

# THE CONVERSATION



Australia &  
New Zealand

# Stakeholder



# report



# 2021



Share knowledge.  
Inform decisions.



# THE CONVERSATION

100% independent, not-for-profit.

No advertising or paywalls.

Free to share or republish under Creative Commons.

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## Audience

**9.5M**

Unique readers on site  
for AU/NZ edition  
Average monthly # 2021

**20M**

Article views including  
republishing for AU/NZ  
edition  
Average monthly # 2021

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## Subscribers

**181K**

Daily newsletter

**351K**

Facebook

**190K**

Twitter

**49K**

Instagram

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## Impact & Outcomes

**66%**

Authors contacted by  
media

**22%**

Authors contacted for  
research collaboration

**22%**

Authors invited to speak  
at conferences

**14%**

Authors approached for  
business consultation

**9%**

Authors contacted by  
government

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## Network

**57.6M**

Readers worldwide via  
republishing (Nov 2021)

**8**

International editions

**37**

Languages that articles  
have been translated  
into

**97**

Countries that articles  
have been republished  
into

# A word from our Chair.

**This year The Conversation celebrated its 10th Birthday, navigated a second year of COVID tumult, and made steady progress on its mission of making quality information from academic experts available to all who need it.**

In 2021 The Conversation expanded its reach. Our editorial team published more than 3,900 articles. This expert analysis attracted more than 144 million reads on our website and a further 67 million reads through major republishers such as the ABC and Stuff.

Perhaps of even greater significance is the role The Conversation played in helping to unearth new voices and build the public profiles of academics who went on to lead public debate elsewhere in the media and in other public forums.

The Conversation aims to serve the public interest. Its success is founded on the strength of collaboration and the generosity of many public-spirited supporters.

I am particularly grateful for the support and foresight of the university sector. A decade ago, a small group of Australian university leaders and CSIRO had the



**Julianne Schultz AM, FAHA,  
Chair of The Conversation Media Group**

courage and foresight to back this project when it was just the innovative idea of Andrew Jaspan. They remained by our side in 2021, despite facing serious disruption and financial stress.

From January 2022, The Conversation will have the support of all eight public universities in Aotearoa New Zealand for the first time. We are looking forward to these close relationships continuing for years to come.

The academics who give so freely of their time and expertise are the *sine qua non* of our operation and deserve deepest thanks and appreciation. Thanks are also due to the many volunteers who support our work. I'd particularly like to thank my colleagues on The Conversation Media Board and Editorial Board for their generous and attentive contribution to our governance and operations.


Thanks are also due to the thousands who made personal donations to help ensure The Conversation continues to thrive, and to the enlightened group of foundations and philanthropic organisations that provided generous support.

I'd also like to acknowledge our Australian and New Zealand staff and international colleagues who work in France, Spain, the UK, the US, Canada, Indonesia and across Africa. We are especially proud in Australia to have played a leading role in building this global network.

**We will do all we can to ensure that The Conversation Australia and New Zealand continues to play a role supporting the dissemination of quality information globally.**

In doing this, we hope to raise the profile of academics and increase respect for and access to evidence-based information in a media world infected by misinformation, disinformation and spin.

We have no illusions about the magnitude of this challenge, or its importance in maintaining and enhancing democratic governments. As you will see from this stakeholder report, we are making steady progress – thanks to the support of our many loyal friends, and the clarity of our mission.



# Thank you from our CEO and Editor.

In another year shaped by COVID-19 and prolonged lockdowns, The Conversation has continued to thrive thanks to the generous support of readers, authors and university partners.

The university sector navigated a painful period of contraction, but support for The Conversation remained strong, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand where we'll have all universities as members for the first time in 2022. We now have 47 member universities across Australia and New Zealand and we are extremely encouraged by the sector's steadfast support.

In February, the Australian government passed the News Media Bargaining Code to force Google and Facebook to give back some revenue to support quality journalism. The Conversation negotiated a deal with Google. But despite mounting evidence of serious problems with misinformation, Facebook declined to negotiate and instead asked that we supply our journalism for free.

We decided to fight this perplexing decision and were gratified by the support of more than 9,000 people who signed a parliamentary petition in support of The Conversation. We will continue to fight for fair treatment under the code.



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

Throughout this year, academic authors have continued to step up. From brilliant health experts, to the climate scientists who covered the Glasgow climate negotiations, we could not have been better served. The academics who drop what they are doing to write for us are the beating heart of The Conversation.

