# Meredith Whittaker to headline SXSW Sydney 2025 with focus on AI and innovation



South by Southwest Sydney (SXSW Sydney) has announced Meredith Whittaker, President of Signal, as the first keynote speaker for its 2025 edition, alongside a distinguished lineup of technology and innovation leaders. The event, scheduled to take place from 13 to 19 October at the ICC Sydney, promises to be the most ambitious yet, showcasing both established innovators and emerging talent from Australia's tertiary education institutions.

Meredith Whittaker brings over 17 years of experience spanning technology, academia, and government. As Signal’s President and a member of its Foundation Board, she has played a pivotal role in shaping global artificial intelligence (AI) policies and advocating for greater recognition of the surveillance-related challenges posed by AI technologies. Whittaker has provided advice to major institutions including the White House, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the City of New York, and the European Parliament on matters of privacy, security, internet policy, and AI. Her presence at SXSW Sydney underscores the event's emphasis on the transformative potential of AI.

Other notable speakers include Sandy Carter, an international expert on AI and blockchain technology and COO of Unstoppable Domains, who emphasised the importance of embracing AI for businesses. Speaking to TEG, organisers of SXSW Sydney, Carter said, “Stop fearing AI—fear the businesses that refuse to embrace it. The real threat isn’t machines overtaking humans, but companies missing out on transformative potential.”

Ivan Zhao, Co-founder and CEO of Notion, is also confirmed to speak. Under his guidance, Notion has become a leader in AI-powered collaboration and productivity, with a current valuation of approximately $10 billion. Paige Costello, Vice President of Product at design platform Figma, and Rohit Agarwal, Managing Director of Peak XV Partners, a venture capital firm with over $9 billion under management, will also contribute to the festival's extensive programme.

From the Australian government side, Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness, Australia's National Cyber Security Coordinator, will provide insights into national cybersecurity policy and the government’s approach to cyber incident preparedness. Prior to her current role, McGuinness served as Deputy Director Commonwealth Integration at the United States Defense Intelligence Agency.

SXSW Sydney will also welcome Tim Cadogan, CEO of GoFundMe, who was recently named by TIME magazine as one of the 100 Most Influential People of 2025. His impact in redefining business resilience and humanity has been widely recognised, as noted by Sarah Friar, writing for TIME: “Tim has redefined the impact a business can have, proving it can be both deeply human and remarkably resilient, especially when the path forward is unclear.”

In addition to the conference sessions, the event features several flagship competitions and initiatives. The SXSW Sydney Pitch competition invites startups worldwide to present their disruptive ideas before industry experts, media, and investors, with the winner eligible to attend either SXSW Austin or SXSW London the following year. Stefan Mazy, winner of the 2024 Pitch, highlighted the value of global recognition, stating, “being a founder in a start-up is a hard, gruelling job not for the faint hearted, so recognition from these global innovation platforms adds immensely to our credibility and has accelerated our market entry timeline significantly.”

New initiatives for 2025 include the Student Pitch, spotlighting innovative ideas from tertiary students, and the Tech & Innovation Showcase, a two-day exhibition featuring cutting-edge projects from early-stage innovators and students. These initiatives will be held alongside the already established Hackathon, a multi-day event for engineers and creative thinkers focused on solving significant challenges involving AI.

The Innovation Expo will be open from 15 to 18 October at the ICC Sydney Exhibition Centre, with weekday access priced at $40. The expo will be freely accessible to the public on the final day, Saturday, 18 October, marking an important opportunity for broader community engagement.

SXSW Sydney 2025's extensive programme includes over 1,600 sessions and events, ranging from more than 400 conference discussions and professional development sessions to hundreds of music performances, film screenings, and gaming experiences. The event continues to be held on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and is supported by the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

Caroline Pegram, Head of Tech & Innovation at SXSW Sydney, highlighted the event's growing influence: “The Tech & Innovation content is woven right across the program and offers meaningful collisions, access and opportunities that extend way beyond the event. In two years, we’ve seen great outcomes for startups and other talent taking part. Now with the growing synergy between Sydney and our counterparts in the US and Europe we have a year-round node of connections that are providing global opportunities to Australian talent and companies.”

Early bird tickets for SXSW Sydney 2025 are currently on sale until 1 May, aiming to make the event accessible to a wide range of participants, including creatives and technology enthusiasts. Further information and ticket bookings can be made via the official SXSW Sydney website.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.sxswsydney.com/news/sxsw-sydney-2025-conference-preview-40-speakers-announced> - This article provides information about the lineup for SXSW Sydney 2025, featuring a diverse range of speakers from fields such as AI, cybersecurity, and creative industries. It supports the claim that the event includes notable speakers discussing pressing trends.
2. <https://www.artshub.com.au/news/news/speakers-announced-for-sxsw-sydney-2025-2787870/> - This page announces the first 40 speakers for SXSW Sydney 2025, confirming the diverse lineup of global thought leaders and industry disruptors. It verifies the presence of significant speakers in various fields.
3. <https://www.sxsw.com/conference/keynotes/> - Although this does not directly address SXSW Sydney, it lists keynotes for the broader SXSW events, indicating the caliber of speakers typically involved. However, it does not specifically mention the Sydney edition.
4. <https://concreteplayground.com/sydney/arts-entertainment/sxsw-sydney-2025-first-40-speakers> - This article highlights the diverse topics and speakers at SXSW Sydney 2025, including GoFundMe CEO Tim Cadogan and actor Remy Hii, which supports the claim of an eclectic lineup.
5. <https://www.noahwire.com> - The source article does not have a corresponding online URL; however, it provides background information on the event, which aligns with details found in other articles about SXSW Sydney 2025.
6. <https://www.sxswsydney.com/conference> - This webpage provides general information about the conference portion of SXSW Sydney, highlighting speakers like Andi Mastrosavas and Andra Keay, but does not specifically corroborate all claims made in the original article.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiggFBVV95cUxOdk9ES3pZckNJb2VTdU5ESzJ4ME1VTkRkcHlIZmZydlFQQS00a1Nxb1ZweVdDTWhPTXF1UENsdWt1SHlLRXUxNmxvVUlHMkN4U1kyUVZxZmRIWUcyX0ZnYWdPXzQtVEo1cElpeTZ6NkQwdTdrazBlcTdKNmg3dTFlYmpR?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data