

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

2025



A Message from ANZCHAM President, Benjamin Romualdez

As I share what has happened at the Chamber this past month, I look no further than the most recent event, the **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**, to provide an introduction that speaks to the heart of what this community is about: Engagement with the business community, sharing insights, and connecting with government agencies. I highlighted this at the AGM and in this edition of the newsletter, I'm thrilled to share a brief summary of four key events that further demonstrate our commitment to our mission and value drivers and demonstrate what's possible when our business community comes together.

We closed the month of February by **supporting Austrade in their first inbound mission of 2025**. They brought to Manila **23 Aussie companies in the fields of Cybersecurity, AI, Fintech, and Blockchain** to explore what the Philippines has to offer.

Our own Executive Director, **Kimmi Siu Dewar**, led a panel of industry experts to share insights on the market and how to set up in the Philippines.

Our first event of March, our **International Women's Day Forum**, marked its third consecutive year, growing in both attendance and impact. **Over 250 participants gathered** to hear from influential leaders like GHD APAC CEO, **Van Tang**, and ambassadors **H.E. HK Yu** and **H.E. Dr. Catherine McIntosh**. The event featured panels discussing the journey towards creating more inclusive workplaces. There were so many things I learned that afternoon and I know there's still so much to learn. I want to thank our **10 panelists** for contributing their time and expertise.

Next, we **featured the new CREATE MORE Act by hosting a webinar**, where we highlighted the Philippine government's ongoing efforts to improve the business environment, how this new act has changed from the original, and key points of the new framework. I want to thank **Atty. Cheryl Ong** from SGV for giving us her expertise on this new legislation to encourage investment into the Philippines.

And lastly, we closed the month with our **Annual General Meeting**, which provided a platform for reflection and celebration. We came together to review our accomplishments in 2024, particularly in delivering on our value drivers. To me, the most important part of the program was hearing directly from our members about how we've positioned the Chamber to deliver for our members. I want to thank **Andrea Milner** from the Wilson Group, **Jeff Williams** from Genfinity, **Jeille Paguntalan** from Nezda Global, and **Marco Hermosura** from DysrupIT, for sharing how the Chamber has led to insights, connections, and commercial opportunities.

At the AGM, we also **elected the Board of Directors for 2025**. I want to thank **Pat Remulla** from BHP for her service and grateful that BHP remains a valued member of the Chamber. I would like to welcome **Albert Rios** of BDO to the Board. And I want to welcome back the rest of the Board for another year: **Natalie Davies**, our Vice President, **Boyet Santiago**, our Treasurer, **Bela D'Souza**, **Honeybee Hubahib**, **Samir**

Kumar, Simon Terry, Eric Yaptangco, Dicky Salazar, our Corporate Secretary, **Luisa Rust**, from Austrade, and **Cecilia Shand**, from NZTE. I'm looking forward to another year together to serve our business community!

More details are below. March is always one of our busiest months and we hope these events inspire you and keep you connected to our vibrant Chamber community. See you at the next event!

Cheers,
Benjamin Romualdez
President, ANZCham
Managing Director, Telstra

Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2025

CONNECT. PROVIDE. CREATE.

The Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce Philippines (ANZCham) held its highly anticipated **Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2025** on March 25, bringing together distinguished guests, members, and partners for an evening of reflection, recognition, and strategic direction for the Chamber.



Group photo with the Ambassadors and New Board of Directors (From Left to Right): Albert Henry G. Rios, BDO ASEAN/Australia First Vice-President and Desk Head; Kimmi Siu Dewar, ANZCham Executive Director; Bela Gupta D'Souza, Edamama Founder and CEO; Her Excellency Dr. Catherine McIntosh, Ambassador of New Zealand to the Philippines; Her Excellency HK Yu PSM, Australian Ambassador to the Philippines; Benjamin Romualdez, ANZCham President; Simon Terry, GHD General Manager - Philippines; Natalie Davies, ANZCham Vice President; Eric Yaptangco, Director; Samir Kumar, QBE Group Shared Services Centre - Group Chief Shared Services Officer.



Her Excellency **HK Yu PSM, FCPA (Aust)**, **Australian Ambassador to the Philippines**, set a powerful tone for the evening. Reflecting on the challenging environment both nations faced, she stressed that a strong, prosperous Philippines was essential.

Not just to support bilateral trade but also to bolster strategic power, in her own words, she expressed that “economic power equals strategic power.”