## **This year we worked with more than 4,000 academics.**

It was another year of prolonged and sometimes painful lockdowns and our talented team handled it with professionalism and grace.

We thank everyone who has supported us on our mission. The Conversation is a not-for-profit company that exists to supply quality information freely to those who need it most. Thank you for helping us achieve this.

# A growing, engaged and global audience.

Sharing academic expertise was especially important this year as vaccination roll-outs, the climate crisis and other hot-button issues dominated headlines.

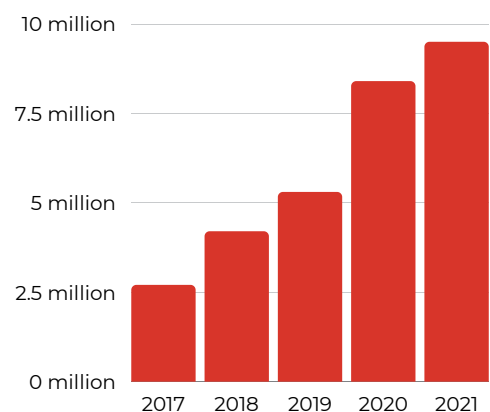
The Conversation's digital strategy prioritised knowledge-sharing on the very platforms misinformation was running rampant. We saw a dramatic increase in our social following as people searching for trustworthy information discovered our platform.

The audience high point of 2021 was the almost three-fold growth of our Instagram audience. Our stories distilled the most important information from Conversation articles and presented them to Instagram users in ways that were engaging, bite-sized and simple to understand. The audience and multimedia teams also launched a dedicated video strategy to ensure articles were accessible in a format other than text.

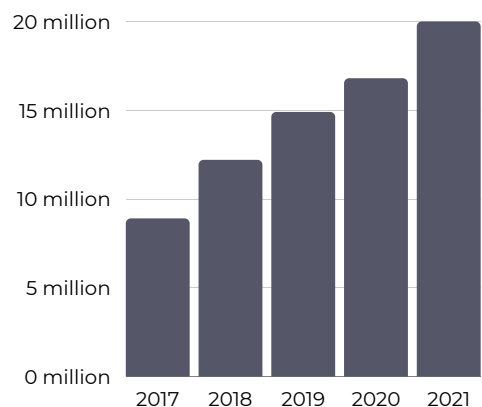
The Conversation's articles saw a huge reach with readers searching for information on Google – delivering more than 60% of total readers a month.

**Our focus on search engine optimisation, strong headlines and providing clear, timely answers to readers' questions – especially on health and science – helped fulfil our mission to share knowledge from experts.**

Australian and New Zealand articles now attract 9.5 million unique reads globally per month



And when you add in republishers, our reach is more than 20 million unique reads per month



# We amplify expert knowledge. Free to read. Free to republish.

All articles we publish at The Conversation are free for other media outlets to republish under Creative Commons. It's our way of ensuring evidence-based information has the widest reach possible.

We've become a go-to source for credible, timely expertise for many news organisations in Australia, New Zealand and abroad. More than 20,000 media outlets have republished our articles to date.

In Australia and New Zealand, we work closely with some of the most-read news outlets such as ABC News, Stuff, SBS and the New Zealand Herald. Our team has recently updated our Republishing Strategy to expand our network of republishers, and have established new relationships with editors at The Age, The New Daily, New Scientist, Domain, Mamamia and more.

Our work is also often republished by international media outlets including the BBC, IFLScience, and The South China Morning Post. Our articles have been translated into 37 languages and republished in 97 countries to date.



Across a broad range of topics – from politics to COVID-19 – columns from The Conversation have become a regular and valuable part of Stuff's news diet. They earn their place on our homepage and in our newspapers with smart writing, sharp headlines, and a savvy connection to the news cycle.

**Patrick Crewsden**  
Stuff Editor-in-Chief



Major republishers



CHANNEL NEWSASIA



# A commitment to gender and cultural diversity.

In 2021 we continued to focus on improving diversity, in particular working with more Indigenous authors and improving gender diversity of researchers across our editorial sections.

Regular gender diversity audits showed that overall almost 50% of articles on The Conversation are written by women. However, when we drill down to the level of individual coverage areas, such as science or business, we found in some areas women comprised less than 40% of authors. Our goal now is to ensure that women make up at least 40% of authors in every section.

