

THE ETHICS CENTRE

Annual Report 2024-25

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Highlights of 2024-25



members of The Ethics Centre, welcoming 349 more members into our community, growth of 11%



sessions on The Ethics Centre and Festival of Dangerous Ideas websites



email subscribers to The Ethics Centre and Festival of Dangerous Ideas, growth of 29%



podcast downloads reached, across 4 series: *FODI*, *Little Bad Thing*, *Leading with Purpose*, *Life and ...* series, growth of 15%



visitors to The Ethics Centre and Festival of Dangerous Ideas websites





of the industry initiative, The Banking and Financial Services Oath



minutes of Ethi-call counselling, growth of 37%



of people who used Ethi-call reported their session gave them a better way to think about difficult decisions in the future



individual reads of articles and content on The Ethics Centre website



views of The Ethics Centre and Festival of Dangerous Ideas videos



social media fans across Facebook, LinkedIn, X, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, growth of 11%



potential audience reached by media coverage that featured The Ethics Centre, growth of 21%

Reflection on 2024-25

I recently attended a conference on Military Ethics convened by the Centre for Defence Ethics and Leadership (CDLE) at the Australian Defence College in Canberra. One speaker, Professor Toni Erskine, of the Australian National University, discussed the work she has been doing on the role that Artificial Intelligence (AI) might play in the decision by states to go to war.

Most discussions of the use of AI in war tends to focus on its application to the battle-space – ranging from battlefield damage assessments, to decisions about targeting to the deployment of lethal autonomous weapons systems (colloquially called 'killer robots') that make life and death decisions without any human in the loop. However, Professor Erskine and her colleagues have been considering the role that AI might play before a single shot is fired. Her focus is on what role AI might play in either initiating armed conflict – based solely on its own assessment of risk and opportunity – or in informing the decision of humans facing the same decision.

What stayed with me was Professor Erskine's observation that human fallibility underpins our current tendency to exercise restraint when deciding whether or not to go to war. Given that the devastations of war visited upon all – even the victors – it makes sense to hold back just in case your judgement proves to be wrong. This tendency is reinforced by lived experience – especially in those cases where restraint has been jettisoned and war has been waged on the basis of false information cooked up to achieve a predetermined end.

Professor Erskine asks us to consider what might happen to restraint when the recommendation to go to war is coming from a technological system that is presumed to have digested all relevant data, identified relevant patterns from past examples of conflict and has calculated the odds of success and failure at the speed of light. The pressure will only increase if it is assumed that one's adversary has access to the same powerful augmentation of decision making offered by Al. So, even if there is always a 'human in the loop', the illusion of certainty offered by machine intelligence (and our tendency as humans to defer to sources of authority) may overcome the bonds of restraint that support an enduring – if troubled – peace.

What I find especially fascinating about this line of argument is that it takes an apparent weakness in the human condition (limited processing power and a tendency to be wrong even when apparently certain) and reframes it as a strength.

I wanted to begin this year's reflection in this manner because the theme of finding 'strength in apparent weakness' is especially relevant to The Ethics Centre's circumstances. As anyone reading this Annual review will know, securing ongoing, sustainable funding for ethics is a huge challenge – one that this organisation has wrestled with for over 35 years.

Yet, for all of the tension and uncertainty, the Centre continues to produce amazing work. Some, like Festival of Dangerous Ideas are visible for all to see. Other parts, like the extraordinary Ethi-call service are necessarily veiled in confidentiality. Beyond that, there are programs large and small in schools, in workplaces, across industries – all designed to help bring ethics to the centre of everyday life.

The Ethics Centre is inching closer towards realising its dream of establishing the world's first national ethics initiative. When eventually we succeed, the

That's why I want to pay particular tribute to our members, donors and supporters and to my colleagues on staff and on the Board for their unwavering faith in the rightness of the purpose we serve. In our current circumstances, we need to prove ourselves every day - and I believe we do so with an uncompromising commitment to quality in all we do.

Vulnerability and uncertainty brings out the best in us. But that does not mean that we should celebrate the status quo. My hope for the next year is that we finally realise our larger strategic goal – and with a stable platform some 35 years in the building - we embark on a magnificent new chapter leading to ever greater impact. If this hope is realised, then there will be one essential precondition for success. We must never forget our current frailty, the humility it engenders and the resilience it requires. Those all too human traits are things that I doubt even the most sophisticated AI will ever truly understand.

