

THE CON VER SAT ION

There is no conversation without you

There is no conversation without our...



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Hello – and farewell from the chairman

When I was asked in early 2017 to be chairman of The Conversation, there were lots of reasons to decline. But Helen, my wife, strongly advised me to accept: "It's important," she said, "and you'll have fun." She was right. So as I hand over to our new chair of The Conversation, Julianne Schultz, Helen is first on the list of people I want to thank.

Also on my thank you list are each of our 44 Australian and New Zealand university members, our member research institutes including the CSIRO, and our other partners: the AMP Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, and the Victorian government. Thanks to Corrs Chambers Westgarth, which provides our legal services, and NGS Global, which provided search assistance, in both cases pro bono.

Thank you to the more than 3,600 academics who collaborated this year with our 22 commissioning editors. Their joint efforts resulted in more than 4,000 articles and 142 million article views in the past year alone – a 20% growth in our audience.

To those millions of readers and the thousands of media outlets globally that republish our content under a Creative Commons licence, thank you for your ongoing support.

This is a cooperative enterprise, which succeeds because a lot of people have decided to make it succeed. At a personal level, I am grateful to past and current board members (with special mention of Richard Leder and Joe Skrzynski, who have served on the board since its early days, and outgoing director Ian Jacobs).

To our chief financial officer, the unflappable Maria Troumboukis. To our team's two leaders: our editor, Misha Ketchell, for his unwavering passion for public interest journalism, and our chief executive officer, Lisa Watts, for the way she brings people together here and globally, building trust across our eight Conversation editions worldwide. Without trust, our "internationalness" would go to waste. To the eight-person platform development team, led by head of engineering James Hill, who work around the clock keeping The Conversation accessible for readers around the world.

To the extraordinary team who designed and drove this year's donations campaign. And a special thank you to the 10,000-plus individuals and families who now support us as Friends of The Conversation.

All of us who love The Conversation owe a debt of thanks to the visionary Andrew Jaspan, who thought it up, and without whom there would be no Conversation.

Harrison Young

Left: USQ Photography, WSU Media, Facebook Journalism Project, Penny Stephens.

Cover: The Conversation launched a new look and logos in 2019, created by design lead Zoe Jazz.



10,429 Friends of The Conversation

A year ago, we set ourselves an ambitious target: to double the number of readers who choose to become Friends of The Conversation, supporting our work with tax-deductible donations.

In 2019, we hit that target with the help of 10,429 Friends from all walks of life – including many first-time donors, who gave whatever they could afford. Their generosity means that a quarter of our annual revenue came directly from readers.

Reader support means far more than just dollars in the bank. It's a public show of faith in our model of publishing informed knowledge, without costly paywalls, advertising, or barriers to sharing. It's a shot in the arm for editorial independence. And it gives us greater financial certainty to grow and plan even more public interest journalism.

The Conversation is among the few media outlets you can donate to and claim a tax deduction. If you value what we do, one of the best ways to support our work is with a monthly donation.

Every few months, Friends of The Conversation are invited behind the scenes to join our Monday morning news conference with editors. Friends also receive priority access to author and reader events, which we hope to expand in the future.

For every donor's handwritten letter of support, every online donation or cheque, every Facebook share, tweet, Instagram love, or letter to the editor – sharing both praise and constructive criticism – thank you. We read them all, and our team has been buoyed by the appreciation of our work. In 2020, with the crucial support of our Friends, we hope to achieve even more together.

For more about donations, bequests and becoming a Friend of The Conversation, go to donate.theconversation.com/au

"I cannot imagine life without The Conversation. Every day it provides food for thought, and information I know I can trust."

Joan Powling

Friend of the Conversation

"I am a passionate advocate for independent quality journalism and believe it is vital in maintaining a healthy and vibrant democracy. At a time when independent journalism is in decline, The Conversation is a brilliant idea I am very happy to support."

