From the Australia-UK-US enhanced security partnership (AUKUS) to the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue network with India, Japan and the US for strategic exchange and practical Indo-Pacific coordination and cooperation (the Quad), participants will also have the opportunity to engage via a moderated question and answer session.

3:00-3:05 PM: Opening remarks by Dr. Butch Herod, Assistant VP of the UHCL Diplomacy Institute

3:05-3:10 PM: Formal welcoming remarks to UHCL by Dr. Glenn Sanford, Dean of the UHCL College of Human Sciences and Humanities

3:10-3:15 PM: Introduction of Consul General by Dr. Daniel Katz, UHCL Diplomacy Institute

3:15-3:45 PM: Prepared remarks by Consul General

3:45 PM-4:00 PM: Discussion/Q&A with Consul General/Dr. Herod and Dr. Katz

4:00 PM-4:30 PM: Moderated Q&A with in-person and Zoom audiences
Thank you, Dr. Herod and Dr Sanford for your opening remarks, and Dr. Katz for the introduction, and I look forward to our discuss shortly.

It is an honour to be here today to discuss the Australian diplomacy agenda in the evolving Indo-Pacific. I also wanted to take this opportunity to share a bit about my background, and role as the Australian Consul-General and Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner.

Before I proceed, I did want to note that our Prime Minister has announced that there will be an election on Saturday 21 May. As such, we are now in, what we call ‘caretaker period’ following the prorogation of the Parliament, and dissolution of the House of Representatives on Monday 11 April.

The caretaker period ends when the election result is clear or, if there is a change of government, when the new government is appointed.

Under the Australian caretaker conventions, the government avoids:

- Making major policy decisions that are likely to commit an incoming government
- Making significant appointments
- Entering into major contracts or undertakings.

As a result, my speech today will necessarily be limited to factual issues and cannot be taken as indicative of the policies of a future government

Today, I will discuss topics that relate to Australia’s important role in the Indo-Pacific region, and key partnerships we hold with our friends in the region – including the Australia-UK-US enhanced security partnership (known as AUKUS) to the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue network with India, Japan and the US, which supports strategic exchange and practical Indo-Pacific coordination and cooperation initiatives (known as the QUAD).

But first I wanted to provide a bit of insight into my role here in Houston, as both the Consul-General and Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner, and share a bit about myself.

- Gomeroi Story
- 2011 Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations
- Key topics: mental health, climate change and future work/study pathways
- St. Gallen Symposium
- National Indigenous Youth Leadership Academy
- Developing the next leaders
I arrived in Houston in January 2021 – 3 weeks before the winter freeze, and during the global pandemic with a 18month old daughter and my wife – so it has been a bit of an adventure and learning curve.

My role shares both a diplomatic, and trade and investment function within the Australian Trade and Investment Commission otherwise known as Austrade, which is the Australian Governments lead agency for trade promotion and investment attraction.

At Austrade, we help attract investment to Australia, to support new industries, enhance existing ones and bolster our world-class research and development – across priority sectors including:

- Defence, Space and Infrastructure
- Energy and Resource
- Healthcare
- Digitech, and
- Agri-business

Austrade operates in 80 offices around the world, with 5 across North America. Our diverse teams consisting of – Senior Trade and Investment Commissioners, Business Development Managers, Consular Officers, Analysts – we also work closely with our various states and territory government agencies and representatives.

The Americas has traditionally been an Investment market, however, over the past 2 years we have had an increasing focus on North America as an export destination for Australian companies seeking to expand their global footprint.

I lead the Healthcare and life sciences sector team for Austrade across the Americas, and work closely with my colleagues in Australia to attract and facilitate investment in our health priority areas – biologics & therapeutics, digital health and med-tech.

As Consul-General, my jurisdiction includes Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma, and focuses on building diplomatic and economic ties across these states, as well as providing passports and consular services for Australians.

The United States is a long-standing and valued partner. In 2018, Australia and the US celebrated 100 years of ‘Mateship’ which recognised the first time Australian and United States troops fought together in the Battle of Hamel on the Western Front in France on July 4, 1918, under the command of Australian General John Monash.

Australian and US service men and women have served side-by-side in every subsequent war, conflict and peace keeping operation.

Mateship acknowledges the trusted and interconnected relationship we have with the US – not only in peace and security, but across all areas of society including advanced technology, healthcare and life sciences, and culture.
The Indo-Pacific is Australia’s neighbourhood, and the world’s most consequential region it encompasses our Pacific family, our Southeast Asian neighbours, our major trading partners, our US Alliance and strategic partners.

Australia’s future remains tied to the stability, security and resilience of the Indo-Pacific.

Australia supports the principles that have underpinned decades of stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific

- Openness – including open and secure markets that facilitate flow of goods, people and ideas
- Inclusiveness – in our region’s architecture and in a regional order which allows many voices, perspectives and players
- Resilience – to coercion as well as to natural disasters and climate change
- And based on rules, norms and international law – where the rights and sovereignty of all countries are respected regardless of size or power.

Challenges to this vision are growing but Australia has a long history of upholding the international rules-based order, and working with regional partners to support a secure, stable and peaceful Indo-Pacific.

We have been building our network of partnerships to strengthen stability, security and prosperity including:

- Modernising our alliance with the United States and building our defence and national security capacity through AUKUS
- Elevating the Quad and strengthening ties with India and Japan
- Deepening our partnership with ASEAN and working with our Pacific family through the Step-Up
- and engaging with partners in Europe who are increasing their focus in the Indo-Pacific.

Our general position is that we want to work with partners in the region in support of their needs and deliver with no strings attached.

The Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the US) is a great example of working with key partners in our region. The Quad has built considerable momentum in recent years, particularly since its elevation to Leaders’ level.

The Leaders’ Summit last September sent a powerful signal of the Quad’s commitment to address the defining challenges facing the region in this era of increasing complexity, and supporting the sovereignty and independence of regional countries by providing them with strategic choices.

These challenges include the impacts of Climate Change, and successfully navigating energy transition, affordability, and access.

The Quad complements our other regional engagement by championing ASEAN centrality and ASEAN’s outlook on the Indo-Pacific.
And with the Indo-Pacific now the centre of strategic competition, a new enhanced trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States was announced last September, AUKUS.

AUKUS complements Australia’s existing network of international partnerships, including ASEAN, our Pacific family, the Five Eyes, the Five Power Defence Arrangements and the Quad.

It boosts collective efforts to ensure the Indo-Pacific remains stable, secure, prosperous and free from coercion.

It is not a new defence alliance or pact, nor a change in strategy but will enable our three countries to better collaborate on defence science, research and education, technology and industrial bases.

Contributing to a stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

AUKUS has been met with great interest, while the focus has been on nuclear-powered submarines, this is one component of the partnership. The strong focus on research, technology and industrial bases provides significant opportunity for partnerships, collaborations and innovation between our nations.

An area for innovation is in critical infrastructure and technology to address the challenges of Climate Change:

Australia is resolutely committed to the Paris Agreement, and Australia has a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Australia is on track to reduce emissions by up to 35 per cent by 2030. Global climate efforts, as well as our shared economic prosperity depends on an accelerated transition to a clean energy global economy.

To that end, Australia is committed to facilitating this at home and internationally, working closely with partners in our region of the world, specifically our pacific family, and near neighbours.

As mentioned, the under the Australian caretaker conventions, the government avoids:

- Making major policy decisions that are likely to commit an incoming government
- Making significant appointments
- Entering into major contracts or undertakings.

So, I hope this provides an insight into the significant and important role the Indo-Pacific region has for Australia and our partners.

I look forward to more of a discussion with Dr Katz.