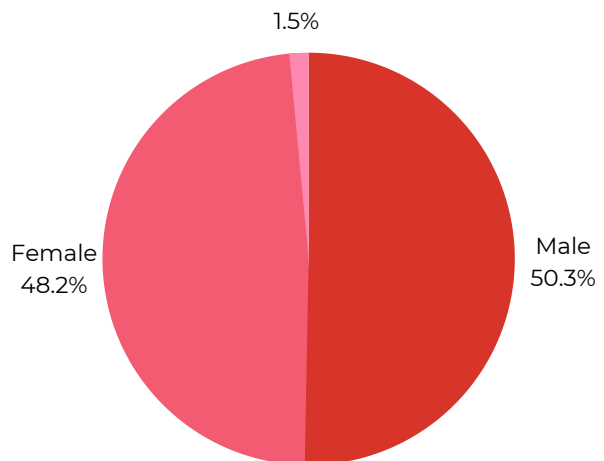
In 2021 we appointed an Indigenous and Public Policy Editor, Carissa Lee, a Noongar writer, editor and actor born on Wemba-Wemba country, based in Narm (Melbourne). Our aim is to publish 100 articles by Indigenous academics in each calendar year and we are on track to meet that target in FY2022.

We have formed a staff committee to increase cultural diversity in the team.



Article by Eddie Synot, Lecturer, Griffith Law School, Griffith University

Gender, AU and NZ authors, 2021

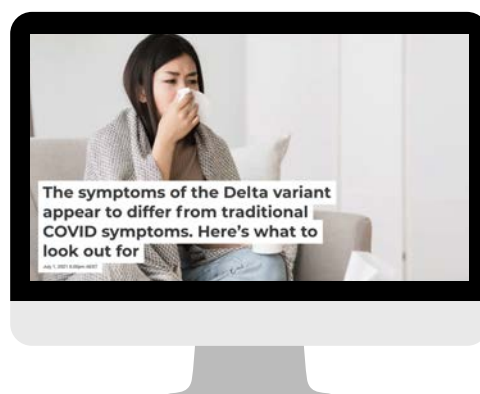


The Conversation partnered with State Library of Queensland in October 2021 to present an online event: **What is the future of First Nations literature?**

The event featured: Larissa Behrendt, Jasmin McCaughey, Rhanna Patrick and Tony Birch.



# Readers' choice. The most-read articles by section in 2021.



Section	Author, Institution	Article	Reads*
Arts & Culture	Julie E Brice & Holly Thorpe, University of Waikato	Sure they're comfortable, but those leggings and sports bras are also redefining modern femininity	317,200
Business & Economy	Peter Martin, Australian National University	The paradox of going contactless is that we're more in love with cash than ever	737,381
Cities	Heather Shearer & Paul Burton, Griffith University	Loving the idea of tiny house living, even if you don't live in one	342,516
Education	Evan Smith, Flinders University	I asked historians what find made them go 'wait, wut?' Here's a taste of the hundreds of replies	224,582
Environment & Energy	Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, The University of Queensland & Lesley Hughes Macquarie University	Seriously ugly: here's how Australia will look if the world heats by 3°C this century	611,268
Health & Medicine	Lara Herrero, Griffith University	The symptoms of the Delta variant appear to differ from traditional COVID symptoms. Here's what to look out for	2,540,823
Politics & Society	Maria O'Sullivan, Monash University	If you don't have a COVID vaccination certificate, could you be banned from restaurants, shops and theatres?	547,516
Science & Technology	John Grant, Southern Cross University	The Moon's top layer alone has enough oxygen to sustain 8 billion people for 100,000 years	1,376,818

\*Reads 1/1/2021–14/12/2021, includes only articles published in 2021

# Public interest journalism thrives with philanthropic support.

We are grateful to our philanthropic partners who provide funding in support of evidence-based journalism.

In 2021, we received funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation and new funding from the Broadley Trust, Ecstra Foundation, the H&L Hecht Trust and Summer Foundation. We had a long-term partnership with the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

These partnerships helped us publish research-based journalism and information about cities, disasters, economics, finance, and refugees. Funding from the Australian government's Australia-India Council allowed us to partner with AKADialog and publish a series on common challenges faced by Australia and India.

As part of the Google News Initiative's 2020 Asia Pacific Innovation Challenge, we built new tools to improve the on-site comments experience and distinguish between real commenters and trolls.

Our ongoing thanks to Corrs Chambers Westgarth, who provided vital pro bono legal services.

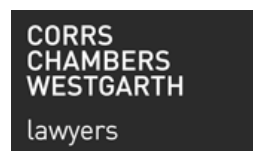
Without each of these funders, there would be no Conversation.

“

We are proud to support the Cities Editor at The Conversation. This is part of building and sharing knowledge about the issues we care about and developing informed policy.