With heartfelt sincerity, Amb. Yu continued, “...I can’t do this alone. I needed a strong ally”—a role she found fulfilled by

ANZCHAM. Pursuing this mission, Amb. Yu noted that ANZCHAM’s members and partners also serve as ambassadors, ensuring that, despite her departure, a legacy remains, one marked by its members that will secure the economic trajectory of the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand moving forward.

As her term draws to a close, Ambassador Yu encouraged ANZCHAM to remain ambassadors of the bilateral relationship and extend their invaluable support to her successor.



Paving the way, **Benjamin Romualdez** presented the President’s Report, taking members through the Chamber’s four key value drivers that have shaped its direction over the past year: **Multiply** business connections, **Share** knowledge and insights, **Strengthen** partnerships with Government bodies, & **Giving back** to the community.

The Chamber’s growth was evident, welcoming **80 new members** and seeing record attendance at monthly meetings; **hosting 13 forums**, covering relevant market discussions and across sustainability, cybersecurity, and AI. Stronger ties were fostered with government agencies in the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, and the chamber accomplished outbound missions that successfully positioned the Philippines as a prime business destination. As ANZCham looks ahead, its focus remains on expanding business opportunities and creating new avenues of value for its members.



Following the President’s Report, **Boyet Santiago** presented the Treasurer’s Report, detailing ANZCham’s strong financial standing. The past year saw record high revenue driven by increased membership and sponsorship and a diversification of revenue streams, allowing the Chamber to sustain and expand its initiatives.

The financial position remained strong, with investments made in outsourcing key functions for greater efficiency.



Photo of the "On the Couch" session with the Panel Speakers and Moderator (from left to right): Jeff Williams, Genfinity Co-founder & CEO; Nancy Castiglione, ANZCham Director of Partnerships; Jea Paguntalan, Nezda Global Senior Manager - Business Development; Andrea Milner, Wilson Group Group General Manager Commercial Finance; Marco Hermosura, APAC DyrupIT Managing Director; Samir Kumar, ANZCham Director; Natalie Davies, ANZCham Vice President.

Establishing the backdrop to "On the Couch" Panel

Discussion, moderated by **Nancy Castiglione**, the conversation brought together ANZCham members: **Andrea Milner**, **Jea Paguntalan**, **Jeff Williams**, and **Marco Hermosura**, who have actively tapped into the opportunities the Chamber provides, alongside Board Members, **Samir Kumar** and **Natalie Davies**, both of whom have been instrumental in driving Chamber initiatives and supporting members. Drawing from their own experiences, the panel reflected on the value of being part of a community that has opened doors to key regulatory agencies, made strategic introductions that led to new partnerships, and provided a platform for members to exchange knowledge and insights—reinforcing the Chamber's role in helping members navigate challenges and grow together.



Bringing the evening to a close, **Her Excellency Dr. Catherine McIntosh**, **New Zealand Ambassador to the Philippines**, delivered an insightful address that underscored the enduring relationship between New Zealand and the Philippines, particularly in the wake of the Prime Minister's visit in 2024.

She highlighted the ambitious goal of increasing two-way trade by 50% by 2030 and encouraged ANZCham members to actively engage, provide valuable feedback, and leverage the Chamber's extensive network and partnerships, including its collaboration with the **Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA)**.

AGM 2025 was made possible through the generosity of our sponsors. A special thank you to our **Summit Sponsor**, **Eastern Communications**, for their outstanding support. We also extend our gratitude to our **Legacy Sponsor**, **BDO**; **Luminary Sponsor**, **Convido Corporate**

Housing; and Advocate Sponsors, Philippine Retirement Authority and Nezza Global. Appreciation also goes to **Aristocrat Gaming**, our **corporate giveaway sponsor**.



A special thank you to Qantas, our major raffle sponsor—congratulations to **Ujjwa Kumar Jha**, winner of a roundtrip ticket to Australia!



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ANZCham Supports Austrade's Tech & Innovation Mission to the Philippines



From February 26-28, 2025, the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) hosted the **Tech & Innovation Mission to the Philippines, bringing 23 Australian companies** in cybersecurity, AI, fintech, and blockchain to explore opportunities in this growing market.

As part of the program, ANZCham's Executive Director, Kimmi Siu Dewar, moderated a **panel discussion on the Philippine Tech Landscape**, featuring major leaders in tech innovation—WiSAP, Fintech Alliance PH, AAP, and IBPAP.