Pamela McLure

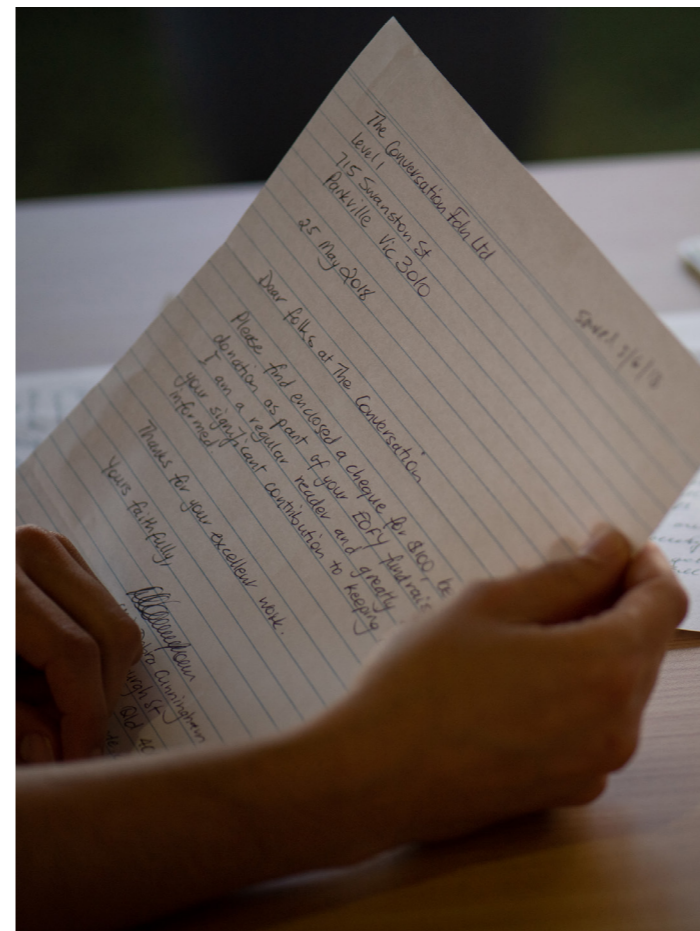
Friend of the Conversation

"Thank you for making our curious kid even more curious."

Parent of Gracie, 5.

Friend of The Conversation Debbi Barnes with deputy editor Fron Jackson-Webb at a newsroom morning tea for donors. USQ author Jake Clark with digital editor Molly Glassey and readers Janine McNaughton, Sienna, 3, and Holly, 7 at a Curious Kids event in Toowoomba. A letter from one of our generous friends. CEO Lisa Watts in conversation with readers in the newsroom.

Photos: Penny Stephens, USQ Photography



Partnerships are at the heart of what we do

From our beginnings in 2011 as a media start-up to today, as a globally-recognised publisher reaching millions of readers every month, The Conversation's rapid growth has been built on the support of our university members and other funders. It's always been a story of shared success.

Today, we're proud to say that we have almost every single Australian and New Zealand university as ongoing members and funders of our work, along with key research institutions such as the CSIRO.

In 2019, we were delighted to welcome the University of Otago and the University of Canterbury as our latest New Zealand members, just two years after hiring our first New Zealand Editor.

All of our editors regularly spend time on campus, sharing writing tips with prospective authors and helping research leaders make the most of member-only benefits, such as audience analytics and engagement reporting.

In 2019, The Conversation received vital funding from strategic partners AMP Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and the Victorian State Government. Together, they helped us publish evidence-based analysis and information on important topics such as cities, education, employment and science. Meanwhile, Corrs Chambers Westgarth provided pro bono legal services.

Thank you to our media partners too: the Australian Science Media Centre, the New Zealand Science Media Centre, and the Royal Society Te Apārangi.

Universities or research institutions seeking information on member-only benefits of supporting The Conversation can contact University Services Manager Felicity Burke at felicity.burke@theconversation.edu.au

Foundations looking to partner with The Conversation can contact our Director of Foundation Relations, Damian Thompson, on +61 3 9988 1943.



Every one of our funders is helping sustain public interest journalism.

Without each of them, there would be no Conversation as we know it today.

Welcome to The University of Otago and the University of Canterbury – now among 44 Australian and New Zealand universities that help fund The Conversation's work.

Left: Editor Misha Ketchell congratulates Pitch It Clever award winner Dr Arosha Weerakoon, from the University of Queensland, at the 2019 Universities Australia conference.

Photos: Samuel White, University of Canterbury, Universities Australia



Reflecting on the Christchurch terror attacks

No single expert could ever explain an event as chilling and incomprehensible as the Christchurch terrorist attacks. But drawing on the expertise of more than 50 researchers from New Zealand, Australia and the world, together we could at least help our readers try to make sense of something so senseless.

Within hours of the attacks, we had published Swinburne media analyst Colleen Murrell's timely warning to news outlets and the public not to share the shooter's livestream video, as that was only helping his cause. It was among our most read articles of the year, with more than 1.6 million article views globally.

Meanwhile, Massey University's Paul Spoonley drew on decades of research into extremism to puncture a fast-developing media myth about New Zealand's "innocence". His article was republished internationally, from the New Zealand Herald to Newsweek in the US, and translated into multiple languages, thanks to The Conversation's Indonesian, Spanish and French editors.

