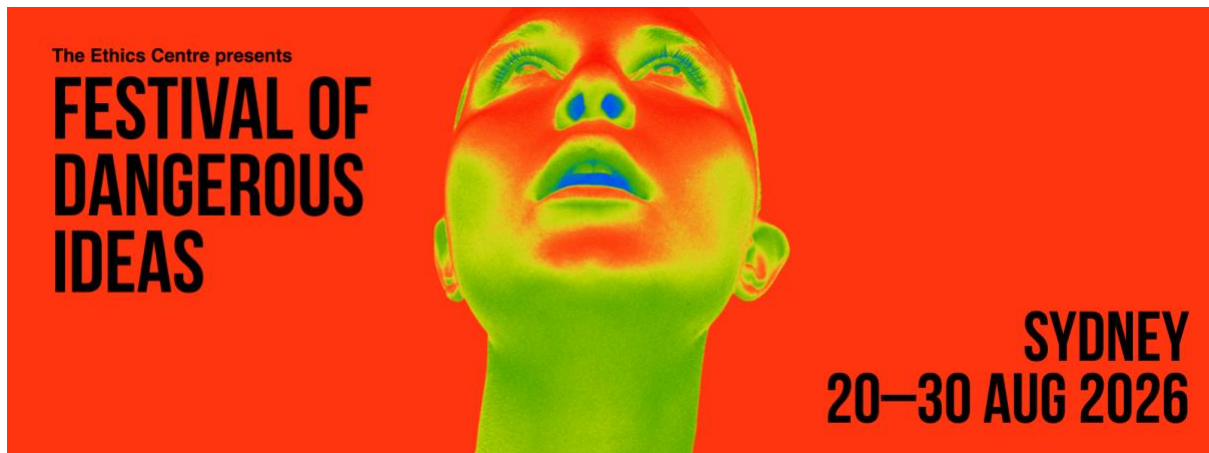




MEDIA RELEASE // 29 JULY 2026

Tim Minchin headlines Festival of Dangerous Ideas as 2026 program expands with new speakers, punks, free experiences and a first time Schools Day

Australia's globally renowned Festival of Dangerous Ideas has expanded its 2026 lineup, with **Tim Minchin** announced as headline speaker alongside new sessions, punk bands, introductions to dangerous films by leading thinkers, free on-site experiences and the Festival's first Schools Day.

Presented by **The Ethics Centre**, the Festival's 13th program will bring leading international and Australian thinkers, writers, artists and troublemakers to Sydney across an expanded 10-day program from 20–30 August 2026.

Alongside the always-popular talks and panels a series of Festival firsts rolls out with world-premiere art, taboo film, behind-the-scenes excursions, music and public encounters with ideas that confront the complex, urgent and uncomfortable forces shaping our world.

The newest announcement is the headline appearance of **Tim Minchin**, who will present the Opening Night Provocation. The celebrated Australian composer-lyricist, pianist, singer, writer, comedian and actor will present a new keynote on storytelling, music and satire as tools for defending a vibrant, free society. Minchin will examine extremism, censorship and fear, while turning the lens on his own career to ask what it means to speak, provoke, withdraw or stay silent in an age of pile-ons, brand protection and moral certainty.

Festival Director, Danielle Harvey said "Festival of Dangerous Ideas keeps getting bigger because global problems keep getting bigger. Instead of doomscrolling or pretending someone else will fix it, we've met complexity head on, and audiences are responding. This year that means punk bands and philosophy, banned books and dangerous films, and a Schools Day that puts students in the room with the ideas that will shape their future. What unites it all is a refusal to look away – from extremism, authoritarianism, the uncomfortable question of what it costs to speak and what it costs to stay silent. The long-awaited opportunity to program Tim Minchin also embodies that refusal. We want people to leave with ideas they can't easily shake."

