

2026 VIETNAM-AUSTRALIA FORUM

OPENING REMARKS

Ms Kate Wallace, Australian Consul-General in Ho Chi Minh City

Xin chào! Thank you so much.

Associate Professor Đậu Hường Nam, Director General of International Cooperation Department at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics

Associate Professor Nguyễn Tấn Vinh, Director General of the Academy of Politics Region II

Distinguished leaders and representatives of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee

Colleagues from the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Academy of Politics Region II

My colleagues from Australia who join us today

Distinguished guests, speakers and delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the 2026 Vietnam-Australia Forum here in Ho Chi Minh City.

On behalf of the Australian Government, I extend our sincere appreciation to the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics for its leadership, direction and longstanding support for the Vietnam Australia Centre, and for guiding the organisation of today's Forum.

I also warmly thank the Academy of Politics Region II for hosting us, and the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee for its close cooperation and important support.

Today's Forum takes place at a moment of great confidence and ambition in the relationship between Australia and Vietnam.

Our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership reflects the trust between our countries and our shared determination to turn that trust into practical cooperation.

The visit of General Secretary and President Tô Lâm to Australia last month has given new momentum to that work.

Ho Chi Minh City is a natural place for this conversation.

It is one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic urban centres and a vital hub for trade, investment, innovation and people-to-people links between Australia and Vietnam.

The city's continued success matters not only to Vietnam, but also to Australian businesses, universities and communities that have built deep connections here.

When we speak about government reform, it is easy to begin with structures, systems and processes.

But most people experience government in much more personal ways.

In Australia, it might be a family registering a birth, a business seeking a permit, an investor navigating regulatory requirements, or a citizen trying to access support through a digital service.

In those moments, people do not think about which department owns a process.

They simply need government to work: to be clear, joined-up, timely and fair.

Businesses similarly need rules that are predictable, proportionate and easy to understand, while maintaining accountability and public confidence.

That is why today's focus on efficient and citizen-centred government is so important.

Ho Chi Minh City's newly expanded metropolitan system creates significant opportunities to integrate services, simplify administrative journeys and use technology and data more effectively.

It also creates a demanding leadership task: aligning institutions, maintaining capability and ensuring people continue to receive reliable services as systems change.

Australia has learned through its own federal system that coordination across institutions and levels of government requires constant effort.

One lesson has been especially important: people should not need to understand the machinery of government in order to receive a good service from government.

This has encouraged Australian institutions to design services around people's life events rather than agency boundaries, to make greater use of digital platforms, and to invest in leaders who can work across organisational lines.

It has also taught us that digital transformation is not simply about putting an existing form online. It is about rethinking the whole journey from the perspective of the person or business using the service.

This is not a story of finished reform. Expectations change, technology changes and cities change. Trust must be earned again through each interaction.

Australia continues to learn, including from our partners, and we come to today's discussion in that spirit.

There is no single Australian model that can simply be transferred to Vietnam.

Our histories, institutions and circumstances are different.

The value of today's Forum lies in honest exchange: sharing what has worked, being open about what has not, and considering which lessons may be useful in each country's context.

I am pleased to welcome Ms Jo Talbot from the Australian Public Service Commission and Ms Vanessa Roarty from Services Australia to today's Forum.

Jo will bring experience of the leadership, workforce capability and culture needed for high-performing government.

Vanessa will speak from Australia's continuing journey to make services simpler, more connected and more centred on the people who use them.

We equally look forward to learning from Ho Chi Minh City's leaders and practitioners, and from representatives of the city's Public Administrative Service Centre, Hi-Tech Park and business community.

Their insights will help connect high-level reform objectives with the daily realities facing citizens, officials, investors and enterprises.

The Vietnam Australia Centre is an important part of this exchange.

As a flagship initiative under our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, it demonstrates what Australia and Vietnam can achieve when high-level political commitment is matched by strong institutions and enduring professional relationships.

Through the partnership between the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and the Australian Government, the Centre connects leaders, policymakers and experts.

It builds capability, supports evidence-informed policy and creates networks that help our two countries solve problems together.

Ultimately, citizen-centred government is about trust. Trust that institutions will listen.

Trust that rules will be applied fairly.

Trust that services will work when people need them.

And trust that reform will lead to practical improvements in people's lives and in the environment for business and investment.

Today's Forum is an opportunity to strengthen that trust through leadership, capability and partnership.

I encourage all participants to share openly, ask practical questions and build connections that continue well beyond today.

Thank you again to the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics for its leadership and direction; to the Academy of Politics Region II for hosting us; to the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee for its valued partnership and support; and to all speakers, organisers and participants.

I wish you a productive and engaging Forum.

Xin cam on. Thank you.