



**Flinders
University**



Jeff Bleich Centre
for Democracy and
Disruptive Technologies

Annual Report

2025



About the Jeff Bleich Centre

The Jeff Bleich Centre for Democracy and Disruptive Technologies (JBC) is a research centre in the College of Business, Government and Law, Flinders University.

The JBC recognises that democratic values and institutions need strengthening in order to flourish in democratic societies. It also recognises the disruptive nature of some technological advances, including the positive social impact that some of these technologies can facilitate, as well as the misuses that can undermine public trust and democratic values and processes. The Centre is named after Jeffrey Bleich, former U.S. Ambassador to Australia appointed by President Obama in 2009. Ambassador Bleich serves as Chairman of the JBC Advisory Board.

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Flinders University proudly acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located. These are the traditional lands of the Arrernte, Dagoman, First Nations of the South-East, First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee region, Jawoyn, Kurna, Larrakia, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri, Ramindjeri, Warumungu, Wardaman and Yolngu people. We honour their Elders - past, present and emerging.

Jeff Bleich Centre's 2025 Annual Report was prepared and printed on Kurna Yarta.

2025 at a Glance

In early 2025, the Jeff Bleich Centre hosted a South Australian federal election conversation, and provided expert commentary on the ongoing effects of multiple rounds of Donald Trump's tariffs.



Federal Election Event

The JBC and the Australian Institute of International Affairs SA held an expert panel on Surviving Fragmentation: Geopolitics and the 2025 Australian Election, with expert speakers Professor Rodrigo Praino, Leonard Blazeby and Dr Nathan Gray.



100 Days of Trump Event

The JBC joined the American Chamber of Commerce in Australia in hosting an insightful breakfast assessing the first 100 days of the Trump presidency. Our experts – direct from Washington DC and from Adelaide – examined the key policies, economic shifts, and global implications of the new administration.



Aus Space 25 Sydney

Professor Rodrigo Praino participated in Space Connect's Australian Space Summit and Exhibition AusSpace 25 in Sydney, joining a panel on international collaboration and AUKUS with Doug Abdiel, Mark Ramsey, and Dan Lloyd.

We continued our meaningful work shaping global policy discussions, through the inaugural JBC Distinguished Lecture and co-hosting the Australian Space Cyber Forum.



JBC Distinguished Lecture

The Jeff Bleich Centre welcomed The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull AC, Australia's 29th Prime Minister, to deliver its inaugural Distinguished Lecture, "Surviving the New World Disorder."

He examined global challenges, Australia's sovereignty, and its strategic alliances. Following the lecture, he joined Ambassador (ret.) Jeff Bleich, Dr Maryanne Kelton and Professor Rodrigo Praino for a panel discussion on world affairs, moderated by Daniela Ritorto.



Australian Space Cyber Forum

The Jeff Bleich Centre once again co-hosted the Australian Space Cyber Forum with CyberOps and Agora High-Tech. The event featured a workshop, business dinner, symposium, and exhibition. Now in its third year and the largest space cyber event in the Southern Hemisphere, it attracted hundreds of Australian and international participants. Opening keynote speakers included The Hon. Stephen Mullighan, Enrico Palermo, Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness, and Ambassador (ret.) Jeff Bleich.



Defence Leaders Breakfast

Professor Rodrigo Praino participated in the Defence Leaders Breakfast, hosted by the Defence Teaming Centre. He joined James Palmer of Silentium Defence for a discussion, with contributions from Molly Donohue Magee and Abraham Denmark.

The Centre finished the year by contributing to the Australian American Leadership Dialogue alongside senior political leaders, and the inaugural Active Citizenship Convention with over 1,500 young participants.



Australian American Leadership Dialogue

The JBC contributed to the 2025 Australian American Leadership Dialogue Forum, which brought more than 260 Australian and U.S. leaders to Adelaide to strengthen the Alliance in a challenging global environment.