Dr Simon Longstaff AO Executive Director

tread.



What is Ethics?



ETHICS IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.

Us and the lives we choose to live.
Us in relationships with each other.
Us in the context of the world we all live in.

KNOW YOUR WORLD. KNOW YOUR SELF.

Ethics extends a great invitation.

To know our world, each other and ourselves.

An unexamined life is not worth living.

NAVIGATE COMPLEXITY.

Our human experience can be complicated. Ethics can guide us through complex terrain. Ethics supports making good choices.

Our Pillars for Change

For over three decades, The Ethics Centre has been the trusted place that leaders, corporations and individuals turn to when facing challenging ethical issues. Our ability to convene people of good will from across the political and cultural spectrum has brought together our community for important conversations that would not otherwise take place. Our advocacy for improved ethical infrastructure, for the benefit of all, has been unwavering.

Australia is grappling with a major crisis of trust – in our leaders, media, democracy, businesses and even in each other. Unethical behaviour hampers our ability, as a society, to move forward because we do not trust the motivation of those in power. Research from Deloitte Access Economics shows that strengthening the country's ethical infrastructure and our ability to make sound decisions can help rebuild this trust, unlocking the social and economic benefits that come with it.

The Ethics Centre is uniquely placed to assist.

We work to bring ethics to the centre of everyday life in three core strategic ways:





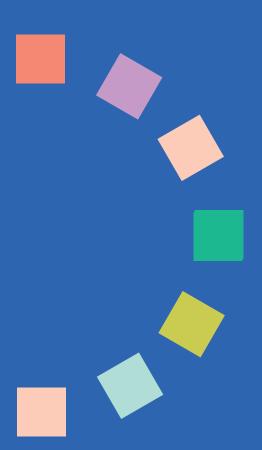




The Ethics Centre promotes ethics to all – from children in schools to the houses of parliament and Australia's business leaders – as a way to realise our vision for a better world.

Let's explore how.

Me Advise



Choices matter.

The decisions we make as individuals are collective in their impact. Each choice we make leaves an imprint on our own lives, those around us and the world at large.

Ethics is central to our capacity to make decisions that are good and right, in both our personal and professional lives. That's why The Ethics Centre provides advice, guidance and programs to support how we each – and collectively – can make better decisions and in doing so, create a better world.



ETHI-CALL CALLER

this to others. My view on the issue

approaching it. Amazing!"

has firmed and I feel more confident

it in my day-to-day and that's become a part of my everyday decision making."

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP ATTENDEE

BFSO YOUNG AMBASSADOR

leadership looks like."

issues that arise in the workplace.

And I've come to value what ethical



ETHI-CALL

Free support to help people make better decisions

Ethi-call, a free independent helpline has been run by The Ethics Centre for over 30 years. Staffed by highly trained volunteers, it is the only service of its kind in the world. It helps people navigate tough decisions, not by telling them what to do, but by helping them to understand what matters to them and giving them a framework to critically evaluate how to make a choice that is best for them.

In the past 12 months, the Centre reached more people than ever before, with a 37% increase in calls, delivering 37,620 minutes of ethical counselling. The skills and insights provided during these sessions have a remarkable, long-lasting impact. 94% of callers say their call left them with a better understanding of the issue they face, and more clarity about what's important to them in the choices they face. Ethi-call's Net Promoter Score increased 11% to an impressive 80.



The largest cohort of Young Ambassadors commits to ethical practices at work

The Banking and Financial Services Oath Young Ambassador program was first developed in 2015. This year, The Ethics Centre celebrated 10 years of delivering this unique initiative that seeks to strengthen the ethical foundation of financial services through the empowerment of individuals in the industry making a personal commitment of integrity. To help mark the occasion, on 12 June 2025, Michele Bullock, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia welcomed the 15 new Ambassadors to the program.

The year-long program focuses on fostering ethical awareness, decision making and leadership among young professionals in the Australian banking and financial services industry.