Acclaimed novelist and digital rights activist **Cory Doctorow** will join the Festival's inaugural **Schools Day**, participating in '**AI Hot Seat**', an interactive session with The Ethics Centre's AI ethicist **Aubrey Blanche**, and students. The Schools Day invites Years 9-11 students into the Festival's big conversations, giving them the critical thinking skills to engage with complex and uncomfortable ideas well beyond the classroom. Across the day, students will learn to build on others' arguments rather than simply oppose them, testing their own positions with philosophers before applying those skills to a live question about AI and the future in *AI Hot Seat*.

The Festival has also announced that new music program **Meltdown** will take over Heaps Normal Health Club Marrickville as a one-night punk eruption of pure sonic release, with the full band lineup featuring Australian psychedelic rock and roll occultists, *Neptune Power Federation*, roving performances from burlesque artist, *Porcelain Alice*, emerging three-piece dance punk band, *Ponzi Scheme* and breakthrough five-piece hydra, *Mac the Knife* with vocalist Bryn Chapman Parish (*Heartbreak High*).

The Festival has also announced a series of introductions and post-screening conversations for **Dangerous Films: Old Reels, New Revelations**, its first-ever film program at Dendy Newtown. The program will reframe provocative and critically acclaimed cinema, asking what makes a film dangerous then and now.

Zero Dark Thirty will be introduced by **Todd Sampson**, award-winning documentary-maker and television presenter, **Holy Motors** by **Leslie Stein**, Jungian analyst and author of *The Self in Jungian Psychology: Theory and Clinical Practice*; **Gojira** (Godzilla) by **Professor Danielle Celermajer**, Deputy Director of the Sydney Environment Institute at the University of Sydney and author of *Summertime: Reflections on a Vanishing Future*; **Salò (120 Days of Sodom)** by **Associate Professor Jane Mills**, documentary filmmaker, anti-censorship campaigner and author of *The Money Shot: Cinema, Sin & Censorship*; **Shortbus** by **Associate Professor Denton Callander** of The Kirby Institute, UNSW; **The Piano** by **Associate Professor Alecia Simmonds**, award-winning author of *Courting: An Intimate History of Love and the Law* and co-host of ABC podcast *The Dead Can't Sue*; and **Rocking the Foundations** by filmmaker **Pat Fiske**; and **Knife: The Attempted Murder of Salman Rushdie** will be introduced by Executive Director of The Ethics Centre Dr Simon Longstaff.

The documentary **Hatred** will include a post-screening panel featuring filmmaker **Mitzi Goldman**, CEO of *Documentary Australia*; Shankari Chandran, 2023 Miles Franklin Literary Award winner; and **Kelby Mason**, philosopher in residence at Primary Ethics.

Adding to the talks program, **Allegra Spender MP** and former judge **Michael Pembroke** will join journalist Pat Abboud on **The Illusion of Impartiality**, a panel exploring whether claims of neutrality are among the most dangerous lies in public life.

Journalist **Peter Hartcher** will chair **The Good Life State**, a panel featuring philosopher **Alexandre Lefebvre**, journalist **Melissa Chan** and historian **Ussama Makdisi**, examining what people find attractive in authoritarian regimes.

Editor of *The Monthly*, **Michael Williams**, will chair **Paranoid Nationalism**, bringing together **Ghassan Hage**, **David Leser** and **Marcia Langton** for a conversation on nationhood, empathy and the politics of grievance.

Richard Holden the Vice-Chancellor's Professor and Chief Societal Economist at UNSW and Director of the Manos Institute for Cognitive Economics, will chair the sold-out panel **Decolonisation Is Not An Economic Policy** with US economist Glenn Loury, CEO of the Council of First Nations Duane Fraser and social commentator Celeste Liddle.

Historian and author Michelle Arrow chairs Palestinian American historian Ussama Makdisi keynote **The Myths of Ancient Hatreds** looking at coexistence in the Middle East.

Joining Ben Law for the **Banned Book Club** at restaurant Attenzione! is writer and critic James Bradley. Together with diners they will go deep into the dark corners of the popular and disturbing tome, *American Psycho*.

The extended Festival will offer a broader free on-site experience at Carriageworks across 21-23 August, creating more ways for audiences to encounter dangerous ideas without a ticket.