Professor Rodrigo Praino and Ambassador Jeff Bleich contributed to discussions on democracy, diplomacy and leadership. The Centre also hosted an exclusive Parliament House dinner featuring prominent speakers including The Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives, and The Hon Michael Steele, former Lieutenant Governor of Maryland.



Keynote at the Governor's Leadership Foundation event

At the Governor's Leadership Foundation "Takes on Democracy" Winter event, Professor Rodrigo Praino delivered the keynote address, exploring the challenges facing democracy and the opportunities for renewal in South Australia and beyond.



Active Citizenship Convention

The Jeff Bleich Centre played a major role in the inaugural Active Citizenship Convention: Our Voice, Our Impact, a three-day event that brought together 1,500 Year 10 students from across South Australia to explore democracy and civic participation. Delivered in partnership with the Department for Education, the program featured workshops, keynote presentations, and panel discussions with leading civic and political figures. Dr Nick Bordeleau was a standout contributor, earning the unofficial title of “Democracy Legend” among attendees.



State Practitioner Network Investment Roundtable

Professor Rodrigo Praino spoke at the Economic Development Australia SA State Practitioner Network Investment Roundtable, alongside Chris Wood, Executive Director of Invest SA, exploring South Australia’s place in an evolving geopolitical landscape.



The Impacts of Colonialism Through Storytelling

Professor Marinella Marmo hosted an event exploring the lasting impacts of colonialism through personal experience and political reflection, centred on *The Chosen Son* by Professor Leanne Weber. The discussion featured Professor Leanne Weber, Michelle Gissara, and Dr Jared Thomas, examining how contemporary laws and policies continue to shape the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Visiting Researchers and Appointments



The **Fulbright Don DeBats Distinguished Chair in Politics and Public Policy** attracts distinguished American academics to undertake collaborative research at the Jeff Bleich Centre.

Professor Aaron Fellmeth is a leading expert in public international law, international business transactions, and intellectual property law. While at the Jeff Bleich Centre, Aaron researched states' obligations under International Human Rights Law with respect to private gun violence.

The Jeff Bleich Centre welcomed Dr Nick Bordeleau as a Research Fellow in 2025, following his successful visiting fellowship with the Centre in March and April 2024.

Nick's research investigates the role of citizens in democratic stability and decline, with particular attention to support for illiberal parties and candidates, public acceptance of democratic backsliding, and the influence of misinformation and conspiracy beliefs. Nick's appointment deepened the Centre's expertise in political behaviour, democratic resilience and the challenges facing contemporary democracies.



The Jeff Bleich Centre hosted Professor Erik Herron of West Virginia University as a visiting researcher in early 2025.

A leading scholar of comparative politics, Professor Herron specialises in political institutions and electoral systems, with extensive research and practical experience in election observation, democratic development and post-communist politics. During the visit, Professor Herron contributed this expertise to a collaborative JBC research project investigating elections and ballot design.

Our Programs

The JBC plays an active role in training a new generation of researchers and building capacity in Australia within areas of vital importance for our democracy.

Washington Internship

The Washington Internship Program (WIP) runs for 8 weeks (January-February), with an alternative 17-week program – combining the Washington Internship Program with a Capital Semester Program (WIPCASP) also available (January-May).

This Flinders program is the largest in Washington run by any university outside the United States. Students work full-time in the office of a member of the U.S. Senate or the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 2025, we supported 5 students to intern on Capitol Hill: Alyce Ferme, Clint Morin, Jameson Henderson-Redden, Preston Natale and Hillary Thursby.



2025 Washington Interns

Clint Morin, Preston Natale, Hillary Thursby, Jameson Henderson-Redden and Alyce Ferme.



2025 Vienna Interns

Claire Wilson and Ellie Fox, with colleagues at the European Space Policy Institute

Vienna Space Internship

Students spend up to 8 weeks in the charming city of Vienna where they discover how law and policy can impact human activity in space, with an opportunity to sit in on meetings at the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. The internship takes place at the European Space Policy Institute (ESPI) headquarters in Vienna, where students explore space law and policy issues.