Supporting ethical capacity building for the engine-room of our economy

The Ethics Centre is regularly engaged by organisations to assist in their staff ethics training programs and to deliver engaging and informative speaking spots. The Centre aims to reveal the ethical lens to key issues in the workplace, offering perspective and guidance to help audiences better understand the ethical dimension and build their decision making skills in their day-to-day working lives. Programs focus on creating a space for teams to become aware of the ethical dimensions that can exist and equip them with a toolkit and language they can use in their workplaces. The Centre also supports professionals who have breached an ethical framework or code of practice to undertake remediation through the Ethics Counsel program.

Examining the complexities of our world

Through videos, podcasts and written articles, The Ethics Centre's content-led approach engages a wide range of audiences and provides a considered approach to discussing the pressing ethical issues our society faces. In an age of noise, the Centre's ethics content offers clarity. This year, the Centre's podcasts had 424,500 downloads, articles online had over 1 million reads and videos had over 551,000 views. Topics covered included democracy and global politics (the most read article was *Trump and the failure of the Grand Bargain*), critical thinking, disagreement, Al and war.

We *** Educate

Building skills in ethics is a lifelong undertaking.

We aspire to build and support ethical thinkers, courageous leaders and compassionate citizens of all ages. With a suite of evidence-based education programs – from early primary to late adolescence – to courses and workshops for adults, we encourage Australians to engage with complexity, navigate moral challenges and lead with integrity in a rapidly changing world.

By embedding ethics into classrooms and communities alike, we're not just teaching values; we're cultivating people ready to shape a fairer, more thoughtful future – across the generations.

The people at the centre of our work say

"Ethics isn't the purview of scholars, it's the living blood of a democracy. The Ethics Centre creates that strong civic friendship that binds us all together."

GWILYM DAVID BLUNT, FELLOW

"Being able to talk about real issues about race, identity, culture, sexuality, gender and bias, without judgment, helped all of us grow. It made us think more critically about our own beliefs and the roles we play in society."

COMMON GROUND STUDENT

"Reflecting on curiosity and imagination has helped me as a single mum/working professional connect with myself and my child in ways I had not expected the course to facilitate. Overall a wonderful course and I cannot express my gratitude more, sincere thanks from an aspiring amateur philosopher."

ETHICS REBOOT SUBSCRIBER



Helping students and teachers navigate complex ethical issues

From classroom resources to long-term professional support, the Centre's programs empower both students and teachers to engage deeply with ethical challenges. *Common Ground*, delivered in partnership with Courage to Care NSW and funded by Multicultural NSW, equipped students to address discrimination and build inclusive communities.

Ethical by Design: Leading New Futures, developed with The Menzies Leadership Foundation, immersed students in systems thinking and innovation through a curriculum-aligned program that culminated in the \$20,000 Design Out Racism challenge. For educators, Ethics for Educators and Quick Ethics provided practical, curriculum-linked tools to embed ethical inquiry into daily teaching. Complementing these were the Moral Injury and Professional Learning initiatives, which addressed teacher wellbeing and strengthened ethical leadership through structured support and reflective practice.



Increasing ethical literacy in daily life

In the past 12 months, the Centre ran two dedicated adult education programs to help build ethical literacy. The free, online course *Ethics Reboot* is a 21-day challenge to help people create better habits. Through a daily email containing challenges, audiences learn about a new ethical virtue each day and are encouraged to practise it in their lives. By the end of the financial year, the course had over 2,632 subscribers and overwhelmingly positive feedback: 94% of subscribers say it met their expectations and all those surveyed reported an increase in their wellbeing indicators. The in-person workshops *Ethics Tune Ups*, hosted by Dr Tim Dean, also proved popular this year and were expanded to a daytime offering as well as held in Melbourne for the first time.

An ethical lens on breaking news

The media provides a powerful way to increase the understanding of ethics among a broad, national audience. This year, The Ethics Centre provided comment, analysis and contributed to debates of national interest including the federal election, trust in our institutions, AI and everyday ethics. The Festival of Dangerous Ideas also drives high media interest, especially around key international speakers including Masha Gessen, David Baddiel and Roxane Gay. The Centre was featured on major media programs nationally, including ABC radio, Q+A, The Guardian, The Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Daily Telegraph, reaching a potential audience of over 102 million Australians – growth of 21%.

