



Stakeholder Report 2022

THE CONVERSATION

Australia & New Zealand

A word from our Chair.

We live in testing times – many of the old certainties are being challenged and found wanting. 2022, even more than most years, proved this point.

Wherever you look there are signs that change is afoot. The Australian election in May signalled the power of a new sort of on-the-ground politics, the Russian invasion of Ukraine demonstrated that the agreed rules of international engagement could be easily broken, the floods that devastated eastern Australia were a shocking reminder that climate change has many faces, and inflation returned while unemployment fell to record lows.

Little of this was expected at the beginning of the year. When the COVID-19 lockdowns gave way to a more 'normal' way of life – thanks to the brilliant scientists and companies that brought vaccines to limit the damage of the virus to market and into hundreds of millions of bodies in record time – most hoped that the pandemic years would recede like a bad dream.

We stopped obsessively talking about it. But the damage was done and kept coming. This year the death rate from COVID-19 in Australia and New Zealand substantially exceeded the number of people who died during the previous two years.

Human beings are good at forgetting, which is why academic research is so important. It helps us remember and



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

anticipate, so that the future might be better than the past. The research many scholars did during the pandemic is now bearing fruit.

Close readers of The Conversation would have been less surprised than most about the shape of the new normal in 2022. The best academic research is ahead of the game and The Conversation makes it available. As well as making sense of the day-to-day, that knowledge is a guide, and an investment in the future.

Thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julianne Schultz'.

Thank you from our CEO and Editor.

In a year of rapid change and at times alarming news, it is inspiring to see The Conversation continue to have positive impact. Success in 2022 was powered by selflessness and dedication from authors, staff, our Chair and Board members, volunteers, donors and philanthropic and university partners. We thank you all.

It's a privilege to be part of a project built on collaboration and public service, and it is sorely needed. The latest Reuters Digital News report recorded increases in people actively avoiding news. In Reuter's 2022 survey, 41% of respondents sometimes or often avoid news, up from 30% in 2017.

That speaks volumes about a sense of disempowerment many people feel when confronted by big global events and wicked problems. The Conversation exists to address this. By teaming academics with journalists, we aim to produce a type of journalism that is practical, timely, evidence-based and focused on solutions.

It's working. This year we have published more than 3,870 authors from 48 universities in Australia and New Zealand. These experts have attracted an average audience of 6.4 million unique visitors a month. And the team working in Australia and New Zealand is now just one part of a thriving global network.



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

In 2022 we were denied funding from Facebook under the Australian government's News Media Bargaining Code. We did get funding from Google. We will continue to fight for a fair share. But it's reassuring to know that with our generous supporters, we can survive without Facebook.

This year we launched a compelling new section, Books & Ideas, which reached 3.5 million reads in eight months. We also covered a federal election and did it our way, by listening to the experts and focusing on the policy issues that are most important to readers. Our #settheagenda survey helped us harness the wisdom of the crowd in a way that we will repeat in future. Our short run election podcast, Below the Line, was an engaging and informative addition to the online coverage.

Thank you for supporting us.

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is 'Misha Ketchell' and the signature on the right is 'Lisa Watts'.

An engaged, informed and connected audience.

After two years of rapid growth, online audiences contracted across all news platforms during the year. The Conversation was no exception.

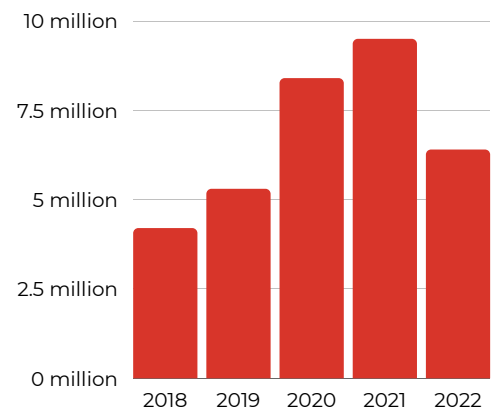
However, we expanded our social media team to combat misinformation on the platforms where it thrives and multiplies. It was pleasing to see our strategy pay off with continued growth in social media engagement.

Another strength in 2022 was the deep engagement of our readers. In our annual survey, 90% of readers said they would recommend The Conversation to others.

