

THE CONVERSATION

Share knowledge. Inform decisions.



2023

**IMPACT
REPORT**
July – Sept

Australia & New Zealand

A note from our Editor



What's the point of journalism? The answer seems obvious enough. It's to share information and keep people reliably informed. But if you dig a little deeper there's a lot more to it.

Why do people need to be reliably informed? Because people use the information and knowledge they gain from the media as the basis for important decisions in their lives. The most obvious one is who to vote for. In Australia, for example, the High Court has long recognised that democracy requires freedom of political communication. Without it, people have no basis of reliable information on which to decide who should lead us.

But if you drill down, the big political decisions are the tip of an iceberg. We need good information to know what to do about climate change, collectively and individually. We need good information on how to navigate a pandemic, or how much screen time to allow our children, or what we should eat to stay healthy.

Good information helps us decide what movies to see. It helps us understand our fellow citizens and the culture in which we live. Good information is crucial to social cohesion.

But, increasingly, good information is under threat. With so much more media now consumed online, attention-seeking has become an end in itself.

In a recent book, *Traffic*, Ben Smith, the former editor of BuzzFeed, describes the lengths to which his publication would go to win audiences, such as publishing deliberately offensive and provocative opinions and stolen intimate photos. In a world in which everything is measured in clicks, talk of quality journalism sounds pretty glib.

Everywhere we see signs of anger, division and the poor outcomes that flow from an unreliable media ecosystem fuelled by distrust and misinformation. This is where *The Conversation* comes in.

We produce quality journalism written by academics so that our community can be better informed and people can make better decisions in their lives. We think the calm presentation of the best evidence and research improves social cohesion and enhances our sense of community.

That is the impact we want to have, and we are having, and that is the impact you will read about in our report. I hope you enjoy reading about the many ways we are contributing to a better informed world.

Misha Ketchell
Editor, *The Conversation*

Better information informs better decisions

Our recent Reader and Author Survey, as well as feedback from authors, demonstrates how The Conversation shapes the ways in which policy-makers, institutions and the general public make informed decisions.



Content

Academic rigour
Journalistic flair

We change behaviours and attitudes

Readers change their behaviour and/or attitudes.

Our readers get reliable facts without bias. They access fresh, new perspectives unavailable elsewhere and learn about the latest research.

Authors have opportunities for academic collaboration, are invited to speak at conferences. They also see increased readership and citations of scholarly articles.

We influence and inform society's big systems eg. education, work, healthcare

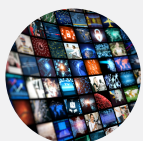
Our authors and readers use articles to support advocacy roles or campaigns. Readers share articles to highlight or debate an issue.

Healthcare professionals use our articles to share up-to-date research.

Teachers and students deploy new knowledge in the classroom.

Media amplification

Republishing
Authors contacted by
media for interviews



We influence public policy & industry

Authors are contacted by policymakers, and are invited to contribute to briefing papers or submissions to parliament.

Our readers contact government or local politicians after reading our articles.

Authors are contacted by business or industry.

Scan here for
survey results



How do institutions reproduce cycles of disadvantage?

Support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation has allowed The Conversation to develop and publish an ongoing series on [how institutions reproduce cycles of disadvantage](#) and how we can reimagine them to break these cycles. We asked the authors of the first 31 articles in the series what happened after publication.

The authors were contacted by politicians, bureaucrats and industry specialists, and were invited to participate in roundtable discussions, review policy recommendations, and collaborate on research projects. Here are some examples:

Our authors influenced government to make reforms

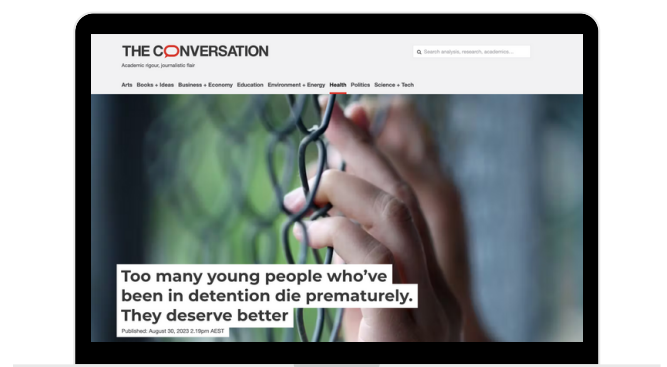
After [Kathryn Thorburn](#) (Notre Dame) described [the broken service delivery system in remote Aboriginal communities](#) she was invited to meet with Neil Thompson, Member of the Legislative Assembly in WA, to discuss the state of infrastructure in remote communities and the funding inefficiencies in that space.

Our authors shaped policy

Senior policymakers contacted [Daniel Ghezelbash](#) and [Jane McAdam](#) (UNSW Sydney) after they explained [why the government's plan to overhaul the asylum system is a smart use of resources – and might just work](#) to let them know they had read the article and the research had helped shape their approach.

Our authors collaborated with policymakers to improve outcomes

After Lucas Calais Ferreira (University of Melbourne), Alex Brown (ANU), Stuart Kinner (Curtin University) and Susan M Sawyer (University of Melbourne) called for reform because [too many young people who've been in detention die prematurely](#), they met with senior policy advisers at the Department of Justice and Community Safety in Victoria to discuss potential collaborative research opportunities to improve outcomes for Aboriginal men and women after release from detention. Lucas also included The Conversation article as part of his presentation at the Public Health Association Australia's Public Health Conference, which led to interesting discussions with public health professionals working in justice settings in Victoria and NSW.



