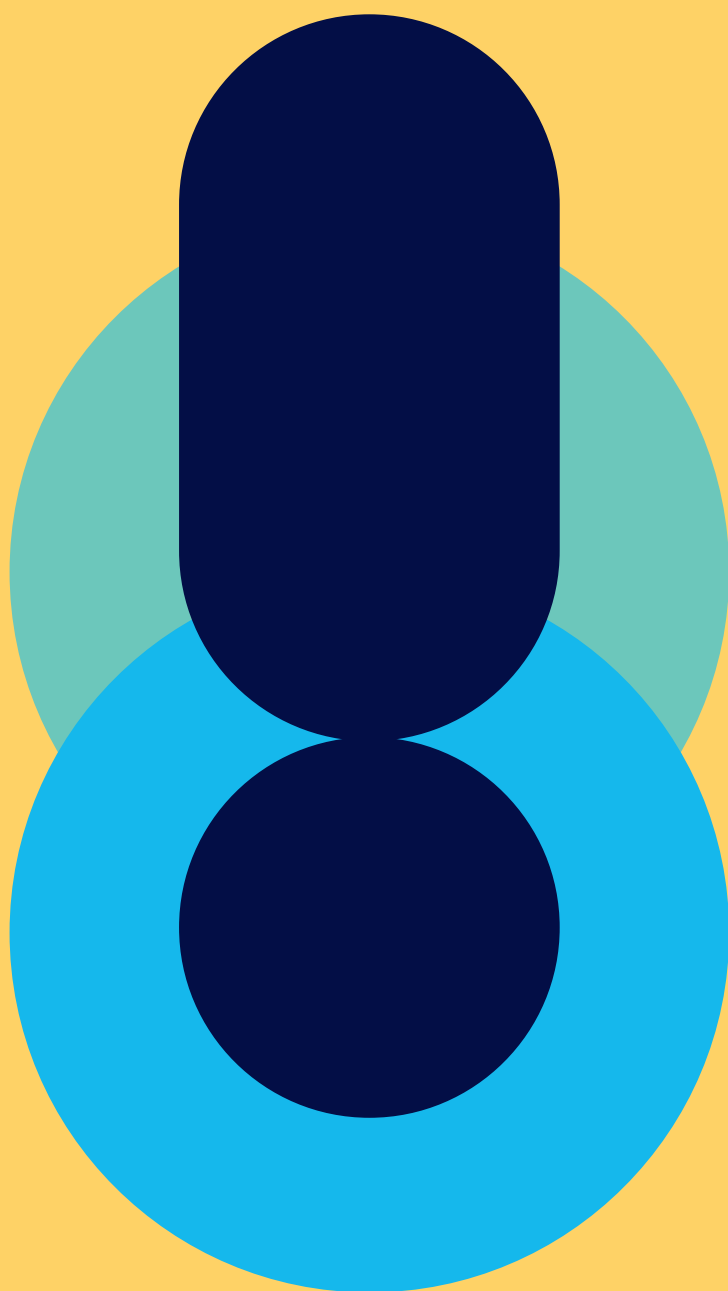


Philanthropy Leadership Summit 2025

Compass



Philanthropy in response to our times

We are living through a ‘polycrisis’—a convergence of multiple crises happening simultaneously in the world: the pandemic, climate shocks, extreme weather, war, geopolitical instability, mass migrations, the rise of populist authoritarianism and increasing political polarisation in societies.

These challenges are urgent and connected, and our responses must be as well.

Summary

The Philanthropy Leadership Summit 2025 highlighted the vital role for philanthropy to support the leadership needed for these times. If we act urgently and boldly, philanthropy can help build a future that is more sustainable, equitable, connected and hopeful.



Philanthropy can play a role in the deliberate development of narratives for societies that tell us how we can be in a good place—which is very different from where we are right now. That the future can be productive, it can be humane and prosperous, and people can be supported and have jobs. Philanthropy can play a role in this worldview evolution.

Professor Thomas Homer-Dixon,
Philanthropy Leadership Summit 2025



The pointers that follow emerged from the gathering of the Leadership Summit on *Leadership for Our Times*. They are offered as **tools, not rules**—ideas to inspire and guide our practice to meet the demands of these times.

In summary, we must be both responsive and adaptable:

- Listening to community voices, supporting their responses to immediate need.
- Embracing shared hopes and aspirations for a different future, whilst remaining grounded in action.
- Centring First Nations voices, reflecting their unique position as the First Peoples of this land, and recognising historical legacies and the practice shifts that are required.
- Working collaboratively and respectfully to foster new models of partnership and cooperation.
- Balancing urgent action with backing long-term systems change that improves outcomes for people and planet.

Polycrisis Philanthropy Pointers

Be adaptable

- Balance urgency with long-term change.
- Fund urgent needs and critical gaps, alongside, or instead of, existing programs.
- Consider spending more, sooner, whilst recognising that change also requires long-term investment.
- Engage in policy advocacy, in different forms, that aims to address underlying causes and promote change at the systems level.
- Back community-led solutions and its leaders, and movements that shift societal norms and attitudes.

Build trust and share power

- ‘Pay what it takes’ with an emphasis on multi-year, flexible funding so partners are empowered to plan, adapt and respond to changing contexts.
- Fund partner-identified priorities—including leadership development, technology and infrastructure.
- Offer non-financial support, such as voice, networks, and convening power.

Centre First Nations

- Listen to First Nations leaders, because they hold the wisdom to lead on solutions for Community and Country.
- Prioritise funding First Nations-led organisations for First Nations benefit, to ensure responses to social and environmental challenges are self-determined.
- Grow our cultural knowledge and competency about working together respectfully, recognising the societal responsibility of all non-First Nations people and funders to work in genuine partnership.
- Support the self-determination of First Nations peoples and communities, which encompasses the ability to self-govern, enact decision-making, and have control over their economic, social, and cultural development.
- Embody the Five R’s of philanthropy as promoted by the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples: Respect, Relationships, Responsibility, Reciprocity and Redistribution.



Good leaders help their constituents be more comfortable with the uncertainty of our world and model the idea that the unknown is not always scary—it's also the space where great hope and possibility lies.

Professor Thomas Homer-Dixon, Philanthropy Leadership Summit 2025



Elevate lived experience

- Elevate lived experience voices into decision-making, ensuring that people and communities impacted by social and environmental challenges are at the core of shaping responses.
- Regularly review and reflect on funding arrangements and relationship dynamics, to ensure that these build and maintain trust.

Be bold, creative and take risks

- Invest in bold, innovative ideas that challenge the status quo and shift systems—even if that involves taking risks and learning from failure.
- Back emerging leaders and movements that may not yet have established track records.
- Support cross-sector innovation that brings together philanthropy, business, government and community.
- Use all forms of finance for greatest social impact, including catalytic capital, blended finance and impact investments.

Work collectively for greater impact

- Collaborate with others to increase the volume of funding, grow knowledge and build shared agendas.
- Join collaborative funds and support coalitions and networks working together for change.
- Share practice openly—including successes and challenges—so we all can learn together and from each other.

Philanthropy Australia would like to thank all the speakers, participants and supporters of the Philanthropy Leadership Summit 2025.