Free access will include **HEAP** – the Festival's major participatory art commission where audiences are invited to step barefoot into a vast landscape of earth to uncover new works by eight leading Australian contemporary artists - alongside **the festival favorite philosophy community chat Circle of Chairs**, an activation inspired by the Epstein Files, a communal choir, artist talks, onsite bookshop and a foyer scored by DJs Aunty Jonny, Luke M de Zilva and Thick Owens designed to bring the festival's ideas into the shared civic space.

Minister for Jobs and Tourism Steve Kamper said: "Critical thinking is the foundation of culture and creativity, which makes the Festival of Dangerous Ideas so important for Sydney's cultural calendar. As the only festival of its kind in Australia, it brings together some of the brightest minds from around the globe for genuine discussion on the issues that matter most. Events like this define Sydney as not just the nation's cultural capital, but its intellectual capital too."

The Festival's expanded program brings together 150+ guests this year, all appearing live and in person.

Major international figures announced previously are **John Cameron Mitchell, Maria Alyokhina, Maria Ressa, Cory Doctorow, Glenn Loury, Peter Beinart, Ussama Makdisi and Philippe Bolopion**, with Australians including **Lucinda Holdforth, Malcolm Turnbull, Aftab Malik, Richard Flanagan, Bob Carr, Clive Hamilton, Amy Thunig-McGregor, Greg Sheridan, Hannah Ferguson, Stan Grant, Jess Hill and Peter Singer**.

The Festival's **Dangerous Art** program extends the festival's exploration of dangerous ideas into performance, installation, music, dining and participatory experience, with **Exposure, Farewell Tour, Deep Soulful Sweats, FAKE, The World Came Flooding In, And Also With You** and decadent dining experience **The Last Supper** presented alongside **HEAP**.

Dangerous Excursions: Forbidden Access will open hidden collections, restricted spaces and difficult histories across Sydney's cultural institutions, inviting audiences into archives, storage stacks, labs and behind-the-scenes areas rarely seen by the public. Participating institutions include *State Library of NSW, Chau Chak Wing Museum, Australian Botanic*

Garden Mount Annan, National Herbarium of New South Wales and PlantBank, Caroline Simpson Library at The Mint, Justice and Police Museum, ABC Ultimo Centre and the Australian Museum Research Institute.

Other festival highlights include a series of workshops at The Ethics Centre covering: having difficult conversations, using AI without losing autonomy, filing FOI requests and navigating workplace conflict, led by **Monty Badami, Aubrey Blanche, Cam Wilson and Tim Duggan.**

Tickets to all Festival events are now on sale.

Festival of Dangerous Ideas is presented by The Ethics Centre, a not-for-profit that encourages people to examine all aspects of life. The Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and Destination NSW, and its returning principal partner is JobLink Plus.

– ENDS –

Media Contacts

Caroline Hendry // caroline@commonstate.co // +61 406 154 577

Jadan Carroll // jadan@commonstate.co // +61 403 837 351

NOTES TO EDITOR

- Festival of Dangerous Ideas 2026 runs from 20-30 August across Sydney with key events at Carriageworks and other major institutions.
- The theme of the 2026 event is *Revelation*
- The program features 150+ speakers and artists, including 19 international guests, appearing in 115 sessions across 10 days
- Single and multipack tickets are now available to purchase at festivalofdangerousideas.com
- Selected sessions will be available for livestream, to be announced soon
- Festival of Dangerous Ideas is presented by The Ethics Centre
- Festival of Dangerous Ideas [MEDIA CENTRE](#)

About The Ethics Centre

The Festival of Dangerous Ideas is the flagship event presented by The Ethics Centre. It sits alongside an annual program of events, courses and content with memberships and advisory services for individuals and businesses. Ethics is at the centre of being human. The Ethics Centre is a not-for-profit organisation developing and delivering innovative programs, services, and experiences, designed to bring ethics to the centre of personal and professional life. The Ethics Centre is committed to injecting a pause into the centre of public life and allowing people to stop, connect with others and explore the ethical dimensions of our everyday lives.

Presented by



Principal Partner



**Supported by the NSW Government
through Create NSW**



Strategic Partner