This year, two Flinders students, Claire Wilson and Ellie Fox, represented the JBC in Vienna as the second cohort of the program.

Innovations Incubator

The Innovations Incubator is the JBC's internal internship program, allowing students to gain research training by working alongside JBC researchers on active projects. This program is available to Flinders University undergraduate and postgraduate students throughout the year.



2025 Innovations Incubator Interns

Research Highlights

The Jeff Bleich Centre was established to undertake world-leading research, to strengthen the core values and institutions of democratic societies. In 2025, we have strengthened our existing research themes and introduced a new one - EquiTech.

\$11,531,500

Active grants to JBC members in 2025

46

Projects

20

Funders

27

Researchers

\$5,939,000

Active Australian Research Council grant funding in 2025

51.50%

of total funding

Publications

126

Publications from
JBC Members
since January 2025

5

Disciplines

2

Colleges

90

Refereed
Journal Articles
since January 2025



21%
Q1



15%
Top 10%

Research funding and publications span across all four of the JBC's research pillars:

- Democracy, Participation and Human Rights
- Defence, Security and Space
- AI, Social Media and Disruptive Technologies
- EquiTech: Multiculturalism, Gender and Digital Justice

Policy Perspectives

The JBC delivers insightful, evidence-based pieces to our readers that explore specific policy issues from across the JBC key themes. Our editorial approach blends journalistic clarity with robust analysis, making complex policy issues accessible to a broad audience.

February



**Trump 2.0 and the War in Ukraine:
Settlement or Stalemate?**

Dr Jessica Genauer

March



**The Peril of Smart Cities for Queer
Rights in Africa**

Josh Sunman & Dr Luis da Vinha

April



**Bad news travels fast:
the co-optation of mainstream media
to promote radical and extremist
ideologies online**

Dr Melissa-Ellen Dowling

May



**A Fragile Ceasefire between
India and Pakistan: Kashmiris
Face the Consequences**

Dr Leoni Connah

Media & Engagement

60%

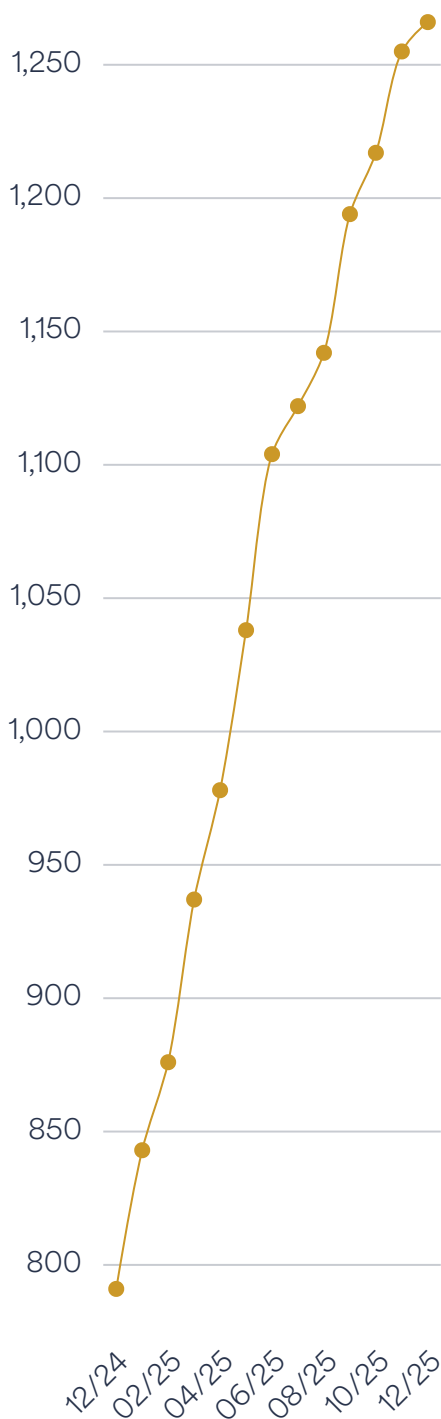
**Increase in
LinkedIn Followers**

January 2025 - December 2025

475 new followers in 2025

June strongest growth month (66 new followers)

1,266 total followers in December 2025



External Engagement Platforms

Policy Perspectives

Accessible, expert-written op-ed pieces on current events

[Click here to read more](#)

YouTube Channel

The Jeff Bleich Centre YouTube Channel hosts our expert-made explainers, event recordings and interviews.

