

Pre-Conference Dinner  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025  
Venue: Pemako, Thimphu

ABRC 2025  
Australia-Bhutan Research Conference

| Time        | Activity                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 17:30-18:00 | Arrival of HE Dasho Sonam Tobgay, Ambassador of Bhutan to Australia<br>Arrival of Ms Carly Partridge, Minister Counsellor and officials from Australian High Commission, Delhi |
| 18:00-18:20 | Arrival of guests                                                                                                                                                              |
| 18:20-18:30 | Welcome remarks by Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan                                                                                           |
| 18:30-18:40 | Welcome remarks by HE Dasho Sonam Tobgay, Ambassador of Bhutan to Australia                                                                                                    |
| 18:40-18:50 | Welcome remarks by Ms Carly Partridge, Minister Counsellor, Australian High Commission, Delhi                                                                                  |
| 18:50-21:00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal social networking session</li> <li>• Dinner</li> </ul>                                                                       |
| 21:00       | Programme ends                                                                                                                                                                 |

Day I  
3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025

| Time        | Activity/Theme/Session                                                                        |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 08:15-08:50 | Registration                                                                                  |
| 08:50-08:55 | Guests and participants to be seated                                                          |
| 08:55-09:00 | Arrival of Chief Guest                                                                        |
| 09:00-09:05 | Offering of Butter Lamp by the Chief Guest                                                    |
| 09:05-09:10 | <i>Marchang</i> Ceremony                                                                      |
| 09:10-09:20 | Welcome Address by Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan          |
| 09:20-09:30 | Address by HE Dasho Sonam Tobgay, Ambassador of Bhutan to Australia                           |
| 09:30-09:40 | Address by Ms Carly Partridge, Minister Counsellor, Australian High Commission, Delhi         |
| 09:40-10:00 | Keynote Address by the Chief Guest                                                            |
| 10:00-10:10 | Journal Launch: Special Edition of the Bhutan Journal of Research and Development (BJRD), RUB |
|             | Journal Launch: Bhutan Insight Journal, Australia                                             |

| Time        | Activity/Theme/Session                  |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 10:10-11:00 | Photo Opportunity followed by Tea Break |

### Thematic Area I: Cybersecurity and Responsible Digital Engagement

#### Session I 11:00-12:40

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| 11:00-11:15 | <b>Keynote Address: Professor Uwe Dulleck, Executive Dean, University of Canberra</b><br><b>Topic: Importance of social impact for the social licence of universities</b>                                                                    |
| 11:20-11:35 | Ms Tashi Yangchen, Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic: Strengthening digital defences: Evaluating the impact of cybersecurity awareness workshops among first-year engineering students in Bhutan</b> |
| 11:35-11:50 | Professor Alistair McEwan (PhD), The University of Sydney, Australia<br><b>Topic: Mindful innovation of assistive technology</b>                                                                                                             |
| 11:50-12:05 | Mr Sreekanth Nethagani, Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic: Digital transformation meets cyber threats: Strengthening Bhutan's hydropower security framework</b>                                      |
| 12:05-12:20 | Dr Madura Thiwanka Pathirana, Edith Cowan University, Sri Lanka<br><b>Topic: Digital mindfulness in tourism: Insights from Australia and strategies for Bhutan's nature-based experiences</b>                                                |
| 12:20-12:40 | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Pratima Pradhan, Deputy Chief ICT Officer, BtCIRT, GovTech Agency                                                                                                                                               |
| 12:40-13:40 | <b>Lunch and Networking</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

### Thematic Area II: Climate Change and Environmental Dynamics in Bhutan and Himalayas

#### Session II 13:40-15:20

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| 13:40-13:55 | <b>Keynote Address: Professor Dhan Bdr. Gurung (PhD), College of Natural Resources, Royal University Bhutan</b><br><b>Topic: Beyond adaptation: Resilient future solutions to climate change</b>  |
| 14:00-14:15 | Mr Jambay, Australian Rivers Institute, Griffith University, Australia<br><b>Topic: Hydrogeological assessment of drying lakes and restoration strategies: A case study from Dagapela, Bhutan</b> |
| 14:15-14:30 | Dr Yeshey Khandu, College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic: Dendroclimatic reconstruction unfolds chronicles of climate change over Northern Bhutan Himalayas</b>     |