**Dr Catherine Brown OAM**  
CEO, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Foundations looking to partner please contact our Chief Operating Officer  
[damian.thompson@theconversation.com](mailto:damian.thompson@theconversation.com)



# Friends of The Conversation empower our team.

The Conversation offers sincere thanks to those readers who made monthly or single tax-deductible donations as Friends of The Conversation to help support our work. In 2020–21 we had donations from 21,266 people.

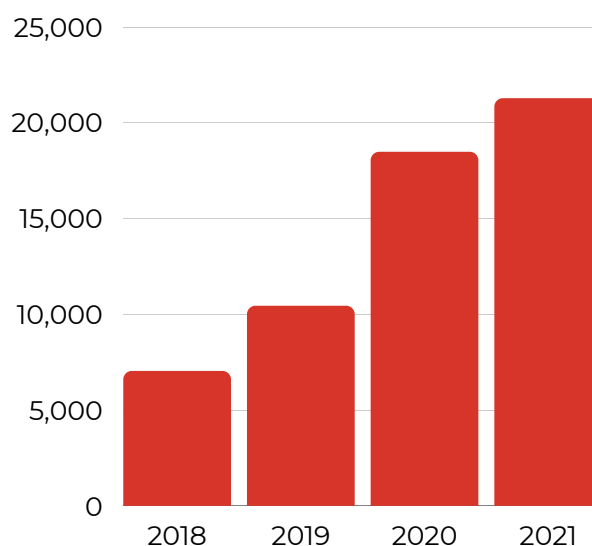
The Conversation is based on our confidence that, given the chance, people will act selflessly to help others. We see it every day in the academics who give their time to write, and the foundations and universities and donors who make our work possible.

And we see it especially in thousands of readers who donate to ensure quality information can be free for everyone, not just a select few. Thank you for your generosity in 2021. You have shown us that what we do matters, and that we can't afford to stuff it up. Your support has been truly inspiring.



For more about donations and bequests go to [donate.theconversation.com/au](https://donate.theconversation.com/au)

Number of donors, FY2021

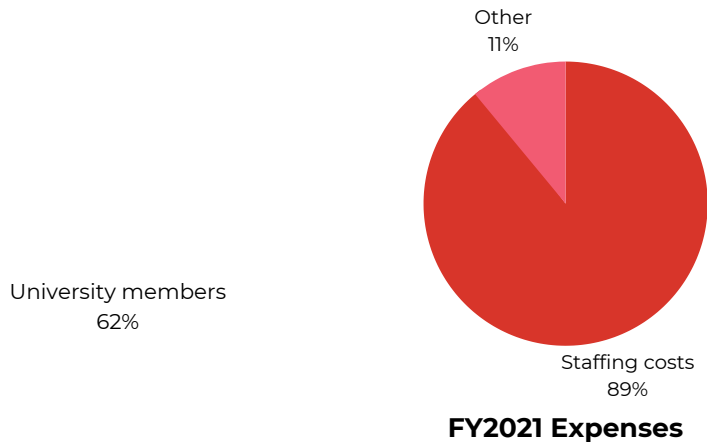
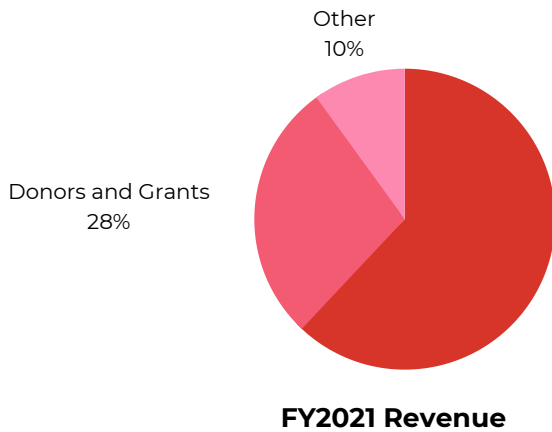


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I commend the excellent work done at The Conversation. We have a real need for clear, unbiased and well-researched articles to make sure that we continue to have meaningful public debate on issues that matter.