Amplifying young voices

The Centre's youth strategy continued to build this year, with the aim to support and amplify youth voices. The Young Writers' Competition entered its second year and resulted in a record 88 entries from young writers across the country. Winning entries were published on the Centre's website and social media channels. As part of the Centre's goal to support young writers in ethics, the Centre also began the first pitch writing workshop in 2025, where a small group of young people gathered to learn about and practise refining their pitching and writing skills. The beginning of the year saw the Centre involved again with the UNSW Philosophy Society at Orientation Week, giving out merchandise, and talking with and engaging new students.

We * * * * * Engage

At The Ethics Centre we champion the examined life.

We provide safe spaces where conversations can occur and where people can challenge their own assumptions about what ought to be done.

We aim to create opportunities in which people can explore ethical questions in good faith – hosting respectful conversation, civic debate, community connection and different perspectives. A space in which ideas, ideals and beliefs can be addressed openly, with mutual respect.

Our power to convene conversations that are urgent and complex, yet can't be had anywhere else, is unique.



FODI 2024 Australia's original ideas festival

The Ethics Centre's Festival of Dangerous Ideas (FODI to its fans) is a biennial event that unites global experts and thinkers with curious audiences to explore challenging, profound issues shaping humanity's future. This year, held in August 2024, was FODI's biggest since 2016.

The program presented world-leading thinkers and change-makers such as Masha Gessen, David Baddiel, Roxane Gay, Megan Phelps-Roper, David Runciman, Jean Twenge and Jen Gunter – in-demand speakers at the forefront of global conversations on social media and children (Twenge participated in government meetings on this issue while in Australia), the world order, identity, cancel culture, women's health, democracy and more.

This impressive and high-profile lineup was presented alongside dynamic art installations such as *Tape* (from European artists Numen/For Use), a suspended cocoon made entirely of sticky tape. Over 17,200 tickets were sold, 42% more than the previous Festival, expanded the FODI footprint from Carriageworks to The State Library and UNSW Sydney, and increased FODI's media reach by a massive 88%.







Convening people for conversations that can't be had anywhere else

In addition to FODI, the Centre's annual events program brought together more than 897 people in person to explore ethical issues ranging from democracy and duty to journalism and ageing. A further 1,668 participants joined via livestream, resulting in a total attendance 32% higher than the previous year. The conversations sparked at these events extended into the Centre's social media and articles, prompting even more Australians to engage critically with these pressing contemporary issues.

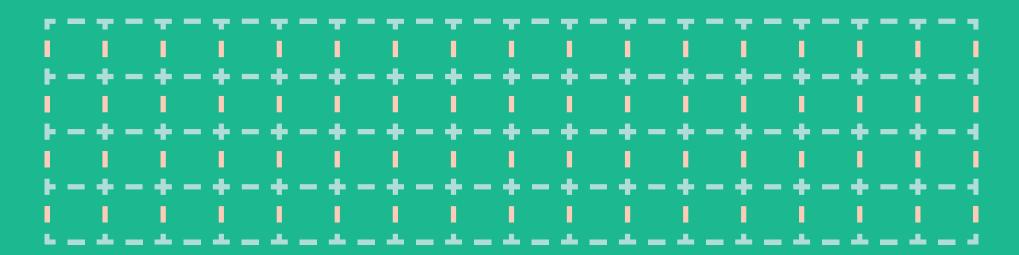
A collaborative space for corporate Australia

The Ethics Alliance is a corporate community with members from a broad cross-section of industries. It delivers the insights, inspiration and core tools needed to embed ethics in how you do business, creating positive, lasting and sustainable change through the collaboration of high-level decision makers. Our Alliance members are given a unique opportunity to connect with each other and address some of the most pressing ethical challenges they are facing, together – from Al and privacy to regulation and how to build (and maintain) trust, and more.

A community who supports our work

The Ethics Centre welcomed 349 new members this year, bringing the total number of members to over 1,093 – the largest cohort ever. Membership fees as well as generous donations made by members directly support the ongoing work of the Centre. Monthly members gatherings, hosted by philosophers from the Centre, provide a unique opportunity for the community to come together to have conversations that matter about pressing ethical issues in daily life.

Fundraising & Supporters



Thank you to our Members and Donors

The unwavering support of our members and donors makes our work possible. Your belief in the power of ethics to transform lives and communities drives everything we do at The Ethics Centre.

