



April - June 2022

Impact Report

Australia and New Zealand

THE CONVERSATION

Share knowledge. Inform decisions.
theconversation.com



Real-world impact

As a not-for-profit publisher, The Conversation is 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.

And it's not just media that contact our authors, but politicians, policy-makers and industry groups too. Our collaboration with academics helps them achieve real-world change.

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“Publishing in The Conversation provides a valuable opportunity for academics to connect with a global audience, and to 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



We provide expert advice in a crisis



Australia has flooded multiple times this year. Our experts explained why, and made evidence-based recommendations to mitigate effects.

In 2022 The Conversation published 74 evidence-based articles on floods reaching more than 2 million readers.

Articles have ranged from big picture topics like the effect of climate change on weather patterns, to more local issues like how to best help your neighbours and the dangers of mould.

Many of our articles are solution-focussed such as expert advice on how to communicate weather warnings most effectively; best-practice for disaster governance and relief; ways to improve insurance; and how to flood-proof electricity. Other articles advocated for those most impacted by floods including people with disabilities, homeless and Indigenous people as well as wildlife and livestock.

Many authors were contacted by industry, policymakers and the media to provide expert advice, e.g.

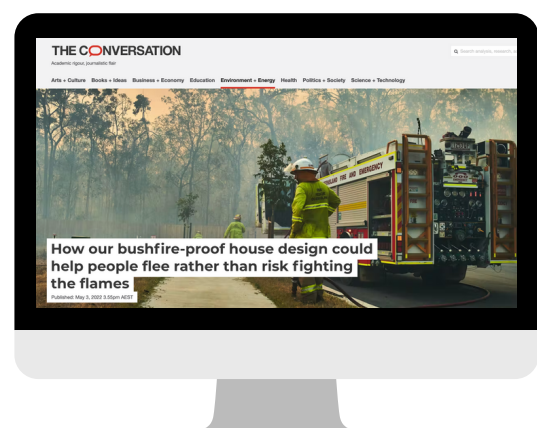


Caroline Schuster (ANU) was invited to meet a CEO of an Australian insurance provider to discuss a new type of insurance which pays out as soon as extreme weather hits.

Jerry Vanclay (Southern Cross University) provided data and research to ABC TV's Four Corners program about Lismore.

Jamie Pittock (ANU) was interviewed on how government failures exacerbated Sydney's flood disaster by media from all over the world including New York Times, Al Jazeera, Daily Mail UK, CNA Singapore TV, Xinhau and the ABC. In total, the article generated 220 media items and a total potential audience of just under 20 million (Insentia).

After Deborah Ascher Barnstone (UTS) wrote *How our bushfire-proof house design could help people flee rather than risk fighting the flames* she was interviewed by Domain for an article on climate resilient design, and was invited to write an article on the project for Sanctuary magazine. She was interviewed by ABC Perth and ABC Radio SW WA. A number of people contacted her about designing and building a version of this house for them.



We cover the election issues that matter most to readers, not politicians

Our election coverage was driven by a desire to focus on policy over personality and inform the public while remaining impartial.

To ensure that the issues that mattered most to readers were well covered and we avoided the trap of allowing political insiders to dictate what was talked about, we launched a #settheagenda campaign to enable our audience to tell us what they wanted to read. We conducted a survey of more than 10,000 readers.

Climate change was overwhelmingly the number-one issue on our readers' agenda. In fact, more than 60% of respondents picked it as one of the issues with the greatest impact on their life right now.

Climate change, renewable energy and emissions reduction also featured highly in responses to the question "What do you want the candidates to be talking about as they compete for votes?".

Following the survey, The Conversation's Energy + Environment team published more than 50 articles on climate change, including a piece by five of Australia's leading climate experts grading the Coalition and Labor's climate policies.

We aimed to serve democracy by hosting an important discussion about policy to inform how people vote.

Another major new project for the campaign period was Below The Line, a podcast hosted by former ABC presenter Jon Faine with academics from LaTrobe, Sydney and Melbourne universities.