| Time                                                             | Activity/Theme/Session                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| 14:30-14:45                                                      | Dr Om Katel, College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Climate change discourses in Bhutan Himalayas: Impacts, adaptation funding, and policy options</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 14:45-15:00                                                      | Mr Tshering Gyeltshen, Sherubtse College, Royal Univeristy of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Time-series climate forecasting in Bhutan with a CNN-LSTM-transformer hybrid architecture</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 15:00-15:20                                                      | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Professor Dhan Bdr. Gurung (PhD), College of Natural Resources, Royal University Bhutan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 15:20-15:40                                                      | <b>Tea Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Session III 15:40-16:20</b>                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 15:40-15:55                                                      | Ms Rinzin Dema, Queensland University of Technology, Australia ( <b>Online</b> )<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Uncovering clean energy deprivation in Bhutan: A multidimensional analysis of household energy use</i>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 15:55-16:10                                                      | Assistant Professor Ugyen Dorji, College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Spatio-temporal profiling of aquatic biodiversity in stream habitats in Gelephu Mindfulness City</i>                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 16:10-16:20                                                      | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Professor Dhan Bdr. Gurung (PhD), College of Natural Resources, Royal University Bhutan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Session IV 16:20-17:05</b>                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Fireside Chat I: Bridging Research, Innovation and Policy</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 16:25-17:05                                                      | Moderated by: Dr Chencho Lhamu, Dean, Royal Thimphu College                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr Ujjwal Deep Dahal, Chief Executive Officer, Druk Holding and Investments</li> <li>Dr Nawang Norbu, Executive Director, Bhutan Ecological Society</li> <li>Dr Tshewang Lhendp, President, Jigme Namgyel Engineering College</li> <li>Professor Maryam Omari, Executive Dean, School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Australia</li> </ul> |
| 17:05-17:15                                                      | Summary and Closing Remarks for Day I                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 19:00-22:00                                                      | <b>Dinner hosted by Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Vice Chancellor, RUB for invited guests and presenters</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

| Time | Activity/Theme/Session |
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**Thematic Area III: Integration of STEM for Societal Impact**

**Session I 09:00-10:40**

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| 09:00-09:15 | <b>Keynote Address: Professor Ken-Tye Yong, Associate Dean (External Engagement), Faculty of Engineering, The University of Sydney, Australia</b><br><b>Topic: Microfluidics and organ-on-chip technologies: Reimagining innovation, health, and well-being for a sustainable future</b> |
| 09:20-09:35 | Mr Tshewang Nidup, ETH Zurich, Switzerland & College of Science and Technology, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic: Attributes of Bhutanese conifer timber for optimal and sustainable application in the building and construction sector</b>                                       |
| 09:35-09:50 | Dr Mumta Chhetri, The University of Sydney, Australia<br><b>Topic: Integrated surveillance and biosecurity strategies for plant pathogens: Lessons from Australia for Bhutan</b>                                                                                                         |
| 09:50-10:05 | Dr Leela Rizal, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Australia <b>(Online)</b><br><b>Topic: Genomic analyses and mating tests among sympatric isolates of Beauveria bassiana provide evidence for a diverse cryptic species complex</b>                         |
| 10:05-10:20 | Mr Samten Lhendup, Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic: Comparative study on thermal performance of mud rammed and concrete residential building envelope in Paro - Bhutan</b>                                                                     |
| 10:20-10:40 | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by: Professor Ken-Tye Yong, Associate Dean (External Engagement), Faculty of Engineering, The University of Sydney, Australia</b>                                                                                                                                   |
| 10:40-11:00 | <b>Tea Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

**Thematic Area IV: Happiness and Well-being in Cross-Cultural Context**

**Session II 11:00-12:40**

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| 11:00-11:15 | <b>Keynote Address: Dr Annie Gowing, Student Wellbeing Specialisation Leader, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne, Australia</b><br><b>Topic: Well-being: Meanings, measures and messiness</b>                                                              |
| 11:20-11:35 | Professor Kezang Sherab (PhD), Dean, Academic Affairs Department, Royal Thimphu College<br><b>Topic: All is not well: Psychological challenges facing Bhutan's youth in higher education</b>                                                                              |
| 11:35-11:50 | Mr Tshering Dorji, Physics Teacher, Shari Higher Secondary School, Paro, Ministry of Education and Skills Development<br><b>Topic: Random forest analysis reveals bullying and sexual abuse as key factors contributing to suicidal ideation among Bhutanese Students</b> |
| 11:50-12:05 | Associate Professor Vicki Banham, (PhD) Edith Cowan University, Australia<br><b>Topic: Exploring knowledge exchange in a cultural immersion programme: A preliminary study</b>                                                                                            |

| Time        | Activity/Theme/Session                                                                                                                                                    |
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| 12:05-12:20 | Dr Jambay Lhamo, Paro College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Compassion in practice: Perspectives of Bhutanese primary science teachers</i> |
| 12:20-12:40 | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Dr Annie Gowing, Student Wellbeing Specialisation Leader, Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne, Australia                       |
| 12:40-13:40 | <b>Lunch and Networking</b>                                                                                                                                               |