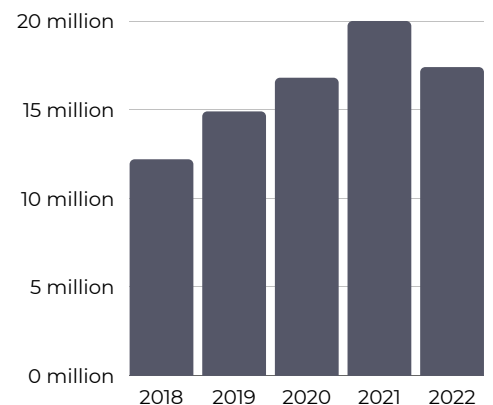
83% of people said they read The Conversation to get expert analysis of current events. And three-quarters said they read The Conversation to get reliable facts without bias.

Our priority in 2023 will be to increase our on-site audience, expand our pool of republishers, and grow brand awareness to better reflect our growing influence.

Australian and New Zealand articles attracted an average of 6.4 million unique reads per month in 2022, down from the COVID high:



But including republishers, our reach was 17.4 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. That way our 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 1,160 media outlets have republished articles from our AU/NZ edition 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. After updating our Republishing Strategy in 2021, we continued to expand our network of republishers in 2022.

The ABC, Stuff and Science Alert remained our top republishers, while Channel News Asia broke into the top 10 for the first time. Space.com and Lifehacker also increased their reads.

Our work is also often republished by international media outlets, including CNN and the Washington Post, who were in our top 25 republishers in 2022. Our articles have been translated into 37 languages and read in 194 nations.



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 COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, 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



CHANNEL NEWSASIA



Major republishers

Our editorial teams work with academics to bring you evidence-based news.

Our Australia and New Zealand team includes 35 editors who work from Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane, Auckland and Wellington.

They work with experts from partner institutions to cover everything from COVID to global warming to the momentous 2022 federal election that saw the rise of independents and the election of a Labor government.

“

I should speak to academic economists more than I do, but these days I get my fill of academia by being an incessant reader of the excellent The Conversation website.

Ross Gittins

Economics Editor, Sydney Morning Herald



Arts & Culture

In 2022 we had a renewed focus on popular culture, finding unique and interesting ways into the stories everyone is talking about. Everything from a NZ expert in monstrous births on House of the Dragon, to experts in Australian larrikinism on Bluey.

Through the election and beyond, we have strived to deliver the best coverage of Australian arts and cultural policy. This has included historical looks at Whitlam's arts policy, and looking forward to the Labor government's new national cultural policy.

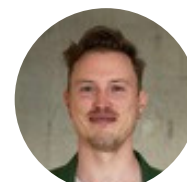
One of the joys of Arts & Culture is how wonderfully broad our output can be: we try and capture everything from dating culture to visual arts to theatre to history. Who knows what 2023 could hold? That is precisely the pleasure.

Top articles*

- Volcanoes, plague, famine and endless winter: Welcome to 536, what historians and scientists believe was the 'worst year to be alive', Miles Pattenden (Australian Catholic University)
- 'High maintenance' is a red flag on dating apps. Women are still expected to shrink themselves, Lisa Portolan (Western Sydney University)
- If you cry while watching movies, it is probably a sign of your emotional strength, Debra Rickwood (University of Canberra)



Jane Howard
Editor



Patrick Lenton
Deputy Editor



13,207,938 reads*
308 articles
291 authors

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022. Includes only articles published in 2022.

Books & Ideas

Our new section launched in March 2022. Our aim is to publish longform writing and in-depth, expert reviews of fiction and non-fiction works by the best academic writers, while covering debates central to Australian intellectual life. The section also publishes unique products such as our Guides to the Classics and Friday essays, along with new research.

We launched a number of new series, including The Book That Changed Me and another on books that are cultural touchstones. We are attracting influential academic writers and have covered discussions on topics such as free speech, cancel culture, academic freedom, the state of the publishing industry, funding for writers, plagiarism, and American exceptionalism.

We have published almost 80 non-fiction book reviews and more than 40 fiction book reviews, along with extracts from new works by authors including Hugh White and Jeff Sparrow. Standout Friday essays have included Sandra Phillips on the need for more First Nations editors, Meera Atkinson on the despised muse label and Simon During on the decline of the humanities.