The 2025 Annual Appeal was met with extraordinary generosity, raising \$348,850. This is testament to our shared commitment to making ethical tools and resources accessible to all. These contributions directly fund Ethi-call, our free and confidential ethics counselling service, which continues to provide vital support to individuals facing complex moral challenges. Your support enables us to continue to deliver diverse programming, from thought-provoking events that spark important conversations to our advocacy work promoting ethical considerations across all aspects of society. Thanks to your generosity, we continue to publish free content and develop practical tools that ensure ethical resources remain accessible to everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

We continue to develop and deliver initiatives and programs that build moral courage and resilience in young Australians and build ethical leadership capabilities in early career professionals.

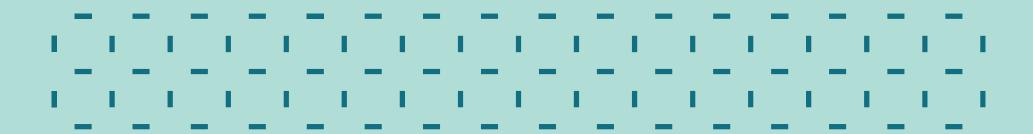
Innovative, free courses like *Ethics Unboxed* and *Ethics Reboot* reflect our ongoing commitment to ethical education and practical application. These initiatives, made possible by your contributions, help individuals and organisations navigate ethical complexity with confidence and clarity.

Our generous donors and members enable us to remain true to our founding principle: that ethics should not be a luxury available only to some, but a fundamental resource accessible to all. Together, we are building a more ethical world, one conversation, one decision, at a time.

Thank you for your continued trust and investment in our shared vision.



Our Supporters



We take this opportunity to thank our major donors who have made significant gifts to The Ethics Centre this financial year. With their support we're building a better world where everyone makes more ethical decisions.

- + Ferris Family Foundation
- + Joblink Plus
- + Peter Joseph AM
- + Dr Simon Longstaff AO and Suzie Longstaff
- + Bill Manos & Manos Foundation
- + Roger Massy-Greene AM and Belinda Hutchinson AC
- + Cynthia Nadai
- + Michael Pain

- + Dick and Pip Smith Foundation
- + Jost Stollmann
- + Professor Emeritus Christopher Tennant
- + Third Link Investment Managers
- + Steve Tucker
- + Karen Wood
- + John Wylie
- + Amely and Alexander Zaininger



Our Theory of Change

Our theory of change is ambitious. Central to this ambition is generating system level change. But system level change only begins at an individual level. Here's how:



Our world is, to a considerable degree, shaped by human decisions.



Better decisions make for a better world.



Humans can be inspired, taught and supported to make better decisions.



We begin with awareness of our individual and collective responsibility for the world we make.



We end with an innovative, just and thriving world.

Looking Forward

Like you, we passionately care about creating a better world.



Restoring Trust with the Estalishment of a National Ethics Institute

There is a direct and powerful link between prosperity and trust. Deloitte Access Economics has estimated that a mere 10% improvement in ethics in Australia (and the trust it produces) would increase the nation's GDP by \$45 billion per annum. So, there is everything to be gained by developing practical proposals for increasing trust and resilience in areas of vital national interest.

The Ethics Centre is committed to pursuing funding for the proposed national Ethics Institute, in partnership with the University of NSW and the University of Sydney. The Ethics Institute will be a national resource for advice on the profound ethical questions that face our nation. In addition to providing disinterested, expert advice, the Institute will coordinate national efforts to strengthen and reinforce the nation's ethical infrastructure and decision making. This and the increased trust it will help build are essential prerequisites for the effective implementation of the reforms our society must embrace if we are to make for ourselves a sustainable, just and prosperous future.



Education Programs with Impact

Teaching ethics to young people isn't about imposing values, rather it's about empowering them with the tools to navigate the complexities of their lives now and in the future with clarity, compassion and courage. In a world that needs principled leadership and respectful engagement, it's one of the most vital skillsets the Centre can support.



Better Businesses and Stronger Industries

Supporting organisations and business leaders to put ethics at the core of their DNA will continue to be a priority for the Centre. Through collegiate sharing in the Ethics Alliance, to the personal oath taken by the Banking and Financial Services Oath Young Ambassadors, to leadership development initiatives, the Centre is focused on helping improve ethical behaviour in business now and in to the future.