"I am about to do media interview #52 (Deutsche Welle) and all but six or seven have been with overseas media. Eight with the BBC, four with CNN etc. And nearly all have referenced The Conversation piece."
– Distinguished Professor Paul Spoonley

In the months since, we have published more than 50 articles on the attacks' causes and the solutions to extremist violence, including gun law reform and balancing freedom of speech with freedom from hate speech.

Many readers told us how much they valued hearing from genuine experts, especially those from New Zealand. Responding to their feedback, we fast-tracked the launch of theconversation.com/nz – a New Zealand-specific landing page – which went live five days after the attacks.

"I just finished reading Professor Edwina Pio's article about moving beyond simplistic debate and demonising Islam, and again wanted to commend you on how The Conversation has been covering the events in Christchurch. Some of the wider journalism over the past few days has crossed the line from poor, to grossly irresponsible [...] It's so nice to see a different approach!"

Dr Samara McPhedran

Senior Research Fellow, Violence Research and Prevention Program, Griffith University

2019 in review

This year, curious Conversation readers of all ages shaped our coverage more than ever before.

We were inundated with questions from preschoolers and school kids for our popular Curious Kids series, and its accompanying Imagine This podcast, co-produced with the ABC. Teenage readers messaged us for confidential advice on everything from sex and drugs to depression with our new I Need to Know series. And rather than rely on Google, readers came to us to find experts to answer their health, science and environment queries, through our I've Always Wondered and Five Experts series.

Our editors and authors met even more readers in person at sold-out events in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney, launching our pre-election collection of essays, *Advancing Australia: Ideas for a Better Country*. We ran six Curious Kids events across regional Victoria and Queensland. And we recorded more live Conversation Club events in partnership with Radio National's Big Ideas program and Brisbane's Avid Reader bookshop.

With climate change a hot topic on both sides of the Tasman, we launched *Climate Explained*, giving readers a chance to hear from real climate science and policy experts. We also joined the global #CoveringClimateNow initiative, along with more than 300 media outlets – with a combined audience of more than 1 billion people – ahead of the United Nations' September climate summit.

Our Australian election coverage was once again led by Chief Political Correspondent Michelle Grattan (right), whose insightful analysis and podcast interviews remain required reading and listening in Canberra and beyond.

Election highlights included expert fact checks on claims about welfare payments and the costs of seeing a doctor; an interactive graphic tracking the Adani coal mine's progress; and – in what proved to be a prescient article – a look back at the 'unloseable' 1993 election, the last time an opposition made itself such a big election target. And multimedia editor Wes Mountain's political cartoons were recognised as among the best in Australia, with this cartoon (right) selected for a Museum of Australian Democracy exhibition.



Images above: AAP/James Ross, EPA/Fazry Ismail, University of Canberra, Wes Mountain

Opposite page: Nathan, 5, collects Curious Kids articles to read with his dad Ben Gratzler at bedtime. Photo: Caroline Gratzler

Following Scott Morrison's poll-defying win, our experts continued scrutinising key policies such as the government's A\$158 billion tax package. To keep a closer eye on Australia's economy, our business team created a new twice-yearly economic survey, drawn from a panel of 20 leading forecasters from 12 universities, including former Treasury, IMF, OECD and Reserve Bank officials, a former government minister and a former member of the Reserve Bank board.

Meanwhile, in New Zealand we analysed the Ardern government's ambitious – but potentially difficult to implement – new approaches to running the economy, including its long-awaited 'well-being budget' and 'zero carbon bill'.

Our essayists asked big questions, including about the future of education. Is it just about getting a job? What do universities need to do to survive disruption? And as the job market changes, what should vocational educators do to keep up?

While arts coverage elsewhere struggles for space and resources, this year we committed to reviewing even more visual, digital and performing arts shows. We launched a new series, showcasing Hidden Women of History from around the world. And for all the talk of shrinking modern attention spans, our readers often embraced our longest reads, especially our in-depth Friday Essays.

On the life-and-death challenge of reducing drug overdoses among young people, we shared the experiences of researchers from the field, many of whom made the case for careful trials of pill testing at festivals. Our Research Checks debunked other media's coverage of new journal articles, through independent analysis and blind reviews. And our series Where Culture Meets Health looked at how to make our health system safer for everyone, such as by investing in Indigenous-led healthcare, and the need for more translators when almost one in four Australians speak a language other than English at home.