[Click here to watch our videos](#)

JBC Newsletter

Quarterly information pack of the Centre's achievements and exciting initiatives

[Click here to subscribe](#)



Our Partners



SCHOOL *of* DATA SCIENCE



Konrad Adenauer Research Chair
in Empirical Democracy Studies
Chaire de recherche Konrad-Adenauer
en études empiriques de la démocratie



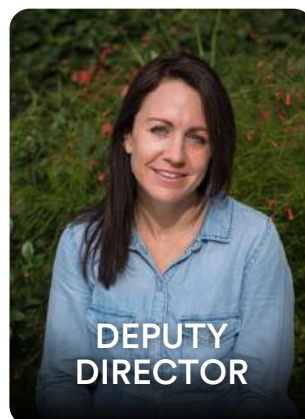
uOttawa

Core Team



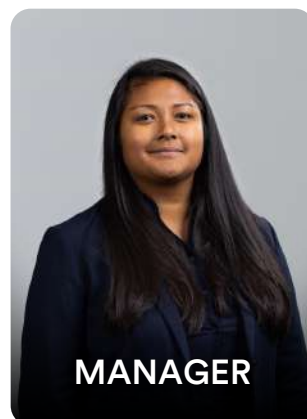
DIRECTOR

**Professor
Rodrigo Praino**



**DEPUTY
DIRECTOR**

**Professor
Emma Thomas**



MANAGER

**Katrina
Lee**

JBC Advisory Board

The JBC board members play a critical role in providing the Centre with a vision, mission, and strategic direction.



CHAIRMAN

**Ambassador (ret)
Jeff Bleich**



**DEPUTY
CHAIRMAN**

**Professor
Colin Stirling**



**Rear Admiral the Hon
Kevin Scarce AC CSC
RAN (Rtd)**



Shaun Bonett



Mark Arbib



Laura Anderson

17

Full Members

Academics within the Business,
Government & Law College

12

Associate Members

Academics within the
University from other Colleges

9

Affiliate Members

Domestic and international
affiliations, external to Flinders

Members

Marinella Marmo
Sanzhuan (Sandra) Guo
Joel Lisk
Rowan Nicholson
Tania Leiman
Rodrigo Praino
Sahana Sarkar
Rob Manwaring
Maryanne Kelton

Intifar Chowdhury
Josh Holloway
Stacey Henderson
Philip Johnson
Robert Chalmers
Tahlia Hart
Leoni Connah
Nick Bordeleau

Associates

Adela McMurray
Rajesh Johnsam
David Hobbs
Nada Ibrahim
James Scheibner
Andreas Cebulla

Gerry Redmond
Naser Pourazad
Emma Thomas
Bruno Pereira
Hossein Esmaeili
Angie Abdel Shafei

Affiliates

Dr Luis da Vinha
De Montfort University

Clemence Poirier
ETH Zurich

**Associate Professor
Hudson Golino**
University of Virginia

Sara Dalledonne
European Space Policy
Institute

Dr Luigi Martino
Khalifa University

Professor Daniel Stockemer
University of Ottawa

**Associate Professor Mariana
Golino**
University of Virginia

Melissa Hermes
European Association of
Remote Sensing Companies

Dr Reza Azizian
Ferveret

**An expert voice
on how to strengthen the core
values and institutions of
democratic societies in a world
where technology constantly
disrupts the status quo**



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