The podcast analysed the party lines, polls, media narratives and policies of importance throughout the campaign in a rigorous and evidence-based manner, breaking free of party spin and populist slogans.

Below the Line was featured in Spotify's election hub and Apple's 'Australia Votes' section.



We play a critical role in sharing public health information

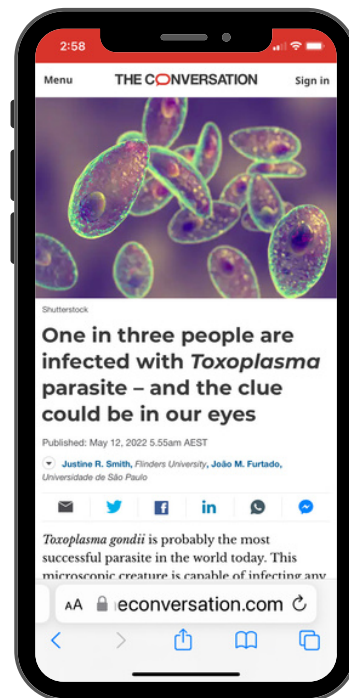
One in three Australians are infected with a potentially damaging parasite. Many don't know.

Across the world, it's estimated 30–50% of people are infected with *Toxoplasma*. The disease caused by this parasite can scar the back of the eye but the extent of the problem is not widely recognised, even by the medical community. *Toxoplasma* infection is not curable, but it can be prevented.

A recent Conversation article about *Toxoplasma* by Justine R. Smith and João M. Furtado reached 950 thousand readers around the world, including key health professionals.

The article was republished by the ABC, Stuff, Live Science, Science Alert and multiple online scientific news sites and rural newspapers.

Consequent interviews included the American Academy of Ophthalmology podcast, Nine News, ABC radio stations, 6PR, Yahoo!News and many more.



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"The Conversation has done public health a huge service.

"We have been trying for quite some time to get the word out that this infection is common and the disease is important. With your help, we have finally succeeded."

Justine R. Smith
Professor of Eye & Vision Health
Flinders University

The Conversation continues to provide evidence-based analysis in the pandemic, and works hard to combat misinformation on social media.

The Conversation published 69 COVID-related articles in the period April-June 2022, reaching 4 million reads.

Topics ranged from how-tos such as how to avoid catching COVID on a plane, how to do a RAT, and how to combat fatigue; explainers about new variants and symptoms; updates and analysis of policy changes; fact-checks of new information about vaccines; and answers to questions such as when to start exercising and why am I still coughing.

Want to cut your chance of catching COVID on a plane? Wear a mask and avoid business class by Thea van de Mortel was republished by media outlets around the globe, including the ABC, RTE (Ireland) and NZ Herald, reaching half a million readers. Thea was interviewed by Fortune Magazine (USA).

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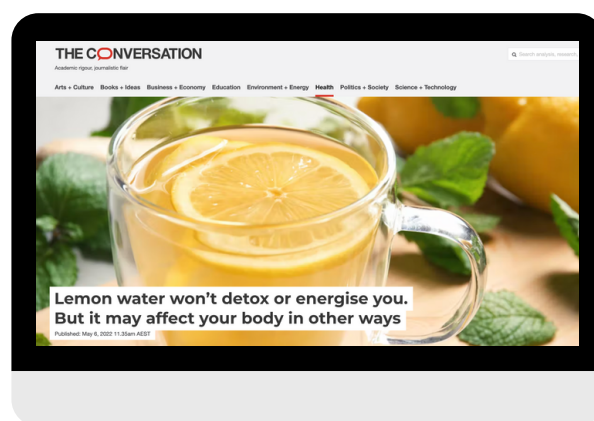
"The Conversation provides public access to evidence-based information to counteract biased, factually incorrect material that plagues the internet and some media outlets.

"This is critical for robust democracies."

Thea van de Mortel
Professor, Nursing and Deputy Head
(Learning & Teaching), School of Nursing
and Midwifery, Griffith University

It's never been more crucial that science coverage is accurate, timely, and above all, well informed. Many of The Conversation's most popular articles fact-check misinformation about health and medicine.