**Niem Tri**  
Friend of The Conversation

# Every dollar counts: financial overview.

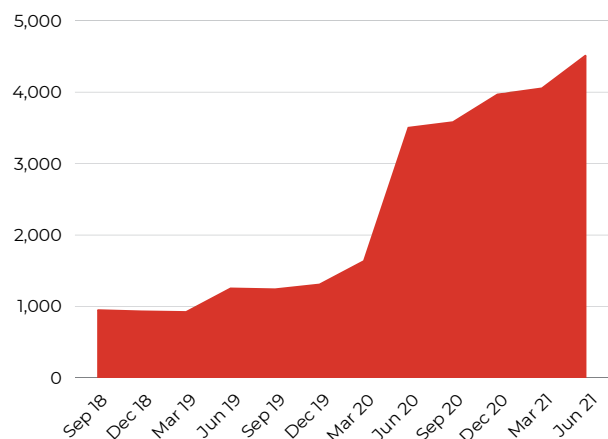


During a time of deep budget cuts across all sectors, The Conversation has managed to strengthen its financial position and maintain ongoing sustainability.

Our revenue comes from our university members, foundations and strategic partners, and dedicated readers who donate via The Conversation Foundation.

Friends of The Conversation are crucial to our success and readers who decided to make a monthly contribution have increased over the last three years. This funding helps us to support our operational costs of approximately \$5m per annum, with 89% going towards our team who edit, publish and distribute articles from Australian and New Zealand academics. The remainder of our expenses (11%) are office administration, rent and general operating costs.

## Total active recurring donations



**Support non-profit journalism today.**

**Every donation is tax deductible and makes a difference.**

# The Conversation delivers real world change.



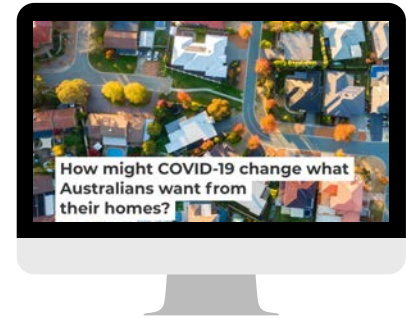
"The Conversation plays an important role in bridging the gap between academia and the community.

"I became an academic as I wanted to make a difference. As much as I have been able to achieve since moving to the public health field through traditional academic outputs, I am not sure I have ever had more of an impact than what I have had this past year, with all of the opportunities that have originated from my collaborations with The Conversation.

"What has surprised me the most has been just how far-reaching the exposure is that you get from writing for The Conversation. I have had a reach and an impact that I could only have previously dreamed of and have been able to establish myself as reliable media commentator during the pandemic."

**Hassan Vally**

La Trobe University



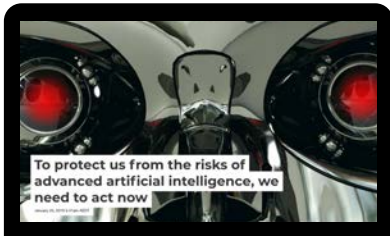
"The Conversation is a bridge to impacting and influencing public discourse in direct ways, backed up by evidence. It plays a critical evidence-to-impact role in promoting our research to a wide global and national readership of citizens, policy-makers, practitioners and academic peers.

"For our research group, publishing in The Conversation has led to international conference invitations, invitations to collaborate on research, approaches by academics in related fields to build interdisciplinary projects, plus direct engagement with media and the community."

**Wendy Stone**

Swinburne University of Technology





"The Conversation plays a critical role in research translation and impact.

"The Conversation is extremely useful for initiating new research projects, partnerships and collaborations. For example, following our recent articles on the risks associated with artificial general intelligence we developed new collaborations and partnerships with academics and practitioners who were exposed to our work via The Conversation.

"We now see The Conversation as a key component of the research translation process."

**Paul Salmon**  
USC Australia



"I write for The Conversation because I value its independence, integrity, and the professional support from its editors. I think our job as scholars is to share information with the public – and there are no paywalls to stop that.

"Key New Zealand and overseas news outlets value The Conversation, so they republish my articles, while others such as the New York Times, BBC and Der Spiegel have then contacted me for interviews.

"The Conversation keeps you current and in the public eye."

**Alexander Gillespie**  
University of Waikato



"The Conversation is a vital outlet for academics looking to distil complex research ideas in an accessible format. It can engage new audiences in topics of social or ecological importance, stimulate debate and result in all manner of exciting outcomes.

"As a result of the article, I have been interviewed by local and national media on a regular basis, further affording my research a platform through which I can debunk popularly held myths and promulgate research-driven insights. I have also commenced writing the article into a full manuscript for publication in a peer reviewed journal. Moreover, I received many insightful comments which have helped inform an additional research project examining how and why certain people come to co-exist with snakes living on their property."