Top articles*

- Shantaram – the Black white man's burden, Sunil Badami (UTS)
- Physician heal thyself? After 4 years of treatment for stage 4 cancer I just wanted some encouraging words from my oncologist, Tim Baker (Griffith University)
- What is love? In pop culture, love is often depicted as a willingness to sacrifice, but ancient philosophers took a different view, Oscar Davis (Bond University)

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022



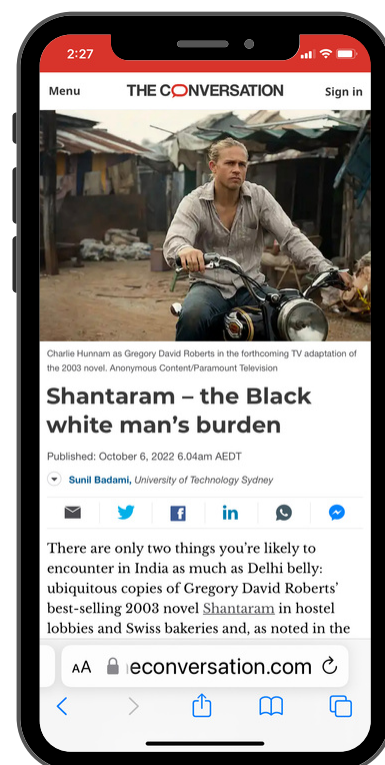
Suzy Freeman-Greene
Editor



James Ley
Deputy Editor



Jo Case
Deputy Editor



3,468,323 reads*

253 articles

235 authors

Business & Economy



Peter Martin
Editor



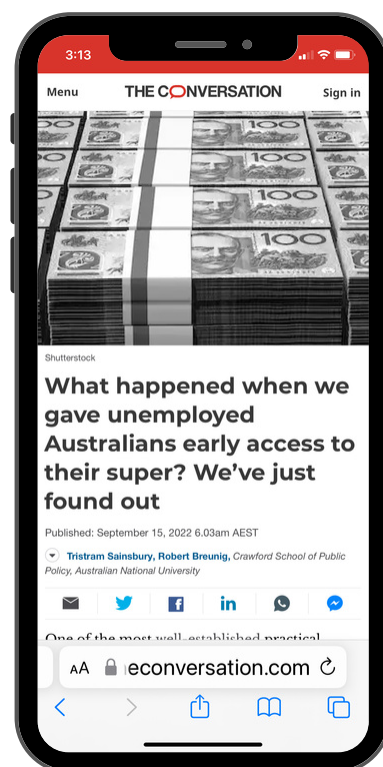
Tim Wallace
Deputy Editor

Highlights included the unexpected dive in unemployment to a half-century low, the roaring back of inflation to a 30-year high, dramatic interest rate hikes, data hacking, an employment summit and two very different Commonwealth budgets.

Our expert coverage was supplemented by a weekly column written by section editor Peter Martin republished in ABC Online, exclusive surveys using a panel of 50 leading Australian economists assembled by the Economic Society of Australia, and a twice-yearly survey of top economic forecasters. The report of the year's first survey, published on January 31, was headed: "Top economists expect RBA to hold rates low in 2022". By July 1, the report of the second survey was headed: "Sky-high mortgages, 7.1% inflation, and a 20% chance of recession".

Top articles*

- What happened when we gave unemployed Australians early access to their super? We've just found out, Tristram Sainsbury & Robert Breunig (ANU)
- Healthy humans drive the economy: we're now witnessing one of the worst public policy failures in Australia's history, Jim Stanford (University of Sydney)
- Putin's biggest mistake of the Ukraine war? Trusting the Western financial system, Peter Martin (ANU, The Conversation)



13,058,635 reads*

363 articles

343 authors

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022.

Education



Judith Ireland
Editor

A key focus for education has been the teacher shortage, which has been felt at the ground level by schools and parents, and is one of the key education priorities of the new Labor government.

Our coverage included a world-first study on media representation of teachers as well as original research on teachers' experiences – and the abuse they cop from parents. It also included expert opinions on how to solve the crisis.

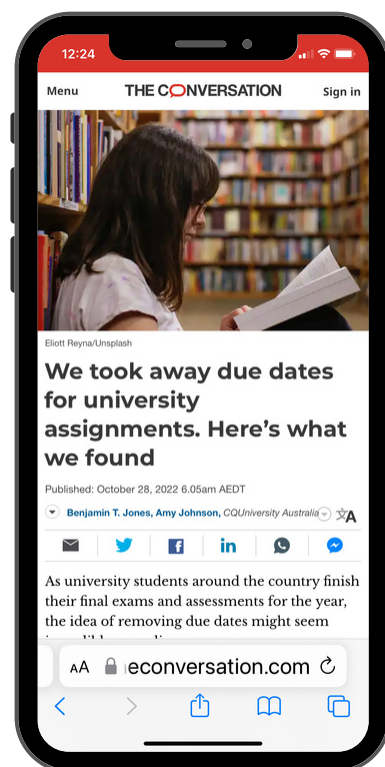
In higher education, the focus remains on a sector still reeling after COVID. Key pieces here include research on food insecurity among not just university students but staff, what happened when academics removed due dates for assignments and the return of international students to Australia.

