

Political scientists pivotal for future-building

By Dr Nick Frank, 28 November 2025

Leaving the Australian Political Studies Association (APSA) 2025 Annual Conference at the University of Melbourne, I felt a renewed sense of purpose and, unexpectedly, optimism. What stood out most was the extraordinary energy around climate and energy politics. Panels on environmental governance, climate diplomacy, and the energy transition showed how researchers are uncovering new pathways for action.

Across discussions on democracy, climate, and global security, one message was clear: there has never been a greater need for political scientists. The challenges we're facing—democratic backsliding, climate disruption, and rising geopolitical competition—are unfolding at the same time. The discipline can offer guidance about what supports participation, how institutions hold up under strain, and how wider economic and political forces influence the choices available to governments and communities.

What APSA 2025 reinforced for me is that our contribution is not only analytical but also practical. Through research on participation, policy, institutions, and global politics, we can offer evidence and options that contribute to more durable and accountable public decisions.