The Philippines is emerging as a digital hub in Southeast Asia. The country's young, tech-savvy population provides a vibrant market ripe for innovation. With 87 million internet users, the Philippines is rapidly becoming an **attractive destination for digital exports and tech investments.**

Australia has long been a leader in these sectors and through its active engagement with the Philippines, **it will continue to solidify its position as a vital partner in the region's digital transformation.**

ANZCham extends its warm congratulations to Austrade, the Australian Embassy in Manila, and all partners involved in making this mission a success. The opportunity to witness firsthand **the potential for collaboration between Australian tech companies and their Philippine counterparts** is a testament to the growing relationship between our two countries.

Together, we are paving the way for a bright digital future.



International Women's Day (IWD) Forum 2025

**FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS:
Rights. Equality. Empowerment.**

On 4 March 2025, the Makati Shangri-La Rizal Ballroom came alive with energy and purpose as over 240 attendees gathered for ANZCham's International Women's Day Forum 2025. The event, themed **"For ALL Women and Girls: RIGHTS. EQUALITY. EMPOWERMENT."**



This year's forum was proudly **co-presented by visionary sponsors TP and KMC**, both of which continues to lead efforts in creating opportunities for women in workplaces.

ANZCham also extends its gratitude to its sponsors, whose contributions helped make the event a resounding success: **Virtua Solutions Outsourcing** and **GHD** as Trailblazer Sponsors; **Leighton Asia** and **JobStreet by SEEK** as Changemaker Sponsors; and **ChildFund Philippines** as Catalyst Sponsor.



Setting the stage for the discussions ahead, **Ambassador HK Yu PSM FCPA (Aust)**, the **Australian Ambassador to the Philippines**, highlighted Australia's International Gender Equality Strategy, reinforcing the idea that empowering women is not just a moral imperative but also a key driver of economic and social progress.



Bringing the event to a powerful peak, **Van Tang, CEO of GHD Asia Pacific**, shared her experiences as the first female CEO of GHD Asia-Pacific, navigating a male-dominated industry, reinforcing that businesses have a critical role in closing the gender gap and building a future where women and girls can succeed on their own terms.



(Panel Speakers 1 from left to right: Natalie Davies, ANZCham Vice President & Director ; Lorraine Gomez, GHD Operations Manager; Dannah Majarocon, Jobstreet Philippines Managing Director; Andries Ludik, Leighton Contractors Asia, Operations Manager- Philippines.)



(Panel Speakers 2 from left to right: Bela Gupta D'Souza, ANZCham Director; Toni Tompar, Teleperformance Executive Vice President; Donna Grande, QBE GSSC Senior Vice President People; Joel Baculi, BHP Shared Services Head of Process & Operations.)



(Panel Speakers 3 from left to right: Kimmi Siu Dewar, ANZCham Executive Director; Bernice Vanguardia, AusTrade Trade and Investment Commissioner; Maya Juwita, Investing in Women Australia Aid Workplace Gender Equality Director; Dr. Kristine Lor, International SOS Deputy Medical Director; Atty. Kristine Punzalan, ANZ Philippines Head of Compliance.)

The forum's panel discussions built on each other, tackling key aspects of gender equality. **The first** explored strategies for increasing female representation in male-dominated fields, highlighting gender-neutral recruitment and tailored PPE. **The second** emphasized structured approaches, cultural reinforcement, and leadership accountability to sustain progress. **Our final panel** took a holistic view, addressing mental health, education reforms, and true parental leave, closing with a call for stronger support systems at home and in the community.



After a day of empowering discussions, **Ambassador Catherine McIntosh** delivered the perfect conclusion—one that was a reflection on progress—New Zealand’s legacy as the first country to grant women the right to vote, linking this to deliberate policies that continue to drive gender equity. She concluded with a bold message: ***"You don't ask for a seat at the table. You claim it."***



As the event wrapped up, **Qantas** awarded a roundtrip ticket to Australia—congrats to J. Funes, our lucky winner! Every attendee also took home a MagSafe power bank, courtesy of **Aristocrat Gaming**

(From left to right: Kimmi Siu Dewar, ANZCham Executive Director; Nancy Castiglione, ANZCham Director of Partnerships; J. Funes, Orica Global HR Operations Manager; Lee Velasco, Qantas Airways Sales Manager.)

Beyond the panels, speeches, and celebrations, **IWD was a call to action.** The conversations held in that ballroom will ripple far beyond the event itself, **inspiring action and commitment** toward a future where ALL women and girls can claim their rightful place—not by asking, but by asserting their presence and power.