We commissioned a range of articles on parenting. This included articles on 'screen time' (and the need to ditch the term), co-sleeping with your kids, alternatives to smacking and the benefits of siblings squabbling (yes, there are some from a developmental perspective!).

Top articles*

- 'They phone you up during lunch and yell at you' – why teachers say dealing with parents is the worst part of their job, Kirsten Lambert (Murdoch University)
- 'Lose some weight', 'stupid old hag': universities should no longer ask students for anonymous feedback on their teachers, Richard Lakeman (Southern Cross University), Deb Massey (SCU), Dima Nasrawi (SCU), Jann Fielden, Marie Hutchinson (SCU), Megan Lee (Bond University), Rosanne Coutts (SCU)
- No wonder no one wants to be a teacher: world-first study looks at 65,000 news articles about Australian teachers, Nicole Mockler (University of Sydney)

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022



8,598,744 reads*

214 articles

363 authors

Environment & Energy

Devastating floods on Australia's east coast loomed large this year. We unpacked the complex drivers of this extreme weather and explored how we manage worsening disasters under climate change.

A report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in March laid bare the urgency of climate action, urging hard cuts to global emissions to avoid catastrophic global warming. We covered that and other climate research and policy, including the important COP27 climate conference in Egypt.

Between it all, our authors probed the global energy crisis, the renewable energy transition and Australia's switch to a Labor government. Our coverage expanded this year to explicitly include cities and the many challenges of urban sustainability. We explored the environment from multiple perspectives including, crucially, First Nations voices.

And in July, we covered the troubling State of the Environment report – examining the grave threats to Australia's plants and animals, and what must be done.

Top articles*

- A huge Atlantic ocean current is slowing down. If it collapses, La Niña could become the norm for Australia, Matthew England, Andréa S. Taschetto, Bryam Orihuela-Pinto (UNSW Sydney)
- Altruism in birds? Magpies have outwitted scientists by helping each other remove tracking devices, Dominique Potvin (University of the Sunshine Coast)
- About 200 dead whales have been towed out to sea off Tasmania – and what happens next is a true marvel of nature, Culum Brown (Macquarie University)

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022



Nicole Hasham
Editor



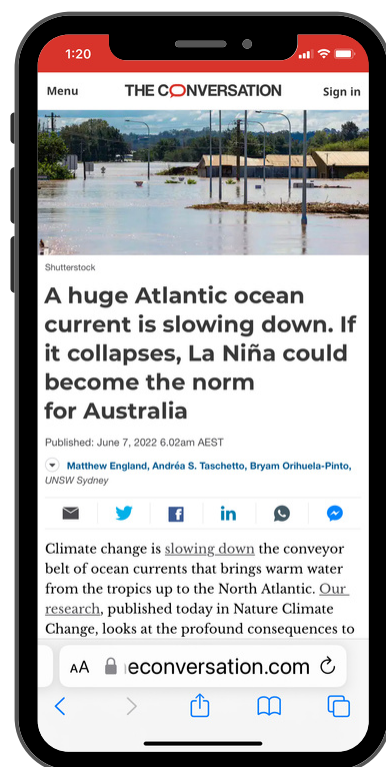
Anthea Batsakis
Deputy Editor



Doug Hendrie
Deputy Editor



John Watson
Deputy Editor &
Cities Editor



23,959,778 reads*

563 articles

873 authors

Health

This year, we continued to cover the COVID pandemic – busting myths, analysing policy changes, and updating readers on new research about vaccinations, treatments and long COVID, including new studies from Australian universities.

We appointed Lucy Beaumont to the newly created role of Health + Disability editor and enhanced our coverage of disability issues with explainers and analysis of the NDIS, adult ADHD, housing for people with disability, and many more topics.

We continued our focus on consumer health issues by explaining the science of how to get better sleep, improve our diet, and reduce our stress levels, while getting expert answers to questions from our Curious Kids readers.