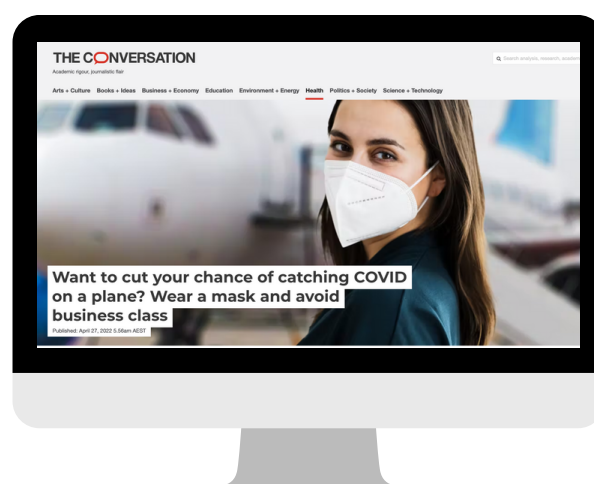
Lemon water won't detox or energise you. But it may affect your body in other ways by Evangeline Mantzioris was the most-read article in May, reaching 665,000 readers.



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"I love communicating nutrition, food and health with the public, so it is very rewarding working with The Conversation."

Evangeline Mantzioris
Program Director of Nutrition and Food
Sciences, University of South Australia



We amplify research that sparks curiosity in complex topics

In recent years, deep cuts have hit newsrooms across Australia and overseas. Without specialist reporters in areas such as science, it's harder to gain coverage for quality research. The Conversation was founded as a not-for-profit, comparatively low-cost solution to that challenge.

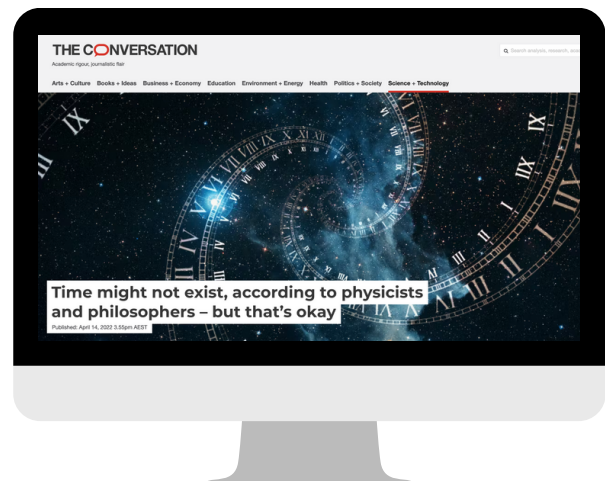
One of our most popular articles in the last quarter was Sam Baron's article (ACU) *Time might not exist, according to physicists and philosophers – but that's okay*.

The Conversation Indonesia and The Conversation Spain translated the article and it was republished by global media outlets including Singularity Hub, ABC, Science Alert, SciTech Daily, Phys.org, Live Science, Space.com and IFLScience, reaching nearly a million readers! MC Hammer even got on board.

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

Kingsley Dixon
John Curtin Distinguished Professor
Curtin University



We share expert information to support NFPs, advocacy groups & inform public debate

An expert warned how ABC's plans to axe its librarians will damage journalism. Her Conversation article played a critical role in the response by peak bodies.

Following the announcement of ABC's plans to make its librarians and archivists redundant, Lisa M. Given (Professor of Information Sciences, RMIT University) warned how work by trained information professionals is critical at the ABC.

The article was cited in an Open Letter published by the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) urging ABC management to reconsider the staffing cuts. The letter was sent to the ABC and various ministers and shared on social media. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) also shared the article in a meeting with the ABC to highlight the implications of the cuts. The article was further cited in a joint open letter by ASA and ALIA to the ABC, which has garnered 3000+ signatures so far.

Lisa was also asked to write a covering note for republication of the article in Information Matters (IM) a global industry publication, sponsored by the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T).

Journalists use The Conversation as a repository of expert information. Our authors are often contacted to provide data and research for documentaries.