Our podcasts, interactive graphics and comic explainers helped us reach millions of new listeners and readers worldwide. The Trust Me, I'm An Expert podcast covered extraordinarily diverse topics: from a visit to a secret Sydney bushland "body farm", to what science says about how to lose weight, to why the Hong Kong protesters felt they had nothing to lose.

When the Australian government promised to send a warship and 200 troops to the Strait of Hormuz, following months of rising tension between Iran and the US, our interactive graphic showed where in the world the strait is, and why such a narrow stretch of water has become so hotly contested.

We also spent the year growing communities of readers with common interests. In little over a year, more than 1,200 floraphiles have flocked to join our Beating Around the Bush Facebook group, sharing stories and photos of Australia's quirky native plants. Similarly, The Conversation: Education Matters Facebook group is home to lively discussions among teachers and parents – many of whom use Conversation articles at work and at home.

Yet even in wealthy countries like Australia and New Zealand, not everyone has a place to call home. All year, our cities section shone a spotlight on new research calling for 730,000 social housing dwellings in Australia over the next 20 years to tackle housing stress, as well as revealing that 5,800 defence veterans are homeless – an article that influential Australian crossbench senator Jacqui Lambie shared and declared "a national shame".

Global issues dominated our science and technology coverage, including how to respond to digital behemoths such as Google and Facebook. But if the daily news ever got you down, we always had good news stories to share, including our To The Moon and Beyond series celebrating 50 years since the moon landing.

As our Curious Kids know better than anyone, our astronomers have a knack for storytelling – and encouraging us all to look up and beyond our current horizon.





A global network dedicated to democratising knowledge

Metrics as of November 2019. White pins mark where we now have editors working for our eight different editions of The Conversation. The number of editors is full-time equivalents.

Africa

16 editors
11.5 uni members

Monthly averages

1.7 million republished reads
119 authors
93 articles

Aus & NZ

22 editors
44 uni members

Monthly averages

13.6 million republished reads
405 authors
321 articles

Canada

8 editors (inc. 1 CA-FR)
32 uni members

Monthly averages

2.1 million republished reads
154 authors
120 articles

France

10 editors
60 uni members

Monthly averages

3.5 million republished reads
244 authors
210 articles

Indonesia

7 editors
1 uni member

Monthly averages

0.4 million republished reads
89 authors
68 articles

Spain

4 editors
33 uni members

Monthly averages

2.1 million republished reads
110 authors
88 articles

United Kingdom

18 editors
85 uni members

Monthly averages

10.4 million republished reads
330 authors
264 articles

United States

19 editors
64 uni members

Monthly averages

8.4 million republished reads
195 authors
166 articles

Real-world impacts for our authors



“Over the years I’ve been writing for The Conversation, I’ve had a number of philanthropic foundations get in touch to say they’d read my articles, and that’s led to significant new funding. If you want philanthropic investment in research, publishing in learned journals is not enough – you have to get your work out to the public. The Conversation really is an effective way to reach philanthropists and the public at the same time.”

Professor Jayashri Kulkarni
Monash University



“After writing about the growing number of Māori babies being removed by the state, I was asked to provide a brief of evidence as an expert witness in proceedings before the Waitangi Tribunal. While it’s too soon to know what the tribunal will recommend, my hope is that it could lead to policy reforms that result in far fewer children being taken from their families.”

Associate Professor Dominic O’Sullivan
Charles Sturt University



“I have industry leaders wanting to work with me who found me through The Conversation. I’ve won funding, including a significant grant for a major research project. I have a contract with Routledge in the UK for a sole-authored book in my research area. And based on an article I wrote for The Conversation, the Harvard Business Review’s executive editor asked me to write for them. The impact and engagement that The Conversation facilitates for my research is unprecedented.”

Dr Libby Sander
Bond University



In the past year, more than 3,600 authors published more than 4,000 articles on The Conversation Australia and New Zealand, reaching an audience of more than 142 million article views globally. But as a not-for-profit publisher, we’re driven by more than numbers. We love hearing from authors about how collaborating with us helps them achieve real-world impacts – like these.



“Writing for The Conversation over the last two years has been a fantastic experience. They’ve helped me strike the right tone on some very controversial issues, including the Christchurch terror attacks. My articles have been translated into Indonesian, republished by dozens of news sites, and led to numerous media requests from as far away as the UK and India. We talk a lot in academia about the ‘impact’ of our research. The Conversation provides this in a real and demonstrable way.”

Dr Joe Burton
University of Waikato



“The Conversation is a fantastic platform to reach influential audiences. After my recent article on Australia’s electric car revolution, I was contacted by the federal Department of Environment and Energy and invited to discuss my research with a group of policy makers. It is so encouraging that researchers like me have such an effective channel to present our latest research with government.”