On the policy front, we interrogated proposals from both sides of government, and examined issues around aged care, primary care funding, out-of-pocket costs, First Nations health care and mental distress.

Top articles*

- Still coughing after COVID? Here's why it happens and what to do about it, Natasha Yates (Bond University)
- Wearing shoes in the house is just plain gross. The verdict from scientists who study indoor contaminants, Mark Patrick Taylor (Macquarie University), Gabriel Filippelli (IUPUI)
- On your back? Side? Face-down? Mice show how we sleep may trigger or protect our brain from diseases like ALS, David Wright (Monash University)



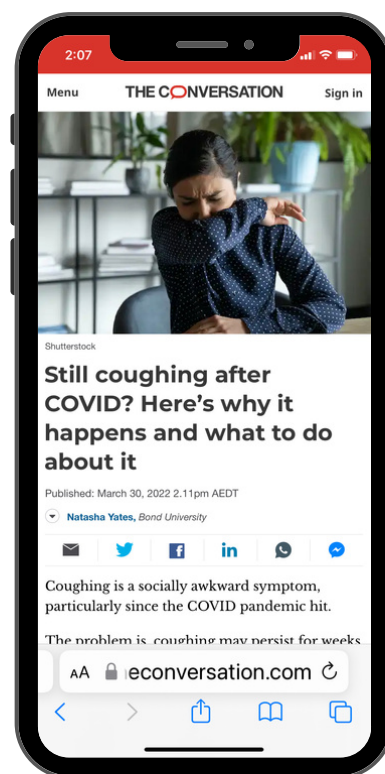
Fron Jackson-Webb
Senior Health Editor



Anna Evangelini
Deputy Editor



Lucy Beaumont
Health & Disability
Editor



59,359,664 reads*
575 articles
761 authors

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022

Politics & Society

Recent Australian political history has been tumultuous, to say the least – but even by its standards, 2022 has rarely provided a dull moment. There was, of course, the long-awaited federal election, which delivered a change of government after nine years and heralded the emergence of the so-called “teal” independents as disruptors of the long two-party hold on the country. Led by our chief political correspondent Michelle Grattan and our election analyst Adrian Beaumont, we engaged some of Australia’s best thinkers and writers to analyse the change of government and what it might mean for the future of the country.

And if that wasn’t enough, we then had the revelation that Scott Morrison had secretly sworn himself in as minister in several portfolios during the COVID pandemic crisis – a story so extraordinary it was almost hard to believe.

Finally, on a more sombre note, we have been closely following the Russian invasion of Ukraine since Vladimir Putin first sent troops into the country in February. Again, we have published a wide range of voices on all aspects of this war, led by ANU’s Matthew Sussex, whose brilliant analysis has been widely republished and quoted in social media.

Top articles*

- Why do we find making new friends so hard as adults?, Anastasia Hronis (UTS)
- Could Russia collapse?, Matthew Sussex (ANU)
- Australia spent billions on jet fighters off the plan. Now, we're having trouble even flying them, Peter Layton (Griffith University)



Amanda Dunn
Editor



Justin Bergman
Senior Deputy Editor



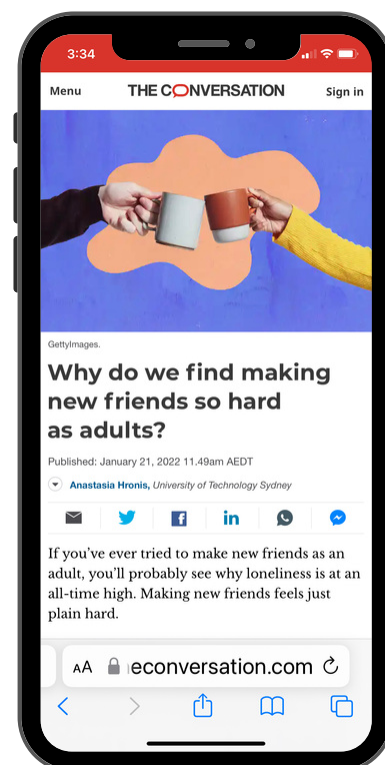
Liam Petterson
Deputy Editor



Carissa Lee
First Nations and Public Policy Editor



Adrian Beaumont
Election Analyst (Psephologist)



29,524,295 reads*
1,086 articles
767 authors

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022

Science & Technology

This year, the James Webb Space Telescope finally opened its infrared eyes, providing us with unprecedented views of our Universe. Our high-impact articles in 2022 covered everything from meteor showers to the hearts of volcanoes, supercomputers, inner workings of our cells, and the very existence of time.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine yielded a new perspective on technology in the battlefield and how the horrors of war are transmitted online.