### Thematic Area V: Biodiversity, Urbanisation, and Sustainable Resource Management

#### Session III 13:40-15:20

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| 13:40-13:55 | <b>Keynote address: Mr Chimi Rinzin, Country Director, World Wildlife Fund</b><br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Bridging technology gap for effective and inclusive conservation</i>                                                                        |
| 14:00-14:15 | Mr Karma Sherub, ETH Zurich, Switzerland & College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Comparing watershed-based eDNA sampling and camera trapping for assessing mammal diversity in north-western Bhutan</i> |
| 14:15-14:30 | Mr Jigme Thinley, College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Environmental DNA (eDNA) in mammal species monitoring in biological corridors of Bhutan</i>                                                     |
| 14:30-14:45 | Associate Professor Sonam Tashi (PhD), Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages, College of Natural Resources, RUB<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Production and quality assessment of mycelium-based leathers from different mushroom species</i>        |
| 14:45-15:00 | Mr Namgay Wangchuk, Student Graduate, College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Machine learning-based estimation of aboveground biomass</i>                                                                |
| 15:00-15:20 | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Mr Chimi Rinzin, Country Director, World Wildlife Fund                                                                                                                                                            |
| 15:20-15:40 | <b>Tea Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

#### Session IV 15:40-16:20

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| 15:40-15:55 | Dr Sherub Phuntsho, University of Technology Sydney, Australia<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Resource recovery from wastewater: Opportunities and challenges</i> |
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| Time                                                       | Activity/Theme/Session                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| 15:55-16:10                                                | Mr Vasker Sharma, Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Emission reduction potential of a food waste-based biogas plant: Installation and lesson learned in Bhutan</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 16:10-16:20                                                | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Mr Chimi Rinzin, Country Director, World Wildlife Fund                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Session V 16:20-17:05</b>                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Fireside Chat II: AI and Future of Higher Education</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 16:25-17:05                                                | <b>Moderated by:</b> Dr Sourav Basu, Faculty, Norbuling Rigter College                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Rinchen Dorji, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan</li> <li>• Ms Yeshey Ohm Dhedup, Deakin University, Australia</li> <li>• Ms Sapna Gurung, Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan</li> <li>• Ms Dorji Lhamo, Member of the National Gender Group</li> </ul> |
| 17:05-17:15                                                | Summary and Closing Remarks for Day II                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Day III

### 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025

| Time                                                              | Activity/Theme/Session                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>Thematic Area VI: Governance, Public Policy and Leadership</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Session I 09:00-10:40</b>                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 09:00-09:15                                                       | <b>Keynote Address: Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan</b><br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Bridging governance, policy, and leadership through higher education and research</i>                        |
| 09:20-09:35                                                       | Dr Deki Choden, Edith Cowan University, Australia<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>The role of CSR in achieving SDGs: A case study from Bhutan</i>                                                                                      |
| 09:35-09:50                                                       | Assistant Professor Gembo Tshering (PhD), Paro College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Financing and governance of primary education in Bhutan: Challenges, gaps, and policy implications</i> |

| Time        | Activity/Theme/Session                                                                                                                                                |
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| 09:50-10:05 | Mr Kinley Rinchen, Edith Cowan University, Australia<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Reimagining post-pandemic workplace culture to foster psychological well-being in Bhutan</i> |
| 10:05-10:20 | Dr Phuntsho Choden, Independent Researcher/Consultant<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Evaluation ecosystem: A case of Bhutan</i>                                                  |
| 10:20-10:40 | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan                                                                        |
| 10:40-11:00 | <b>Tea Break</b>                                                                                                                                                      |

