There is no Conversation without our...

University Members
Page 5

Republishers & Media
Page 8

Our Readers
Page 13

Friends of The Conversation
Page 15

Our Philanthropic Partners
Page 16

Our Team
Page 18
The year in review
From Julianne Schultz
Chair of The Conversation Media Group

In our lifetimes there has never been a year like 2020. From Australia’s summer firestorms, to the endless pandemic, a COVID-delayed election in New Zealand and the COVID-hit US election, it was easy to feel unmoored. But it was also a year The Conversation was designed to serve. By sharing the expertise of scholars and researchers across Australia, New Zealand and worldwide, we were able to help more readers than ever make sense of the challenges we faced.

In the early days of 2020, I called editor Misha Ketchell as the fires wrought havoc in NSW, asking how he planned to cover the disaster. He assured me editors were already back from holidays, reaching out to their networks of experts — scholars with deep knowledge of fire, climate, disaster management and recovery. Together, they produced powerful articles and videos that reached a huge local and global audience.

Soon after, as the first reports leaked out about an unusual virus killing people in Wuhan, China, we again sought out the best public experts.

UNSW’s Professor Raina MacIntyre was the first expert published in The Conversation about COVID-19. Drawing on her extraordinary knowledge of pandemic spread, personal protective equipment and international protocols, Professor MacIntyre urged vigilance.

At the beginning of March we decided that the planned global summit of Conversation chairs, CEOs and editors in Vancouver would become a virtual event. Plans to celebrate the fifth anniversary of TC US with an event at the Australian Embassy in Washington were also put on hold.

Meanwhile, in New Zealand many of the experts who were busy guiding the Ardern government’s elimination strategy — starting with Otago professors Michael Baker and Nick Wilson, as well as Te Pūnaha Matatini’s research team — also found time to write for us.

At every step throughout the year, The Conversation has drawn on its network of academics and researchers, providing trustworthy, timely content, inoculating against what the WHO called an ‘infodemic’ of online misinformation.

In March, The Conversation’s audience tripled — and our developers had to work hard to keep up with the avalanche of new readers landing onsite.
When New Zealand and then Australia went into lockdown, The Conversation’s editors and technical staff took their jobs home. Juggling home schooling, or carving out workspaces in flats and share houses, their workloads soared. Through it all, they maintained good-spirited collegiality. CEO Lisa Watts and Editor Misha Ketchell provided calm and attentive leadership. The Conversation did not miss a beat.

The editors, tech team and management all deserve special credit for not only continuing to produce the daily bulletins and social media feeds while working from home, but also adding new global projects and special editions – such as Cook250, shortlisted for a international journalism award – to consolidate each week’s news. Readers showed their appreciation in emails, letters and much-needed donations, which buoyed the team.

The Conversation was able to realise its founding ambition to provide reliable, evidence-based knowledge when it was most needed.

Our authors and university partners were also exemplary. As the university members of The Conversation scrambled to meet the needs of international and local students, academics in lockdown worked even harder to generously share their knowledge: explaining the science, drawing on history, and investigating the human and economic impacts of the pandemic, all in real time.

More recently, the US election preoccupied the world, while Australia and New Zealand have each reached tipping points in their relationships with China. Scholars and researchers have again been on hand to share their insight.

If nothing else, 2020 has taught us uncertainty is the new normal, and whatever plans are made, we must remain agile and alert to respond to changing circumstances.

Julianne Schultz AM FAHA
Chair, The Conversation
November 2020
When COVID-19 hit, shutting universities and sending our editors into lockdown, we weren’t sure how badly we might be hit. Thanks to the support of our readers and university partners we’ve survived. In fact, right now our independent journalism powered by experts has never felt more essential.

Throughout this year, our authors have worked tirelessly under difficult conditions. From the brilliant epidemiologists who helped us chart a course through the coronavirus pandemic, to the scientists and fire researchers who responded so quickly to global interest in Australia’s summer of bushfires, 2020 has been the year of the expert. Our team published more than 4,100 articles written by academics, which had a record 210 million reads — almost double our readership in 2019.

Many of our authors weren’t just keeping the public informed. Behind the scenes they were also working with politicians, public servants and business leaders to help shape the public health response. Some health experts became household names. To pick just one example, early in the pandemic infectious disease specialist Sanjaya Senanayake wrote an article answering reader questions about COVID-19, such as how long it takes to get sick, and whether everyone who contracts the virus also gets a fever. That article alone attracted more than 1.3 million reads.

Our work is powered by our talented editors based in Australia and New Zealand. This year, our team has never been more stretched and have never performed more admirably. We thank everyone who has supported us on our mission.