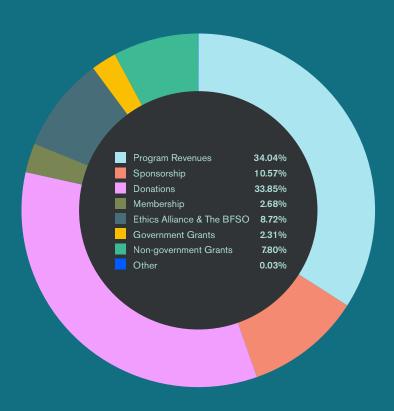
Sound Decision Making

Better decisions make a better world and The Ethics Centre's three-decade history in supporting individuals to make the best decisions possible is unwavering. The free ethics helpline, Ethi-call, is unique in the world and the Centre is striving to find new ways to evolve this service to increase both impact and accessibility.

Financial Performance

The Ethics Centre is fortunate to receive income from donations, membership fees, ticket sales and speaking fees. We also operate a consulting practice which receives fees from clients in the public and private sectors for provision of ethics advice and education. Many of our activities are supported by a cohort of volunteers who give generously of their time. On the other side of the ledger, we are obliged to meet the cost of our operating expenses, including the delivery of an extensive range of programs and events that support our organisational purpose.

For the year ended 30 June 2025



The funding sources and application represented in the charts above relate to activities undertaken by The Ethics Centre only. It does not include activitities of The Ethics Centre's subsidiary Primary Ethics.

Funding Sources:

Program Revenues: \$1,287,795

Income received from consulting services, retainers held in relation to consulting, ethics education learning programs, event ticket sales and counselling services.

Sponsorship: \$400,000

Income received from corporate sponsors in support of the programs being undertaken.

Donations: \$1,280,398

Income received from fundraising appeals.

Membership: \$101,213

Income received from members of The Ethics Centre, as part of the annual membership subscription.

Ethics Alliance & The BFSO: \$330,000

Income received from members of The Ethics Alliance, as part of the annual membership subscription, and the BFSO as oath signatories.

Government Grants: \$87,262

Income received from the NSW government.

Non-government Grants: \$295,000

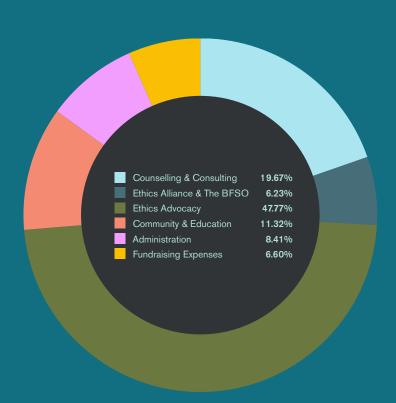
Income received from foundations.

Other: \$1,046

Miscellaneous income.

Total \$3,782,714

In the 2024-25 financial year, The Ethics Centre posted a loss of (\$399,510). While the need for the work we do has never been greater, the financial challenges we face are not unique to non-profits. Our long-term financial stability is always at the forefront of our minds, and we are focused on strategies to secure funding that enables us to deliver on our mission to bring ethics to the centre of everyday life.



Program Costs:

Counselling & Consulting: \$822,485

Includes staff costs and third party costs in relation to delivery of consulting and counselling programs and the ongoing development of the Ethi-call service.

Ethics Alliance & The BFSO: \$260,630

Includes staff and third party costs in relation to developing events and content for Alliance members and BFSO signatories.

Ethics Advocacy: \$1,997,866

Includes staff and third party costs in relation to developing and promoting content, articles and curating public events.

Community & Education: \$473,536

Includes staff and third party trainers in delivering education programs and staff costs associated with research.

Administration: \$351,760

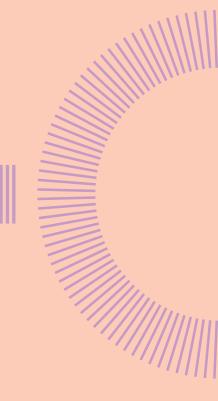
Includes staff and other operating expenses associated with general management and administration of The Ethics Centre.

Fundraising Expenses: \$275,957

The costs associated with attracting more support through donations, developing funding partnerships and the administration of fundraising activities.