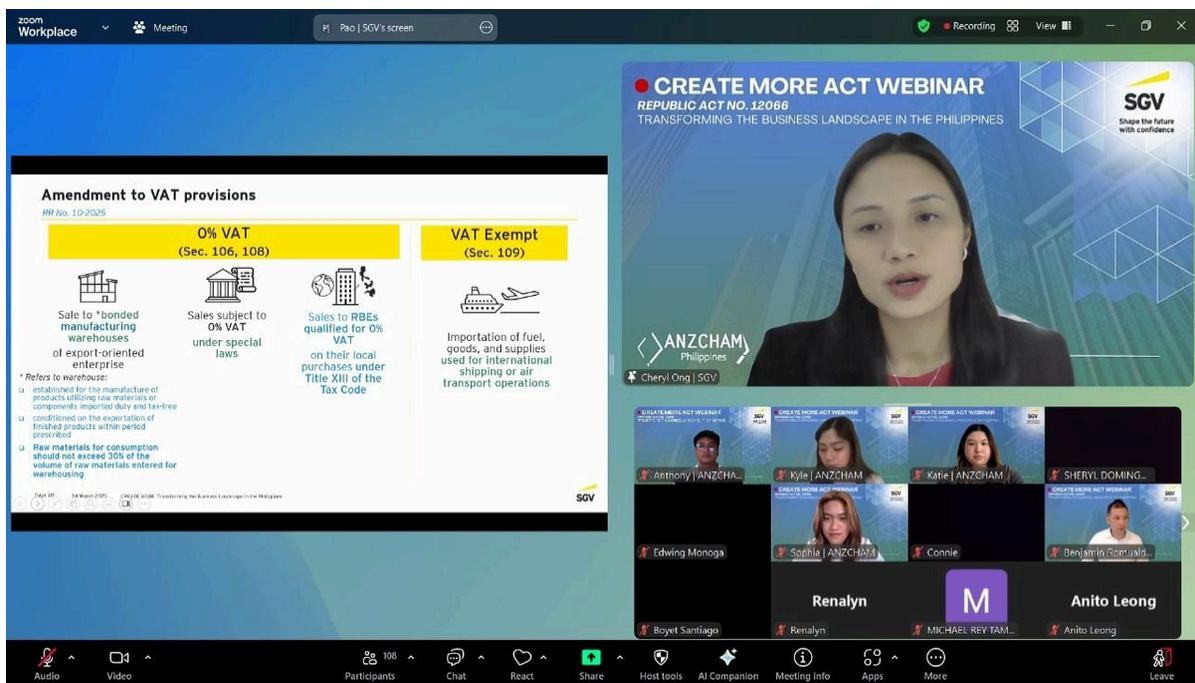


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IWD FORUM 2025 IS CO-PRESENTED BY OUR VISIONARY SPONSORS:



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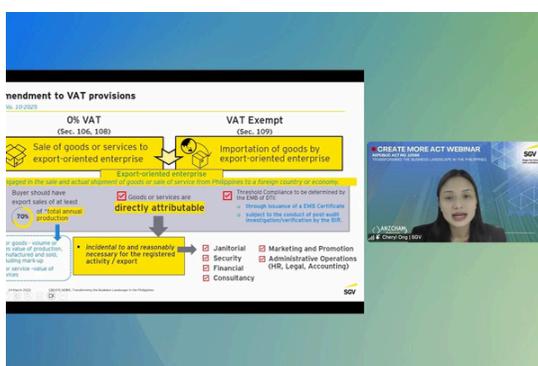


On 14 March 2025, the Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (ANZCham), in partnership with SGV & Co., successfully hosted an insightful webinar focusing on the transformative impact of the newly enacted CREATE MORE law. The session attracted over 100 attendees, including industry leaders, tax experts, and business executives eager to explore how the new legislation reshapes the Philippine investment landscape, particularly for Registered Business Enterprises (RBEs) and exporters.

Leading the discussion was **Atty. Cheryl Edeline C. Ong (CCO), ASEAN Tax Transformation Leader and Partner, Tax at Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co. (SGV)**. Atty. Ong provided an in-depth analysis of the law's key provisions, including an **expanded definition of directly attributable expenses**, which now allows more costs to qualify for VAT zero-rating; clarified RBEs' VAT incentives will remain as long as the 70% export requirement is maintained. **Work-from-home (WFH) rules remain capped at 50 percent** for PEZA-registered enterprises, with tax penalties imposed for exceeding this threshold.

Other significant reforms were covered, including **streamlined importation procedures** and **extended incentive periods**.

As these tax changes take effect, businesses are urged to reassess their compliance strategies and maximize their incentives under the CREATE MORE Act. ANZCham encourages its members to engage with tax experts and consult their respective Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) to ensure seamless compliance and capitalize on the law's benefits.





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