Lisa Watts, Chief Executive Officer and Misha Ketchell, Editor
A unique collaboration
Between academics and journalists

The Conversation is the world’s leading independent publisher of research-based news and analysis.

Through a unique collaboration between academics and journalists, The Conversation unlocks the knowledge of researchers and academics to provide the public with clarity and insight into society’s biggest problems.

The Conversation has never been more important as a bridge between experts and the broader community and a way to showcase the vital work of our universities and research institutions.

In such a difficult year we’re proud almost every Australian and New Zealand university has continued as members to fund our work, along with key institutions such as the CSIRO.

“Without The Conversation providing an independent outlet for science, as a society our ability for informed debate would be severely limited.”

Professor Kingsley Dixon
Curtin University

“The Conversation provides a great and valuable outlet for getting research-based information out to the general public to foster conversations and improve awareness of different issues.”

Alexandra Baxter
Flinders University

“Australian universities promote impact and engagement, and there’s no better way to do this than writing for The Conversation. The Conversation plays an essential role in connecting me and my research to the media and the wider community. Writing for The Conversation gives me an active and public voice in the critical issues of the day.”

Dr Howard Manns
Monash University

Universities or research institutions seeking information on member-only benefits of supporting The Conversation, contact Strategic Partnerships Manager, Susan Hornbeck at partnerships@theconversation.edu.au
There is no Conversation without our University Members & Institutional Partners
The COVID-19 crisis increased demand for evidence-based information. In March 2020 our audience tripled as readers searched for facts they could trust, and it has remained high at more than twice our 2019 average.

As we navigate through the global pandemic, our team continues to work in partnership with our university and research members to ensure readers have access to the most up-to-date evidence-based information on COVID-19 developments.

Since the outbreak, we’ve published more than 1,267 evidence-based articles by academics and researchers. The articles have been read more than 63.1 million times and shared widely on social media and global news outlets such as ABC News, Stuff, ScienceAlert, CNN, Channel News Asia and World Economic Forum.

All this work is part of a broader effort by The Conversation’s global network which has published more than 5,887 COVID-19 articles in four languages that have attracted more than 263 million readers.

"Science has arguably never been more newsworthy than it is in 2020. And it’s never been more crucial that science coverage is accurate, timely, and above all, well informed.

"Whether we’re covering vaccine research, epidemiological modelling, or the rise of misinformation on social media, our articles are written by academics who have spent a whole career studying that issue, and edited by journalists who spend their time asking what our readers most need to know today."

Michael Hopkin
Editor Science & Technology / Health & Medicine
Amplifying expert knowledge

All articles we publish at The Conversation are free for other media outlets to republish under Creative Commons. It's our way of ensuring good, evidence-based information has as great a reach as possible. For many Australian and New Zealand news organisations, we've become a go-to source for credible, timely expertise.

Our global network of 20,000 media outlets republish our articles, garnering an additional 16 million readers per month to The Conversation articles.

Our team works with our international colleagues to ensure articles reach large influential audiences through global publishers like CNN, El País and The South China Morning Post. 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.

The Conversation articles have been translated into 28 languages and republished in 97 countries to date – from Algeria, Argentina and Azerbaijan, to Venezuela, Vietnam and Zambia.

"Our relationship with The Conversation has been particularly important in this hectic year where accurate, timely and accessible science communication has been more important than ever. The insightful analysis pieces they commission are a valuable addition to our website – and are very popular with our readers."

Leigh Tonkin
Editor, Features and Context
ABC News

Newsletter subscribers
Twitter followers
Facebook fans
Instagram followers
Real-world impacts for our authors

As a not-for-profit publisher, we’re driven by more than numbers of readers. We aim to inform public debate with knowledge-based journalism that is responsible, ethical and supported by evidence.

Producers and journalists use The Conversation as a valuable resource to find experts who can provide evidence-based commentary. This year our authors were swamped by media requests from across the globe including television, radio, podcasts, magazines and newspapers – from the New York Times to BBC News to Sputnik Radio.

And it’s not just media that contact our authors, but politicians, policy-makers and industry groups too.

We love hearing from authors about how collaborating with us helps them achieve real-world impacts — like these.

"The impact of publishing with The Conversation has been astonishing.

"I was interviewed by ABC TV, ABC Radio, SBS across different languages, The Australian, Times Higher Education, The PIE News, and cited by leading international education news such as ICEF Monitor and Study International. I was invited to give keynote/featured speeches at conferences such as Graduate Employability Summit and Association of Australian Education Representatives in India (AAERI) Virtual Summit and to speak at industry events such as AMES and VicWISE seminars."