Total \$4,182,234

Governance



Our Structure

The Ethics Centre is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee which is established to be, and to continue, as a charity. The Ethics Centre is listed in the Australian Taxation Act as a deductible gift recipient (DGR).

Board of Directors

The Centre is governed by a voluntary board of up to twelve directors. The Board is responsible for appointing the chair, secretary, and treasurer and delegates day-to-day management to the executive director.

Peter Joseph AM, Chair Michael Pain

Scott Gartrell Steve Tucker

Narelle Hooper Bernadette Bateman, Company Secretary

Stuart Marshall, Treasurer



Role of the Board

The Board is the trustee of the founding vision of The Ethics Centre and is responsible for its good governance. It oversees the management of the organisation and meets six times a year to:

- + approve the strategic direction and policies + approve and monitor budgets
- + define appropriate financial and risk management strategies
- + ensure compliance with relevant standards, regulations and reporting requirements
- + provide accountability to members and stakeholders
- + appoint, support and monitor the performance of the executive director.

Management & Staff

The Centre's executive management is led by Executive Director Dr Simon Longstaff AO.

More information about our staff is available on our website.

A more ethical society is possible, with your help



For over 30 years, The Ethics Centre has been the leading independent advocate for bringing ethics to the centre of life. We wish to be a catalyst and an enabler of better decisions so that every one of us can be a force for good.

But we can't do that by ourselves.

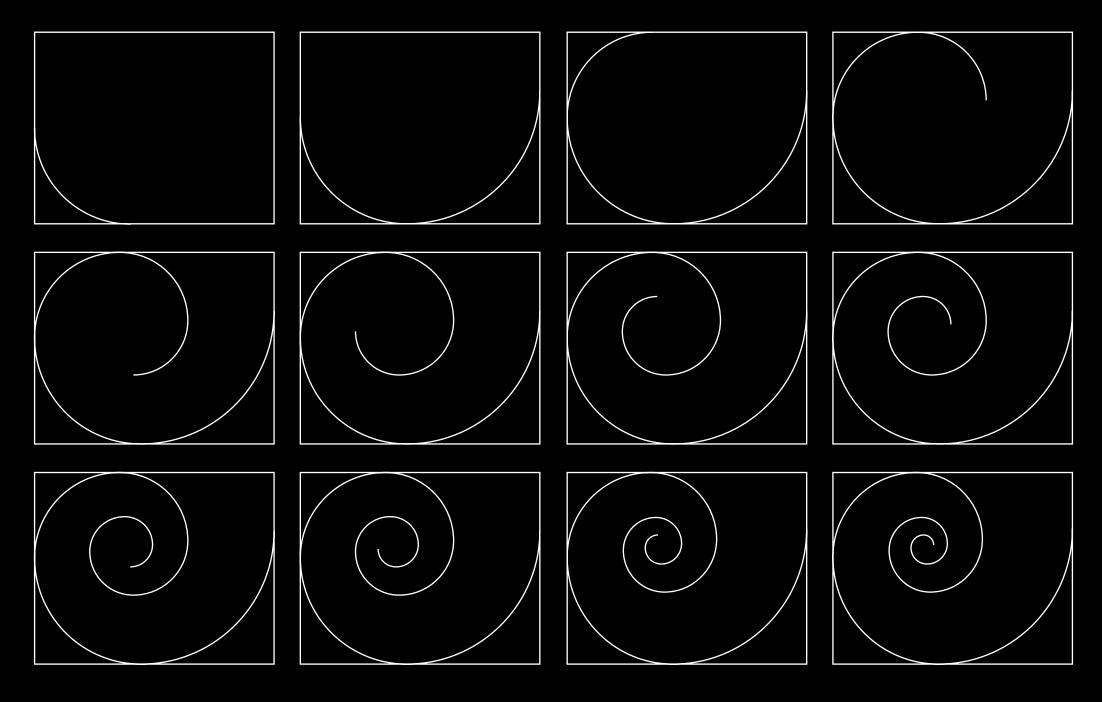
We need your support to be able to have the independence to continue for another 30 years.

Together we can bring ethics to the centre of everyday life.

Every donation, large or small, makes a difference. All donations to The Ethics Centre are tax deductible.

Please consider donating at ethics.org.au/donate





ETHICS.ORG.AU