Our recently launched Social Media and Society series is exploring the role of social media in the modern world. It investigates how social media is changing us as people, changing our lives and our institutions. The series is a global collaboration across several editions of The Conversation network, with dozens of articles published so far, covering topics such as free speech, shadowbanning, misogyny online and more.

Top articles*

- Time might not exist, according to physicists and philosophers – but that's okay, Sam Baron (Australian Catholic University)
- Is there evidence aliens have visited Earth? Here's what's come out of US congress hearings on 'unidentified aerial phenomena', Steven Tingay (Curtin University)
- A total lunar eclipse is set to dazzle tonight – along with some other stellar sights, Tanya Hill (University of Melbourne)



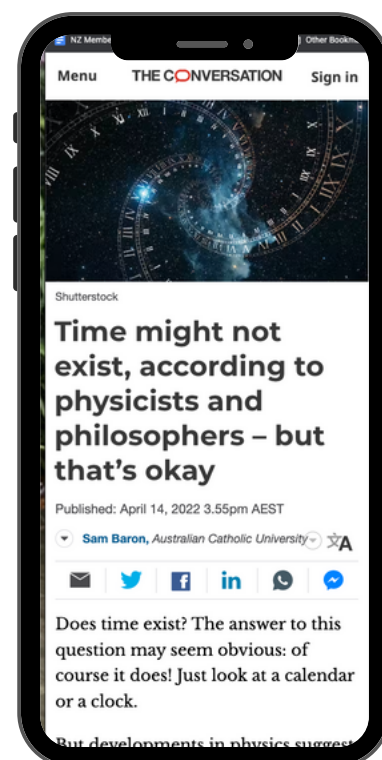
Signe Dean
Editor



Noor Gillani
Technology
Editor



Michael Lucy
Deputy Editor



27,766,846 reads*
390 articles
533 authors

*Reads 1/1/2022–9/11/2022

New Zealand

The year began with a bang for the New Zealand section – quite literally, with the massive undersea eruption in Tonga, an event visible from space. The story we commissioned from volcanologist Shane Cronin at the University of Auckland, a world authority on the volcano, was published within 24 hours and became our best-read article of 2022.

Elsewhere, two news themes tended to dominate: the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Aotearoa New Zealand, and the fallout from the war in Ukraine. We also put considerable time and resources into coverage of the government's budget, with more previews and analysis than in previous years.

We are able to do all of this in part because our team expanded to three, with the hiring of deputy editor Debrin Foxcroft. This expansion – made possible by having all New Zealand universities as members – represents a milestone in The Conversation's growth, with a noticeable increase in local brand awareness.

Top articles*

- Why the volcanic eruption in Tonga was so violent, and what to expect next, Shane Cronin (University of Auckland)
- With the UN powerless, the greatest danger now may be Russia beginning to lose in Ukraine, Alexander Gillespie (University of Waikato)
- No, catching Omicron is not 'inevitable' – here's why we should all still avoid the virus, David Welch (University of Auckland) and Nigel French (Massey University)



Finlay MacDonald
New Zealand Editor



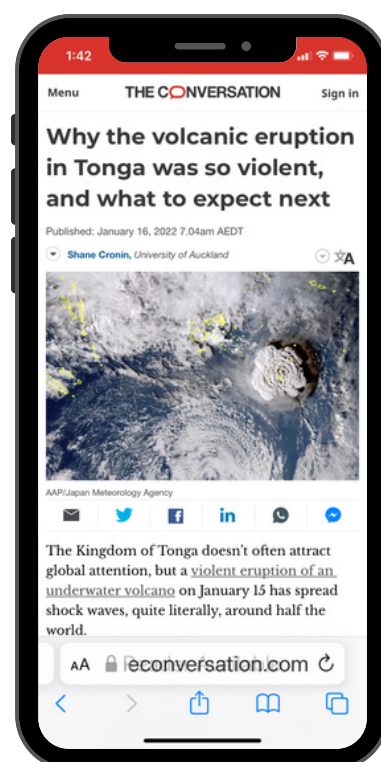
Veronika Meduna
NZ Editor: Science,
Health & Environment



Debrin Foxcroft
Deputy NZ Editor



Liz Minchin
Executive Editor



11,597,764 reads*
330 articles
320 authors

*Reads 1/1/2022–10/11/2022

An award-winning team

The Conversation was delighted to win the Knowledge and Innovation category at the Melbourne Awards 2022.