PhD candidate Gail Broadbent
UNSW



“Writing for The Conversation allows me to reach a far wider and more diverse audience through follow-up TV interviews and republication on national and international news sites. It’s so important in the current digital age to have expert voices and accurate information coming through, particularly on parenting and mental health, which can be rife with opinion, speculation and pseudo-science.”

Dr Monique Robinson
Telethon Kids Institute & University of Western Australia





How we help other media share expert knowledge



Left: Head of communication and engagement Debbie Dickinson at a Facebook Journalism Project workshop.

Above: The Conversation's eight-person international platform team includes head of engineering James Hill (top), developers Ben MacLeod and Rohan Mitchell (middle) & design lead Zoe Jazz (bottom).

Photos: Penny Stephens, Facebook Journalism Project

Everything we do at The Conversation is free for all to share under Creative Commons – and we've become a go-to source for media outlets for credible, timely expertise.

More than 22,000 outlets globally republish our content, reaching large, influential audiences through publishers such as Scientific American, CNN and the World Economic Forum, as well as via many of Australia and New Zealand's most-read news outlets, such as News.com, ABC News, Stuff and the New Zealand Herald.

With the simple click of a button, anyone can easily republish our work – thanks to our small, dedicated platform team, who keep all eight international editions of The Conversation working across multiple sites and in multiple languages.

As of 2019, The Conversation's articles are being republished in 94 countries, and in 25 languages – from Afrikaans, Arabic and Bahasa Indonesian, to Russian, Spanish and Thai.

“We've developed a really close relationship with The Conversation, and really value their broad roster of knowledgeable experts and academics. We republish articles daily on ABC News, but it's particularly helpful when big news breaks, such as during the Christchurch attacks, so we can quickly grab timely, thoughtful analysis pieces to add to the mix of our news coverage.”

Leigh Tonkin

Editor, Features & Context, ABC News

“So far this year we've worked with The Conversation and the New Zealand Science Media Centre to publish a dozen Climate: Explained articles, giving readers the chance to ask questions of real experts on climate science and policy. We've been deluged with so many reader questions that the challenge now is keeping up with demand. I've been delighted by the educational and engaging nature of the articles, and consider the collaboration a real success.”

Patrick Crewdson

Editor in Chief, Stuff

Thank you from our CEO & Editor



With your help, The Conversation has had great success in the past year making more academic knowledge publicly available, when people need it most, in a form that's easy to digest.

Around the world, successful business models to support quality journalism remain elusive. Some commercial outlets have opted for paywalls or subscriptions – but those are inconsistent with our goal of democratising knowledge. Instead, we make our work freely available, thanks to partners who share our values: universities, authors, philanthropic organisations and our readers.

One of the most humbling things that happened this year was that a record 10,000 readers showed their support by becoming donors. Many of them also sent messages about how important The Conversation has become to them, and how it helps keep them informed.

Our success is born of collaboration. We are lucky to have funders and research partners with so much to offer, and a willingness to work with us to communicate complex research, often to tight deadlines. In 2020 we intend to secure enough funding to deliver on our commitment to editorial innovation, including achieving even greater impact for our academic authors.

We are proud of the work we do, and the dedicated team that does it. Turning up to the newsroom each day, bursting with ideas, our editors add journalistic flair to the academic rigour of our expert authors.

To our terrific and talented team, brilliant authors, discerning readers, wise funders and generous donors – thank you for making The Conversation such a success.

Lisa Watts, Chief Executive Officer, & Misha Ketchell, Editor



Photos: Penny Stephens

From interns to editors

The Conversation runs a quarterly internship program, available exclusively to students from our member universities.

This year we hosted 25 interns from eight universities. Our program is well established and gives interns practical experience in editorial, multimedia, audience engagement and data journalism.

Interns join part-time for 12 weeks and complete a structured program of recruitment, induction, and mentoring. Interns get involved in the full range of editorial activities, including pitching ideas, research, commissioning, fact checking, editing, publication, and social media. They leave The Conversation having had a rich, real-world experience in a fast-paced digital newsroom.

Some interns prove too good to let go. This year, we invited another two past interns to permanently join our team: former La Trobe University intern Phoebe Roth, now a deputy health + medicine editor, and former QUT intern Noor Gillani, our new assistant editor: technology.

“The work environment at The Conversation was so safe and comfortable. Everyone is supportive and helpful, which is really admirable. I was pretty surprised how quickly the months passed, I felt like a part of the team in no time and that's a rarity. [I gained a] bunch of podcasts to my credit, an excellent letter of recommendation and an experience worth remembering.”