After we published an extract from the book *'Broken' — requiem for the family court* co-written by Camilla Nelson (University of Notre Dame) she was interviewed for Family Court Murders, a 3 part documentary series screening on the ABC TV. She was also interviewed by Easy Tiger and Channel 10 Documentary Production for a series on the family court.

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"Developments in law and policy often occur quickly and as a fraught area of public debate."

"The Conversation allows me to have a platform to contribute quickly, drawing upon my expertise."

Mary Anne Kenny

Associate Professor, School of Law
Murdoch University

We shine a spotlight on flora and fauna under threat

Australia is globally renowned for its unique wildlife. Yet, Australia has one of the world's worst track records for extinction.

After Elizabeth Sinclair, Gary Kendrick, Jane Edgeloe and Martin Breed wrote *Meet the world's largest plant: a single seagrass clone stretching 180 km in Western Australia's Shark Bay* the authors did TV, radio, online interviews with major media outlets around the world including: ABC, NY Times, Science magazine, The Guardian, BBC, CNN, Newsweek, HuffPost, WA Today, Channel 7, Channel 9, CTV, France Inter, Fox and RTRFM 92.1 The Sound Alternative. The article was also translated into Bulgarian and reposted on www.obekti.bg.

After Andrew Bennett (La Trobe University) co-wrote *New research shows planting trees and shrubs brings woodland birds back to farms, from superb fairy wrens to spotted pardalotes*, he wrote to editor Anthea Batsakis: "We're delighted that [our article has] had close to 14,000 [now 17,335] reads so far – being seen and read widely and getting the news out to far more people than would read the journal paper. I hope we might be able to do this again with other research."

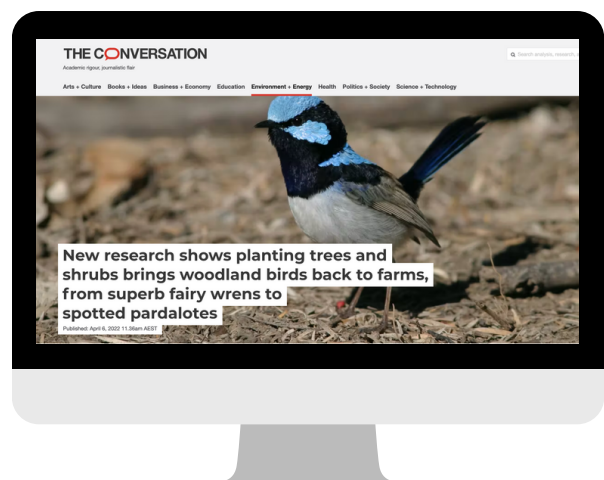
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“Writing for *The Conversation* has profoundly changed my academic life.

"It has connected me with an enormous network of people across the world (1.3 million reads to date) and helped me build a public and industry profile and secure funding for my research."

Ian Wright

Senior Lecturer in Environmental Science
Western Sydney University



Public-interest journalism powered by philanthropy

Whether we are covering an election, the climate emergency or the Russian invasion of Ukraine, The Conversation's editors produce trustworthy journalism that helps you stay informed.

We do this as a not-for-profit company guided by a clear purpose: to provide access to quality explanatory journalism essential for a healthy democracy. We are 100% independent and without advertising or paywalls. All our work is free to read and free to republish under Creative Commons.

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"Collaboration, trust, and a commitment to human wellbeing and the public good are at the heart of The Conversation's success, and that makes it something worth getting behind."

Peter Doherty AC FRS FMedSci
Laureate Professor, The Peter Doherty
Institute for Infection and Immunity.

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THE CONVERSATION



Wendy Harmer ✓ @wendy_harmer · May 10

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Such an important source of evidenced analysis...

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Eddie Clark @Publicwrongs · May 11

Grateful for the platform The Conversation's given me to be a bit more in depth than standard media publication and a *lot* more accessible than standard academic publication. An organisation worth supporting.

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Prof. Peter Doherty ✓ @ProfPCDoherty · May 11

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Julian Burnside ✓ @JulianBurnside · May 10

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