The European Union (EU) has changed the political and economic landscape in Europe, yet few Australians understand much about its underlying structure or means of operation. It is indeed a remarkable organisation with global ramifications. This lecture will draw on different images to provide some answers to basic questions about the EU as well as outlining some of the critical challenges which it faces. It might well be argued that the future for all of us depends on how well the EU does address these challenges.

Professor Bruce Wilson is Director of the European Union Centre at RMIT University, Co-Director of the PASCAL International Observatory and RMIT’s Director of Research for Regional Development at its Hamilton site in western Victoria. As Director of the EU Centre at RMIT, he is responsible for increasing engagement with the EU through academic studies on the European Union, encouraging mobility for staff and students, and for building partnerships between Australian universities and organisations, and their European counterparts. He also leads a major project on comparative regional policy in Europe, Australia and Asia. More generally, Bruce helps to build linkages between Australia and Europe, and to link an international network of researchers and policy makers with city and regional governments in policy formation related to social and economic policy, lifelong learning and environment.