Dilpreet Kaur

University of Melbourne intern



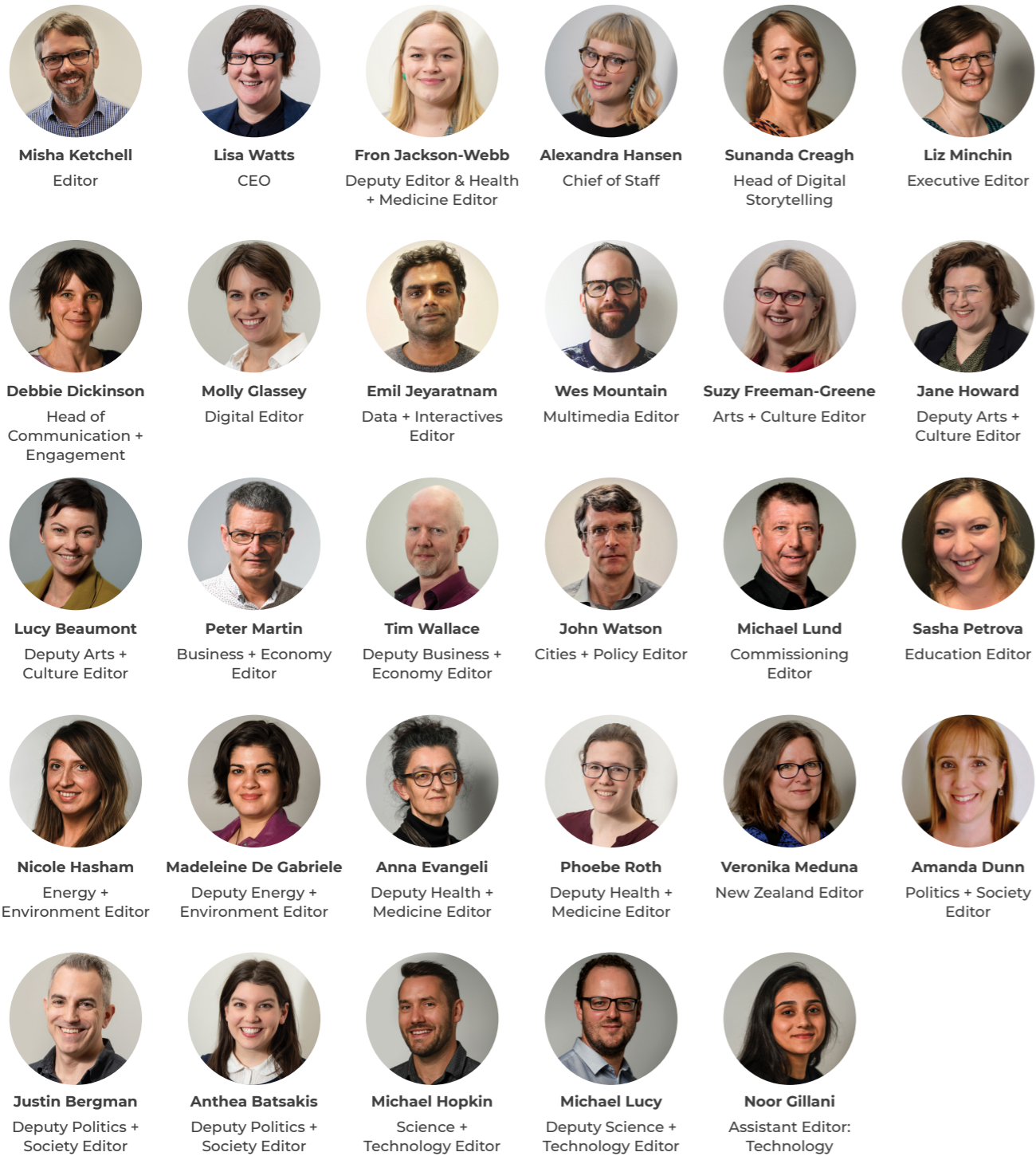
“I worked very closely with [head of digital storytelling] Sunanda Creagh and she was always so lovely to work with, encouraging and ensuring that the interns always had something to do [...] I was impressed with every aspect!”