Now in its 20th year, the Melbourne Awards are the City of Melbourne's highest accolade.

Right: Misha Ketchell, Editor; Lisa Watts, CEO; Maria Troumboukis, Chief Financial Officer



Awards



Patrick Lenton, The Conversation's Deputy Editor for Arts & Culture, and author Esmé Louise James (University of Melbourne) were finalists for the 2022 Walkley Awards in the Headline, Caption or Hook category.

Public interest journalism thrives with philanthropic support.

We are grateful for the support of our philanthropic partners who provide valuable funding and support for our work. In 2022, we received funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Broadley Trust, Ecstra Foundation and Summer Foundation.

Support from these foundations helped us publish research-based journalism and information about cities, disability, economics, financial literacy, overcoming disadvantage 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 ever, our thanks to Corrs Chambers Westgarth, who provided vital pro bono legal services.

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

Foundations looking to partner please contact our Chief Operating Officer damian.thompson@theconversation.com

“

For the Paul Ramsay Foundation, supporting The Conversation is about recognising the importance of data and evidence in helping policymakers tackle disadvantage, while also giving the for-purpose sector additional tools, insights and tangible actions to create change. We are proud to have contributed to The Conversation maintaining its crucial, evidence-based voice in Australia.

Professor Kristy Muir
Paul Ramsay Foundation

paulramsay
FOUNDATION
PARTNERSHIPS FOR POTENTIAL

CORRS
CHAMBERS
WESTGARTH
lawyers



 **SUMMER**
FOUNDATION

ecstra 


Broadley Trust

Friends of The Conversation back better news.

Our Friends of The Conversation community makes possible everything we do, from our evidence-based election coverage to the launch of our Books and Ideas section.

This support underpins our editorial independence and, importantly, allows us to publish expert analysis that is free to read and free to republish.

This year, as we emerged from the shadows of the pandemic, our team held a number of events where we met supporters in person. The feedback from these events and from those who attended our open news conferences was heartening and inspiring. We hope to see and hear from more of our Friends over the coming year.

“

I greatly enjoy reading your informed articles, and also use them in my teaching. I love the in-depth coverage.

Melissa Nyholm

Friend of The Conversation and teacher

Become a Friend of
The Conversation.

Scan the QR code to
make your donation.



Knowledge and ideas should always be free.

The Conversation is committed to ensuring that knowledge should be for everyone and not just a select few. We exist to inform the public and share our work as widely as possible, free to reuse, free to republish and free of paywalls. It's our enduring commitment to open access, but one in need of long-term support.

One of our long-time readers who understood the importance of ensuring financial fortitude for The Conversation was Geoff Hook.

Geoff was described by his friends as a curious and ethical person. A daily reader of The Conversation and a member of our Friends of the Conversation giving community, he cemented his commitment to our work by making a pledge to include a Gift to the Conversation in his Will.

Sadly, Geoff passed away in 2019. His friend Peter Logan tells us:

“

Geoff believed that your education is a gift, and you have a debt to society you should repay in your life's activities.

The Conversation is proud to support his legacy by applying his generosity to continue to amplify the work of academics and provide solutions-based journalism.

If you would like to support a strong future for trustworthy explanatory journalism, essential to a healthy democracy please consider leaving a Gift in your Will to The Conversation.

Find out more by contacting our bequests manager, Helen Johnstone
helen.johnstone@theconversation.edu.au

Or scan the QR code.