Professor Ly Tran
Deakin University
"I’ve published 18 articles with The Conversation and have had some great responses. I’ve been told that my outreach is ‘absolutely outstanding’ as a result.

"During the 2019/2020 fires, a number of reporters found me via my Conversation articles and I did interviews around the world including BBC Radio, Radio 5 UK, The Washington Post, Noordhollands Dagblad, Tagblatt, DW Persian, Sydney Morning Herald, ABC News and ABC radio."

**Associate Professor**
**Cris Brack**
Australian National University

"I wrote my first Conversation article in 2020 on Jacinda Ardern’s COVID-19 leadership – and I’ve been blown away by its impact.

"It’s had more than 900,000 views and sparked new opportunities, including being asked to contribute to a special issue of the Leadership journal (cited eight times already); global media interviews with the BBC World Service, China Global TV, Forbes and a Lebanese newspaper; and seeing my article republished in countries including India, Argentina, Costa Rica, Lebanon, Spain and Indonesia. The global exposure for Massey and my research is ongoing."

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"The Conversation opened new and unexpected investigative avenues in my academic work."

"I have been contacted by researchers and members of the public from different countries, including Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan, Russia, USA and Australia which led to several ongoing projects.

"And I was invited by NASA to serve on a prestigious review panel tasked with selecting the next generation of US space exploration missions."

**Aaron J. Cavosie**
Curtin University

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"And I was invited by NASA to serve on a prestigious review panel tasked with selecting the next generation of US space exploration missions."

**Dr Suze Wilson**
Massey University
2020 began with fire-fuelled orange skies over Australia and parts of New Zealand. In the months that followed, we faced multiple crises: a pandemic, political upheaval, an international human rights movement, global recession and localised emergencies.

Throughout the year, The Conversation partnered with prestigious organisations across Australia, including the National Library of Australia, State Library of Queensland, The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre (UniSA), the Embassy of France and ABC Big Ideas, to produce a series of live events in which leading contributors to The Conversation examined perhaps the most significant and punishing year of the 21st century so far.

In 2021, The Conversation will mark its 10th anniversary, and we look forward to bringing our readers in Australia and New Zealand more thought-provoking events.
2020: The Year That Changed Us
The best of The Conversation, in a sell-out book

Contributors

Australian National University: Liz Allen, Jon Altman, Geoff Cary, Elisa deCourcy, Kate Flaherty, Joelle Gergis, Shamim Homayun, Martyn Jolly, Merryn McKinnon, Andrew Norton
Auckland University of Technology: Jarrod Haar
Australian Museum: Jodi Rowley
Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation: Quan Hua
Bond University: Oliver Bauman, Libby Sander
Charles Darwin University: Rohan Fisher
Charles Sturt University: Stan Grant
Curtin University: Brett Healey
Deakin University: Kate Lycett, Craig Olsson
Edith Cowan University: Esme Franken, Diep Nguyen, Stephen Teo
Flinders University: Jonathan Benjamin, Jacinta Koolmatrie
Grattan Institute: Stephen Duckett, Anika Stobart
Griffith University: Karen Struthers
James Cook University: Sean Ulm
La Trobe University: Caroline Spry, Tony Walker, John Allan Webb
Macquarie University: Jana Bowden
Massey University: Suze Wilson
Monash University: Kate Burridge, Susan Carland, Stephen Gray, Howard Manns
Queens University Ontario: Kate Harkness
Queensland University of Technology: Gary Mortimer
RMIT: David Kelly, Libby Porter
Southern Cross University: David Newell
Swinburne University of Technology: Norman Day, Jason Pallant
University of Canberra: Michelle Grattan, Peter Martin
University of Canterbury: Katie Pickles
University of Johannesburg: Brian J. Armstrong
University of Melbourne: Kathryn Allen, Simon Coghlan, Timothy N. W. Jackson, Kobi Leins, Kate Shaw, Fiona Stanley (Telethon Kids Institute), Caitlin Vincent, Sally Young
University of New England: Lisa Paton
University of NSW: Gabrielle Appleby, Megan Davis, C. Raina MacIntyre
University of Queensland: Ella Donald, Peter Greste, Rebecca E. Olson
University of South Australia: Freya Higgins-Desbiolles
University of Southern Queensland: Geoffreyl Woolcock
University of Sydney: Marlee Bower, Adam Kamradt-Scott
University of Tasmania: Louise Grimmer, Martin Grimmer
University of Technology Sydney: Thalia Anthony, Alison Whittaker
University of Toronto: Bruce Kidd
University of Western Australia: Fiona David, Shino Konishi, Philippa Martyr, Jo McDonald, Michael McFadden, Michael O’Leary
University of Wollongong: Richard Fullagar, Elspeth Hayes, Jordan McKenzie, Roger Patulny, Lauren Samuelsson
University of York: Geoff Bailey
Victoria University of Wellington: Geoff Plimmer
As an independent news publisher, The Conversation’s goal is to produce and share good, research-backed information in a format that people can understand to inform public discourse. Sharing academic expertise was especially important this year when misinformation around COVID-19 and climate change was rampant on social media.