Emily Nunell

UTS intern



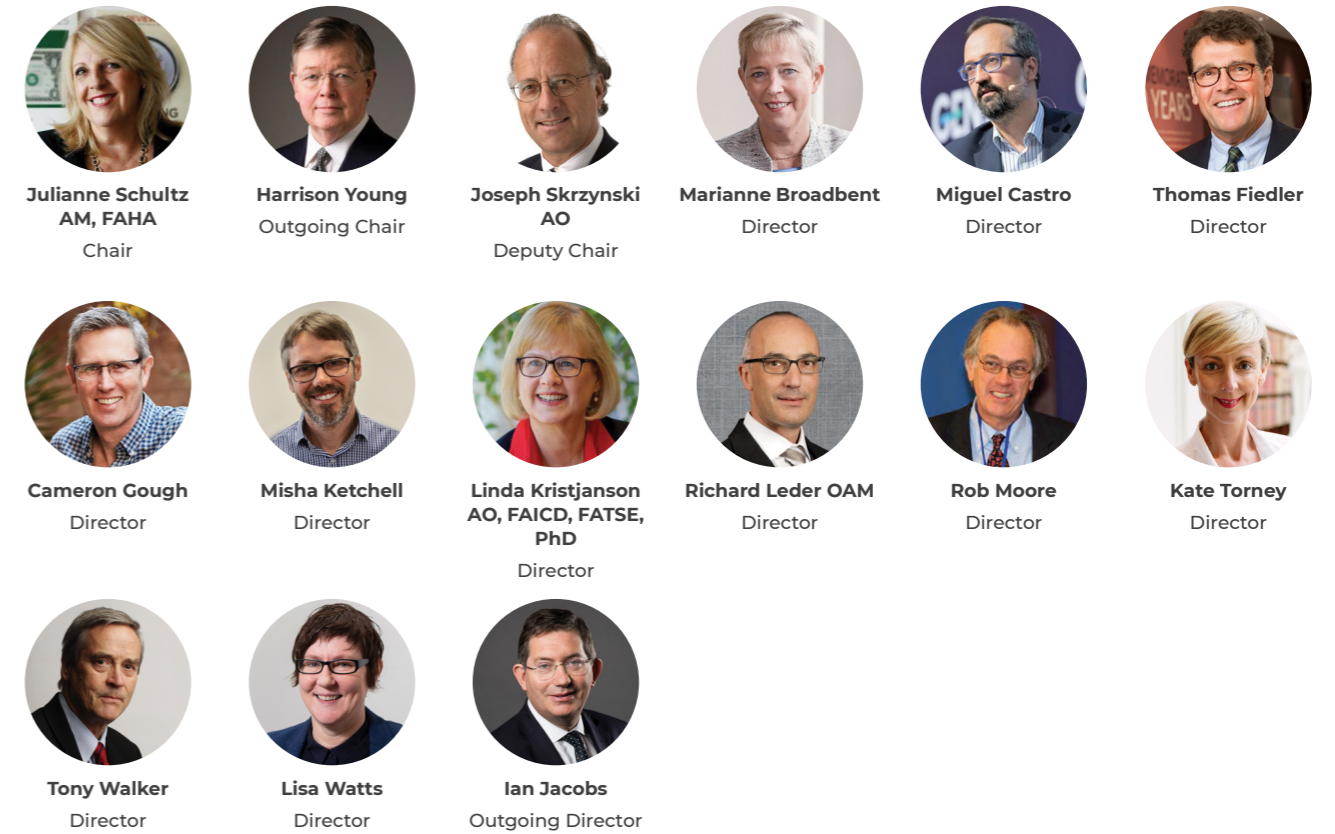
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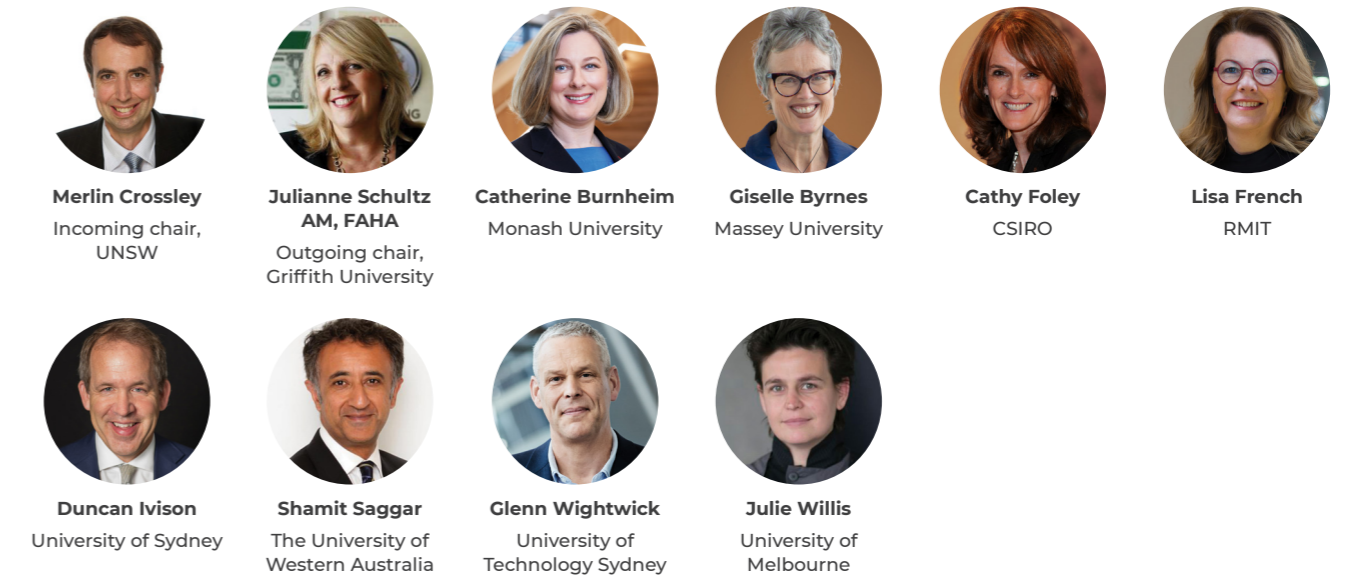
Commercial & Finance