**Gavin JD Smith**  
Australian National University



# A decade of setting the agenda.

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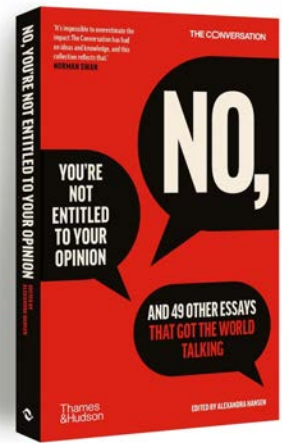
It's impossible to overestimate the impact The Conversation has had on ideas and knowledge, and this collection reflects that.

**Dr Norman Swan**

This year, to celebrate the first ten years of The Conversation, we collected 50 of our best written pieces into a special volume, *No, you're not entitled to your opinion: and 49 other essays that got the world talking*, edited by deputy editor and chief of staff Alexandra Hansen.

Contained within this ten year anniversary collection are key essays that put The Conversation on the map: contemporary slavery, how Jesus wasn't white, how long sex usually lasts, and the close friendships birds form with people.

There are timeless thought pieces and analysis of some of the biggest news events of recent times – the election of Donald Trump, Brexit, coronavirus and the #MeToo movement – as well as insights into why bad moods are good for you, and why tests won't help kids who are poor spellers. These pieces chart not only the course of one media organisation but also the world over the past decade.



## The experts:

Anglia Ruskin University: Sean Lang  
 Australian National University: Frank Bongiorno, Will J Grant, Rod Lamberts, Sarah Legge  
 Charles Darwin University: Jaana Dielenberg, Brett Murphy, John Woinarski, Leigh-Ann Woolley  
 Deakin University: Clare Corbould, Carolyn Holbrook, Patrick Stokes  
 Flinders University: Corey JA Bradshaw, Alice Gorman  
 La Trobe University: Judith Brett, Jennifer Power, Kacey Sinclair  
 Laurentian University: Thomas Merritt  
 Macquarie University: Michelle Arrow  
 Massey University: Paul Spoonley  
 Murdoch University: Mike Calver  
 Museums Victoria: Tanya Hill  
 Nile University of Nigeria: Hakeem Onapajo  
 Queens University, Ontario: Susan Bartels  
 Stamford University: Paul Ehrlich  
 Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre: Andry Schulthorpe  
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 Université Paris-Saclay: Franck Courchamp  
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 University of Canberra: Caroline Fisher, Michelle Grattan, Misty Adoniou  
 University of Divinity: Robyn J Whitaker  
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 University of New England: Gisela Kaplan, Xanthe Mallett  
 University of NSW: Joseph Paul Forgas  
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 University of South Australia: Cat Jones  
 University of Sydney: Chris Dickman, Michael Humphrey, Amanda Salis, David Smith  
 University of Tasmania: David Bowman, Greg Lehman  
 University of Technology Sydney: Jennifer Burn, Eva Cox, Rachael Dunlop, Alison Whittaker  
 University of Texas at Austin: Daina Ramey Berry  
 University of Western Australia: Andrew Whitehouse  
 Victoria University: Bakti Berlyanto Sedayu  
 Western Sydney University: Jane Chalmers

# Curious Kids

Hundreds of children attended sell-out events across Australia to celebrate the publication of *Why Do Tigers Have Whiskers? And other cool things about animals* (Thames & Hudson Australia), The Conversation's first book based on our Curious Kids series, edited by Sunanda Creagh. Look out for the space edition in 2022.



The University of Queensland's spider expert (and former arachnophobe) Samantha Nixon, fielding questions from enthralled kids at Avid Reader in Brisbane.



Long-time Curious Kid Nathan Gratzer.

“

**A beautifully illustrated resource for parents and children alike, bringing the wonder of science to kids. It's not the answer that gets you the Nobel Prize, it's the question!**

**Dr Karl Kruszelnicki**

**The experts:** Alexander Brackowski (The University of Queensland), Michael F. Braby (ANU), Paul McGreevy (University of Sydney), Christine Cooper (Curtin University), Jane Williamson (Macquarie University), Richard Malik (University of Sydney), Andrea Harvey (UTS).

More animal facts provided by: Susan Hazel (University of Adelaide), Peter Banks (University of Sydney), Samantha Nixon and Andrew Walker (The University of Queensland), Bill Bateman (Curtin University), Tanya Latty (University of Sydney), Culum Brown (Macquarie University), Mark Sandeman (Federation University Australia), Glenn Hyndes (Edith Cowan University), Andy Davis (University of Wollongong), David Yeates and Bryan Lessard (CSIRO).