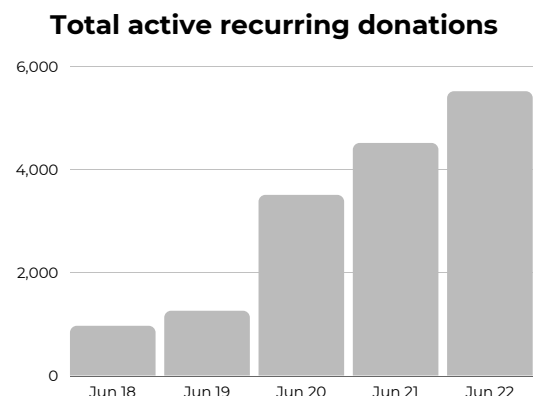
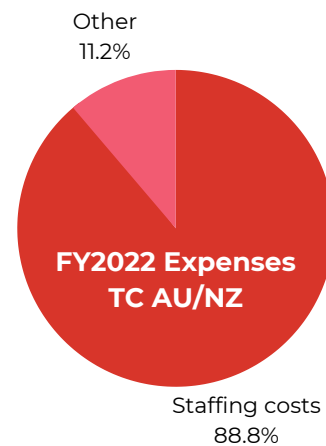
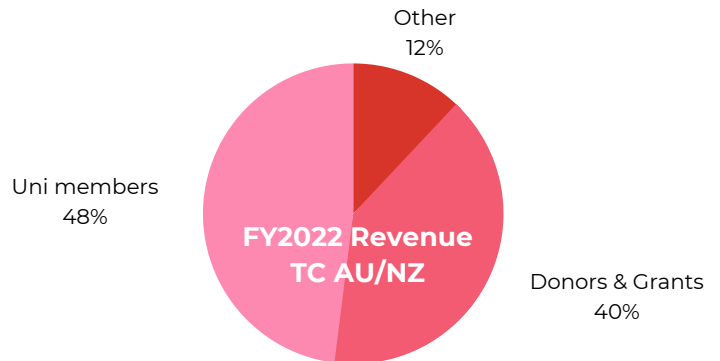
Every dollar counts: financial overview.

Throughout the 2022 financial year, The Conversation secured the support of every major university in Australia and New Zealand, with 48 university partners in total. This support is the backbone to our success and a crucial element of our financial stability representing almost 50% of our total revenue.

Our second major revenue source (40% of our revenue base) is provided by foundations, government and donations from dedicated readers who donate via The Conversation Foundation.

Donor revenue remained constant over the last two financial years despite global challenges and financial pressures; a testament to the loyalty of our readers and the continued support from the Friends of The Conversation.

Our funding helps us to support our operational costs 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.

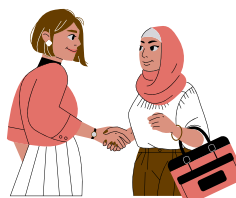


The Conversation delivers real world change.



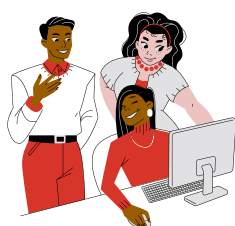
17%

of authors are contacted by government or policy makers



26%

of authors have opportunities for academic collaboration



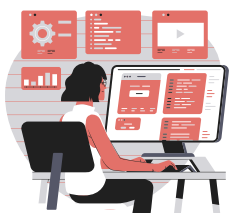
9%

are invited to contribute to briefing papers or submissions to parliament



18%

see increased citations for scholarly articles



14%

of authors are contacted by business or industry



28%

of authors used The Conversation metrics for funding or grant applications



13%

of authors are invited to speak at conferences



58%

of authors are contacted by media

“

It's nice to be part of something you can recommend to people as a source they can trust.



Dr Natasha Yates
Assistant Professor, General Practice, Bond University

“

The Conversation helps me fulfil my obligation as a publicly funded researcher, to effectively communicate my work to those paying the bills.



Steven Tingay
John Curtin Distinguished Professor, (Radio Astronomy), Curtin University

The Conversation provides an unparalleled platform to engage and contribute to public scholarship.



Ritesh Chugh
Associate Professor, Information & Communications Technology, CQUniversity

A valuable opportunity for academics to connect with a global audience, and make a significant contribution to society by sharing knowledge beyond the traditional academic channels.



Paul Haskell-Dowland
Professor of Cyber Security Practice, Edith Cowan University

Editorial team



Lisa Watts
CEO & Executive
Director



Misha Ketchell
Editor & Executive
Director



Fron Jackson-Webb
Deputy Editor /
Senior Health Editor



Alexandra Hansen
Deputy Editor &
Chief of Staff



Michael Hopkin
Deputy Chief of
Staff



Sunanda Creagh
Senior Editor



Liz Minchin
Executive Editor



Finlay MacDonald
New Zealand Editor



Veronika Meduna
NZ Editor: Science,
Health & Environment



Debrin Foxcroft
Deputy NZ Editor



Peter Martin
Editor: Business
& Economy



Tim Wallace
Deputy Editor:
Business &
Economy



Signe Dean
Editor: Science &
Technology



Michael Lucy
Deputy Editor:
Science & Tech



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