Board of Directors



Editorial Board





Pitching & Writing Masterclass

Do you have an important story to share about your research? Can you tell that story in a concise and compelling way?

Join us for a masterclass with a senior editor and discover how you can persuade influential people outside your field – including the media, industry, politicians and the public – that your work matters.

Each session is limited to 20 participants and can be adapted to suit all levels of experience: from senior leaders to early career researchers or PhD candidates.

Participants gain access to:

- strategic advice from an experienced editor
- a time-saving method to critically assess your own or others' writing
- peer and personal feedback on new pitches, and
- a checklist to follow before starting a pitch.

The masterclass is not exclusively about pitching to The Conversation. Instead, it's about sharing our editors' knowledge of why so many pitches fail, based on our experience with The Conversation and other national and international media outlets including the ABC, Fairfax/Nine and Nature.

For more information on bookings and pricing, email masterclass@theconversation.edu.au

“Outstanding workshop. Very relevant to all staff working in research. The research world is changing and it is vital to engage consumers on their level, which is exactly what this workshop taught us to do.”

Participant feedback after a 2019 masterclass at UNSW

Photos: Penny Stephens, Molly Glassey



Newsletters

We invite universities, non-profits, public sector and like-minded organisations to sponsor our newsletter and reach our educated and engaged audience of more than 100,000 subscribers daily.

“UniBank chooses to be a recurring sponsor of The Conversation newsletter because of their large audience that are engaged in the university sector and beyond. It means our brand is visible to their 100,000+ subscribers, which provides excellent exposure about our socially responsible banking approach and our commitment to supporting and working with Australian university communities.” Graeme Healey, Senior Brand and Proposition Manager, UniBank

Cost: from \$A4200/\$NZ4500

Contact Sponsorship and University Services Manager Felicity Burke on felicity.burke@theconversation.edu.au



Event listings

Promote upcoming events, lectures, scholarships, symposia or calls for papers for your organisation through our events board, homepage and, as an optional extra, through our daily newsletter.

“At ANZSOG we use The Conversation's events board to promote our upcoming events. **Our listings often get clicked on by more than 2,500 people, and it's been a valuable way to get our events in front of a large but targeted audience** that we otherwise wouldn't be able to reach.” Lisa Wheildon, Director of Stakeholder Relations and Communications, Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG)

Cost: Free for Partners and Funders of The Conversation, or for non-members, costs start from \$A290/\$NZ310



Jobs listings

The Conversation's job board is where experts go to find work.

Advertising on The Conversation job board ensures it reaches a wide audience within academia, government, business and beyond. You'll receive a monthly report of your job listing's performance, including views and application clicks.

“I was frankly surprised by the quality and quantity of extra applicants we received through the site. We had a level of interest from overseas that we'd never seen before, which gave us a greater depth of candidates to choose from. We're a university that's always looking to attract new academic talent to our region – and the results of putting our fellowships on The Conversation far exceeded my expectations.” Professor Roland De Marco, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), University of the Sunshine Coast

Cost: from A\$390/NZ\$410 per job ad, or receive up to 35% off with a job pack.

There is no Conversation without all of our University Members & Partners