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Director



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Senior Health &  
Medicine Editor



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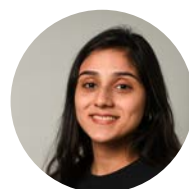
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Manager



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Sponsorship &  
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**Zoe Jazz**  
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Engineer



**Paweł Gałązka**  
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Developer



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Senior Developer



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Senior Developer



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**Rohan Mitchell**  
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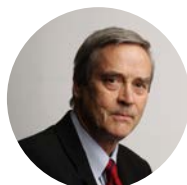
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# The world's leading independent publisher of research-based news and analysis.

## Editions

### Africa

15 Editors  
11.5 University  
Members

#### Monthly averages

124 Authors  
107 Articles

### Canada

14 Editors (inc. CA-FR)  
42 University Members

#### Monthly averages

162 Authors  
137 Articles

### Australia & NZ

27 Editors  
47 University Members

#### Monthly averages

344 Authors  
337 Articles

### France

18 Editors  
133 University Members

#### Monthly averages

217 Authors  
204 Articles

### Indonesia

9 Editors  
2 University Members

#### Monthly averages

59 Authors  
59 Articles

### Spain

8 Editors  
50 University  
Members

#### Monthly averages

201 Authors  
194 Articles

### United Kingdom

28 Editors  
86 University Members

#### Monthly averages

265 Authors  
243 Articles

### United States

21 Editors  
62 University Members

#### Monthly averages

206 Authors  
190 Articles

White pins mark where we now have staff working for our eight different editions of The Conversation. The number of editors is full-time equivalents. Excludes audience development staff. Metrics as at 1/11/20 to 31/10/21

# A global media brand powered by a global network.

The Conversation is the place to find world-leading expert analysis and explanation of key events and issues from across the globe.

The Conversation's global operational model is decentralised, with each edition incorporated as a not-for-profit, with a local board and team. The Conversation Media Group provides the technology and publishing platform for the global network through the business division of The Conversation International.

The Conversation's content management system was built to support a collaborative approach to journalism.

Our international editors work together on key issues and events, such as the Glasgow climate talks, to produce content that speaks to regional editions but also provide an extensive international overview.

## Monthly onsite visitors

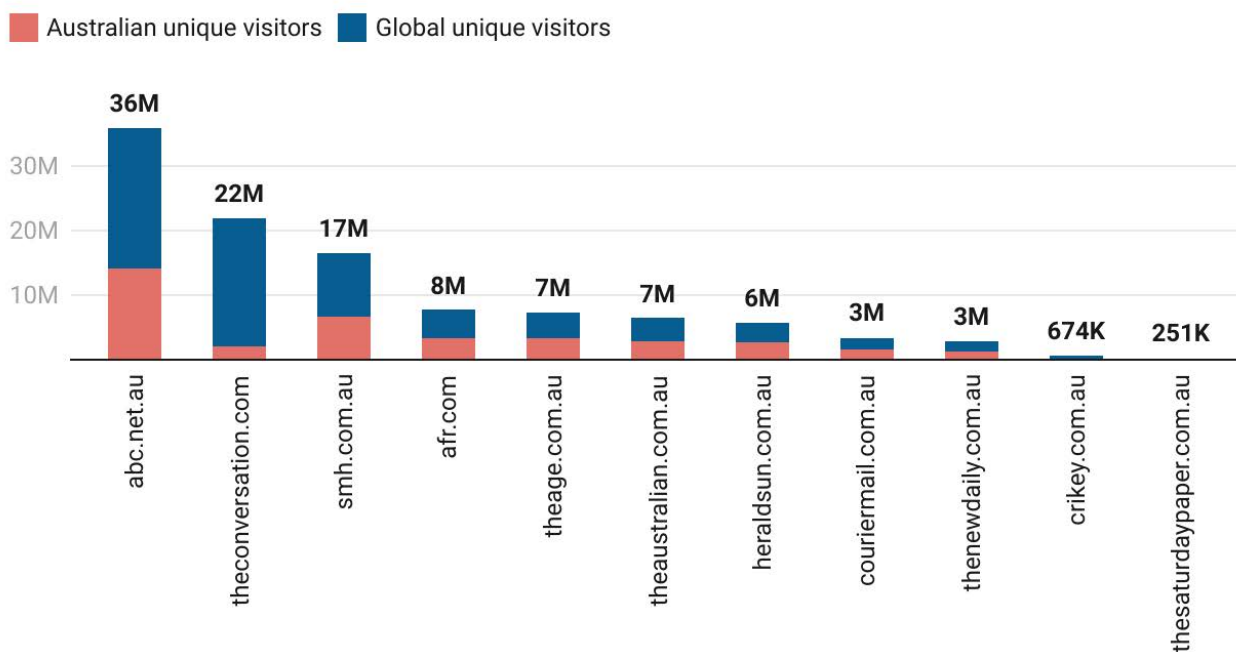


Chart: Similar Web Last 12 mths Nov 20 to Nov 21

# Pitching & Writing Masterclass

Sharing research beyond academia is now a requirement of many research grants.