In 2020, The Conversation’s audience team prioritised knowledge-sharing through social platforms, providing new audiences with bite-sized, fact-based information available at a glance.

In March 2020, The Conversation saw its onsite audience triple to more than 12 million readers onsite. This was a reflection of the growing appetite for evidence-based COVID-19 reporting written by experts who knew exactly what they were talking about. Since then, The Conversation has maintained a healthy audience of roughly 8 million readers per month, more than double our 2019 audience. All articles are edited to be accessible for a general audience.

As our audience has grown, so has its diversity. We reach an overwhelmingly non-academic readership of all ages across the globe, with the majority of readers under 44 years of age.
# Readers' choice

The most-read articles by section in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Author, Institution</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Reads*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Jonathan L. Zecher, Australian Catholic University</td>
<td>Acedia: the lost name for the emotion we're all feeling right now</td>
<td>664,962</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Economy</td>
<td>John Daley, Grattan Institute</td>
<td>The case for Endgame C: stop almost everything, restart when coronavirus is gone</td>
<td>777,103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>Ilan Wiesel, University of Melbourne Liss Ralston &amp; Wendy M. Stone, Swinburne University of Technology</td>
<td>The housing boom propelled inequality, but a coronavirus housing bust will skyrocket it</td>
<td>844,413</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Ly Tran, Deakin University George Tan, University of Adelaide</td>
<td>90,000 foreign graduates are stuck in Australia without financial support: it's a humanitarian and economic crisis in the making</td>
<td>210,220</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment &amp; Energy</td>
<td>Andrew Glickson, Australian National University</td>
<td>While we fixate on coronavirus, Earth is hurtling towards a catastrophe worse than the dinosaur extinction</td>
<td>995,777</td>
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<td>Health &amp; Medicine</td>
<td>Sanjaya Senanayake, Australian National University</td>
<td>Coronavirus: how long does it take to get sick? How infectious is it? Will you always have a fever? COVID-19 basics explained</td>
<td>1,375,136</td>
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<tr>
<td>Politics &amp; Society</td>
<td>Suze Wilson, Massey University</td>
<td>Three reasons why Jacinda Ardern’s coronavirus response has been a masterclass in crisis leadership</td>
<td>844,413</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Ian M. Mackay &amp; Katherine Arden, The University of Queensland</td>
<td>We know how long coronavirus survives on surfaces. Here’s what it means for handling money, food and more</td>
<td>829,047</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Reads 1/1/2020–22/11/2020*
Amid media closures and the economic pressures brought on by the pandemic, the support of Friends of The Conversation has given us a vote of confidence, telling us we are on the right track publishing quality analysis and research from the higher education and research sector.

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 2019-20 we had our most successful year yet with donations from 18,468 people.

"Thank you for continuing to make good journalism accessible to all."

**Fiona Lange**  
Friend of The Conversation

"Thank you for providing The Conversation. In a world where so much is 'published' without thought or verification and with hidden agendas, the articles published by your contributors is appreciated."

**Julie Wangman**  
Friend of The Conversation

"Honest, thoughtful, factual information is becoming hard to find amidst the clutter. Thanks for shining the light!"

**Andrea Zweling**  
Friend of The Conversation

For more about donations, bequests and becoming a Friend of The Conversation, go to donate.theconversation.com/au
We are grateful to our philanthropic partners who provide funding in support of evidence-based journalism.

In 2020, we received vital funding from long-term strategic partners the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation and the Ian Potter Foundation, and new funding from the Ross Trust and VicHealth. This helped us publish analysis and information on important topics such as biodiversity, bushfires, cities, science and public health.

We received COVID-19 relief funding from the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas, Google and Facebook, helping us stay on top of COVID-19 news and engage audiences.

The Conversation was one of a handful of outlets selected to be part of the Google News Initiative’s 2020 Asia Pacific Innovation Challenge. Funding is being used to improve the onsite comments experience and verify the bona fides of commenters.

Thanks also to Corrs Chambers Westgarth who provided vital pro bono legal services.