### Thematic Area VII: Innovation in Education

#### Session II 11:00-12:40

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| 11:00-11:15 | <b>Keynote Address:</b> Dr Dorji Thinley, President, Paro College of Education<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Weaving wisdom and innovation: Crafting a life-enriching and inclusive education for Bhutan</i>                                                                                                               |
| 11:20-11:35 | Mr Norbu Wangdi, Physics and Mathematics Teacher, Ministry of Education and Skills Development<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Barriers to technology use in Bhutanese secondary school science classrooms</i>                                                                                                               |
| 11:35-11:50 | Ms Tshering Om Tamang, Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Exploring the integration of generative AI tools in teaching, learning and assessment in the colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB): Students' perspective on potential benefits and challenges</i> |
| 11:50-12:05 | Dr Phuntsho Wangdi, EduPlus Training Institute, Thimphu<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Designing an inclusive and comprehensive education policy for school education in Bhutan</i>                                                                                                                                         |
| 12:05-12:20 | Assistant Professor Kinley (PhD), Science Education, Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Exploring equity and inclusion using universal design for learning and teaching at Samtse College of Education</i>                                                              |
| 12:20-12:40 | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Dr Dorji Thinley, President, Paro College of Education                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 12:40-13:40 | <b>Lunch and Networking</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

### Thematic Area VIII: Human-Centred Digital Innovation and Health Technologies

#### Session III 13:40-15:20

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| 13:40-13:55 | <b>Keynote Address:</b> Dr Pem Namgyal, President, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Digital technologies must serve humanity; not enslave it</i> |
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| Time        | Activity/Theme/Session                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| 14:00-14:15 | Associate Professor Phurpa Wangchuk (PhD), Medical Chemist, James Cook University, Australia<br><b>(Online)</b><br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Next-gen biotherapeutics: Harnessing plants' magic bullet using integrated AI and multi-modal science approaches</i> |
| 14:15-14:30 | Mr Indra Prasad Sharma, National Medical Services, Ministry of Health, Bhutan<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Bhutan school sight survey: An epidemiological assessment of refractive error in school children</i>                                                   |
| 14:30-14:45 | Dr Bhim Bahadur Rai, Australian National University, Australia<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Vitreoretinal diseases in Bhutan: Epidemiology and novel diagnostic device</i>                                                                                        |
| 14:45-15:00 | Mr Karchung, The University of Sydney, Australia<br><b>Topic:</b> <i>Small solutions, big impact: A self-powered bili-blanket to tackle infant jaundice in resource-limited settings</i>                                                                 |
| 15:00-15:20 | <b>Q&amp;A moderated by:</b> Dr Pem Namgyal, President, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan                                                                                                                                           |
| 15:20-15:40 | <b>Tea Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

**Session IV 15:40-16:25****Fireside Chat III: University as a Space for Personal Transformation and Leadership**

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| 15:40-16:25 | <b>Moderated by:</b> Dr Michelle Walsh, Therapist and Educator at Contemplative Practice Lab and Research Associate, University of Virginia                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lopen Lungtaen Gyatso, President, College of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan</li> <li>Professor Deborah Gare, Pro Vice Chancellor of Law, Murdoch University, Australia</li> <li>Mr Khenrab Nyima Dorji, Student Graduate, Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan</li> <li>Professor Melinda Edwards, Honorary Consul for Bhutan in Brisbane, Australia</li> </ul>                                                                                                             |
| 16:25-17:00 | Closing Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conference Reflection</li> <li>Closing remarks by:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms Carly Partridge, Minister Counsellor, Australian High Commission, India</li> <li>HE Dasho Sonam Tobgay, Ambassador of Bhutan to Australia</li> <li>Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan</li> </ol> </li> <li>Vote of thanks and way forward by Dr Rinchen Dorji, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic and Research), Royal University of Bhutan..</li> </ul> |
| 19:00-22:00 | <b>Dinner hosted by HE Lyonpo D.N. Dhungyel, Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade for invited guests and presenters</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## Day IV Post-Conference Workshop: 6<sup>th</sup> December 2025

| Time       | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| 9:00-13:00 | <p><b>Post-Conference Workshop:</b> Navigating challenges and building resilience for early-career researchers</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b> To understand key challenges faced by early-career researchers in academia; explore strategies to navigate academic expectations, publishing, and supervision; build peer support networks and identify opportunities for mentoring; and develop a shared understanding of researchers' needs for future programming.</p> <p><b>Organisers:</b> Dr Phuntsho Wangdi, EduPlus Training Institute and Dr Rinchen Dorji, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan</p> |