But for busy researchers, it can be difficult to know where to start, and what to do – or when their research is interesting enough to a broader non-academic audience to try to attract public attention.

Our masterclass is designed to help save time and wasted energy. We share our checklist of what to consider before even ‘pitching’ a story to a media outlet like The Conversation, ABC News, a major newspaper or others.

We spend time showing how to adapt content and language to suit different audiences, in different outlets and media. And we help participants sharpen their storytelling skills so people want to hear more.

For more about our masterclass email: [masterclass@theconversation.edu.au](mailto:masterclass@theconversation.edu.au)



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**The most useful professional development workshop I have ever attended. Every single point was new(s) to me and it was invaluable to have feedback from such experienced editors.**

**Not only has this transformed my understanding of how to pitch to The Conversation and other media, the insights benefit my writing for professional newsletters and grant applications.**

**6 stars out of 5.**

**Dr Amelia Church**  
The University of Melbourne

## Newsletter sponsorship

The Conversation's daily newsletter has more than 180,000 educated and engaged subscribers, and we welcome sponsorship from universities and selected organisations that align with our values. We only allow one advertiser per newsletter, so each campaign has high impact.

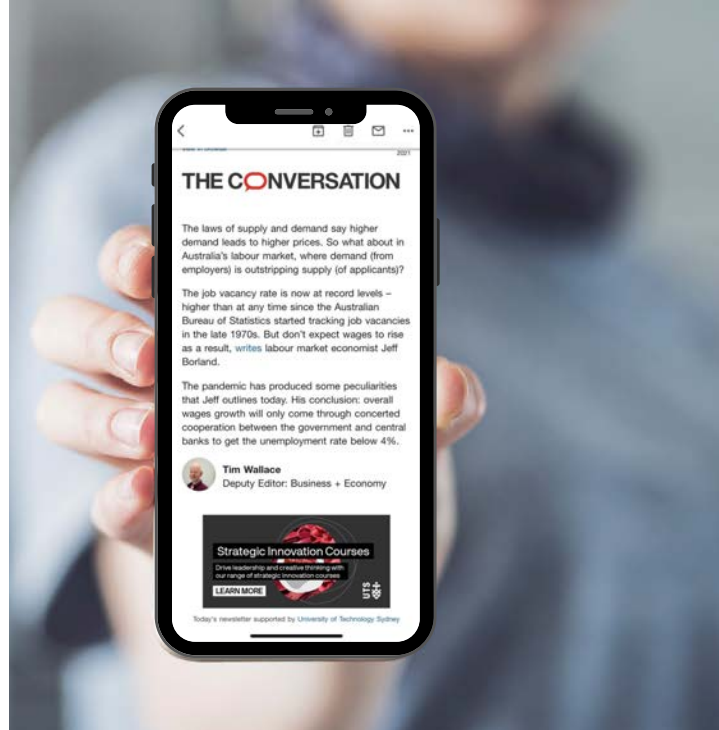
## Event, course & podcast listings

The Conversation allows universities and other organisations to promote upcoming events, podcasts and online courses. Listings are *free* for our university members or A\$390 for non-member organisations. Listings can be boosted to feature in the daily newsletter upon request.

## Job listings

The Conversation's Job Board is a leading platform for academic, ethical and knowledge-sector jobs. Job opportunities feature on rotation on our homepage and on article pages. With job alerts sent directly to active candidates, you will find the best possible candidates for your job vacancies.

For more information email:  
[sponsor@theconversation.edu.au](mailto:sponsor@theconversation.edu.au)



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**In 2021 Monash University promoted a series of Executive Education short courses in The Conversation's daily newsletter and Events & Courses Board.**

**We've loved tapping into The Conversation's large audience by advertising on these platforms, driving awareness around our short courses and reaching more people in just a few days.**

**Georgia Leach**  
Marketing Communications Manager  
Monash University

# Thank you to our University Members and Partners.

## Founding Partners



## Strategic Partners

## Members



[theconversation.com](http://theconversation.com)

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