Every one of our funders is helping sustain public interest journalism. Without each of them, there would be no Conversation.

Foundations looking to partner with The Conversation, please contact Director of Foundations and Fundraising, Damian Thompson at damian.thompson@theconversation.com
Managing our resources effectively is vital to our sustainability.

Thanks to the ongoing support of our Australian and New Zealand university members, and spurred by strong reader support in the wake of our COVID-19 coverage, The Conversation Australia and New Zealand finished the 2020 financial year with a modest surplus. This will be used to offset any declines in revenue over the next few years to cover the fallout from COVID-19.

Over 90% of our revenue is provided by our university members, philanthropic foundations, and readers who donate via The Conversation Foundation.

This funding helps us to support our operational costs, with 87% allocated to our editorial team who commission, edit, publish and distribute The Conversation articles.
Board of Directors

Julianne Schultz
AM, FAHA
Chair of TCMG

Joseph Skrzynski AO
Director

Lisa Watts
CEO and Executive Director

Richard Leder
OAM
Director

Marianne Broadbent
Director

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OAM
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Julie Willis
University of Melbourne

Lisa French
RMIT

Shamit Saggar
University of Western Australia

Misha Ketchell
Editor and Executive Director

Giselle Byrnes
Massey University

Annamarie Jagose
University of Sydney

Susan Forde
Griffith University
The Conversation Media Group operates the technology and publishing platform through the business division of The Conversation International.

The Conversation content management system was developed to support a collaborative approach to journalism.

It enables collaborative writing, with a readability index, editorial workflow and approvals, and rich analytics.

The Conversation’s global operational model is decentralised, with each edition incorporated as a not-for-profit, with a local board and team.
A global network dedicated to democratising knowledge

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Editors</th>
<th>Uni Members/Hosts</th>
<th>Monthly Averages</th>
<th>Reads</th>
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<td>Africa</td>
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<td>17.3 million</td>
<td>1.7 million</td>
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<td>articles</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>3.1 million</td>
<td>5.9 million</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>120</td>
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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. The number of reads are via republication. Excludes audience development staff. Metrics as at 1/11/19 to 31/10/20.
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.

Fewer than 50% of people typically read beyond the first few sentences of an online article or journal abstract. We show how to keep time-poor readers interested, using short, sharp, jargon-free writing.

For more information on bookings and pricing, visit theconversation.com/au/pitching-and-writing-masterclass or email masterclass@theconversation.edu.au

“Honestly, one of the most useful workshops I have ever attended... I really appreciated the clear and direct descriptions of how to structure a news piece versus an academic article. I appreciated getting direct feedback from editors in the breakout groups. It was very helpful! Outstanding.”

Dr Kelly Bertolaccini
Griffith University

“The workshop explained precisely what The Conversation is looking for from contributors; how to write a pitch; how to structure a story; how to ‘write’ a story for a lay audience (as opposed to an academic journal). There were some great case studies and the individual coaching for academic participants was balanced and well done. This was incredibly valuable for me as a Communications and Marketing professional at a university. I will be able to guide our academics/researchers more effectively. The course was very well structured and I sincerely appreciate your guidance. Outstanding.”

Melissa Branagh
Deakin University
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 152,000 subscribers daily.

"As a university publisher our brand aligns brilliantly with The Conversation. We found advertising in their EDM was the ideal way to reach their engaged and significant database of subscribers."

Louise Cornegé
University of Queensland Press

Event listings

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

"Throughout 2020 the UTS Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) promoted events, professional development learning programs and UTS applied policy and local government programs. Although COVID-19 presented new challenges and ways of working, promoting on The Conversation website ensured IPPG could continue to build its brand reputation and program awareness while also contributing to the professional development of public sector employees."

Sarah Reade
UTS

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.

For more information contact Sponsorship and University Services Manager, Felicity Burke, at felicity.burke@theconversation.edu.au
Values

Across 8 editions (Africa, Australia & New Zealand, Canada, France, Indonesia, Spain, UK and USA) we share these values:

Evidence
We commission fact-based articles from experts in their field. We make decisions based on evidence not opinions.

Trust
We are rebuilding trust in journalism by following rigorous processes. We are a trustworthy source.

Independence
We are free of political or commercial influence and support independent thinking.

Transparency
We are open, transparent and accountable. When new information is presented to us, we correct ourselves quickly and publicly.

Knowledge
We believe academic knowledge should be freely available in a format people can understand.

Collaboration
We respectfully exchange ideas. We encourage others to question and challenge our beliefs. We are better together.

Public good
We are a charitable organisation that strives to have a positive impact on society.

theconversation.com
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ABN: 44142923653