Disadvantage & institutions

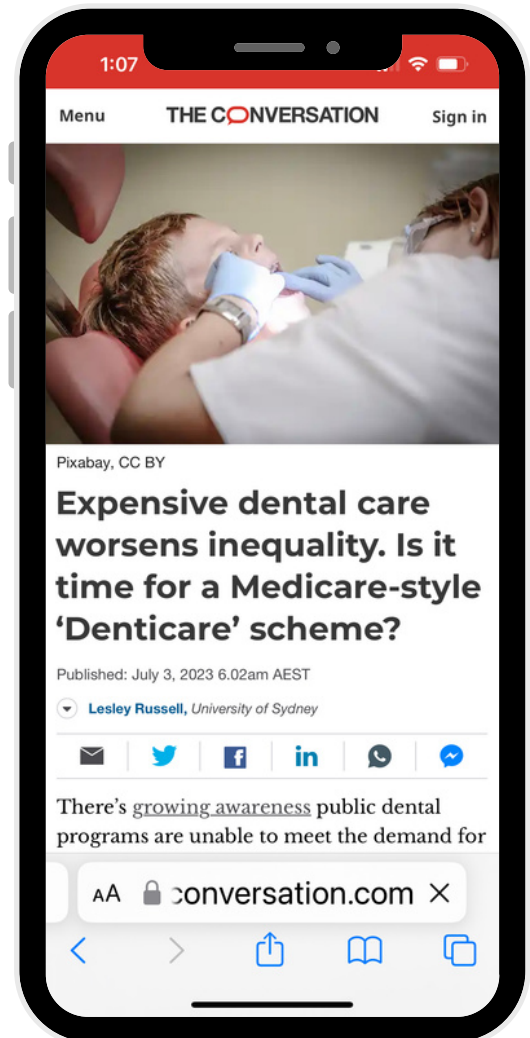
Our authors supported advocacy and educational campaigns

Lesley Russell, author of Expensive dental care worsens inequality. Is it time for a Medicare-style 'Dentcare' scheme?, was contacted to discuss dental issues and how to publicise them by the Oral Cancer Group at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse and Paediatric Dental Group at Westmead Children's Hospital. She also received several emails from dental care professionals keen to see changes in government policy.

"This article generated more interest than usual – amazing given that I've been writing pretty much the same things around dental for a decade."

– Lesley Russell (University of Sydney)

After Linda J. Graham and Callula Killingly (QUT) explained how school suspensions entrench disadvantage and explored possible alternatives, the article was distributed to more than 70 middle school leaders across Central Queensland, who participated in an inclusive education professional development program. It served as a useful corollary to their online program of learning, which is all about preventing exclusion and promoting inclusion. Linda was also contacted to give evidence as an expert witness in a case involving a deceased young person who was suspended multiple times despite being homeless.



Other outcomes included invitations to speak at conferences; interviews on international and national radio; and republication by media outlets around the world including ABC, NewsBreak (USA), Scroll (India) and Medical Xpress, further disseminating research to national and international policy makers, not-for-profits and other key stakeholders.

Shining a light on disability

4.4 million Australians live with a disability and 1.4 million of them have a profound disability. The Summer Foundation partnered with The Conversation to increase the production of evidence-based journalism about disability to engage audiences including policymakers, influencers and the general public. We asked the authors of the 30 disability articles published this quarter what happened after publication.

Our authors reached medical professionals and shared resources

After Elizabeth Emma Palmer, Iva Strnadová, Jackie Leach Scully and Julie Loblinzk (UNSW Sydney) described how people with intellectual disability often felt cut out of their own health appointments, NSW Health (funders) said they were very interested. The research team also saw a huge spike in visitors to their videos and GeneEQUAL Educational Toolkit – a resource which empowers medical professionals to deliver better, more equitable genetic healthcare.

They were consulted on policy

After David Roy (University of Newcastle) made the case for a disability rights act he was asked to present on the DRC recommendations for Education at the NSW Government response forum, also attended by the NSW Minister for Disability Inclusion. David was also interviewed by Educator magazine.

“It was great that the Summer Foundation sponsored this series – I have read almost all of those articles and have used many for my own research and teaching.”

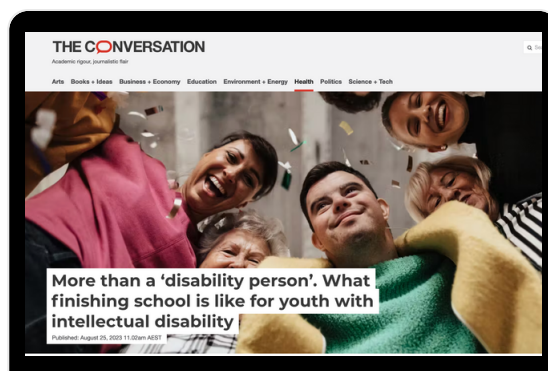
– Kate Anderson, RMIT University

They saw increased citations for scholarly articles

Lise Ludwig Mogensen (WSU) described what finishing school is like for youth with intellectual disability. She was consequently asked to contribute to the Public Consultation on the draft Intellectual Disability Health Capability Framework by the Health and Disability Interface Section of the Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care.

“This [article] has done particularly well and is in the 96th percentile: it's in the top 5% of all research outputs ever tracked by Altmetric... I have had a large number of LinkedIn requests recently. I have also received some attention for other disability research.”

– Lise Ludwig Mogensen (WSU)



Building Better Cities

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation supports The Conversation to work with academics and researchers to unlock timely scholarly works and create engaging, evidence-based journalism about cities. Our [Better Cities series](#) aims to find solutions to many of the challenges our cities currently face, from climate change to housing. We asked the authors of the 27 Better Cities articles published this quarter what happened post-publication. Here are some highlights.

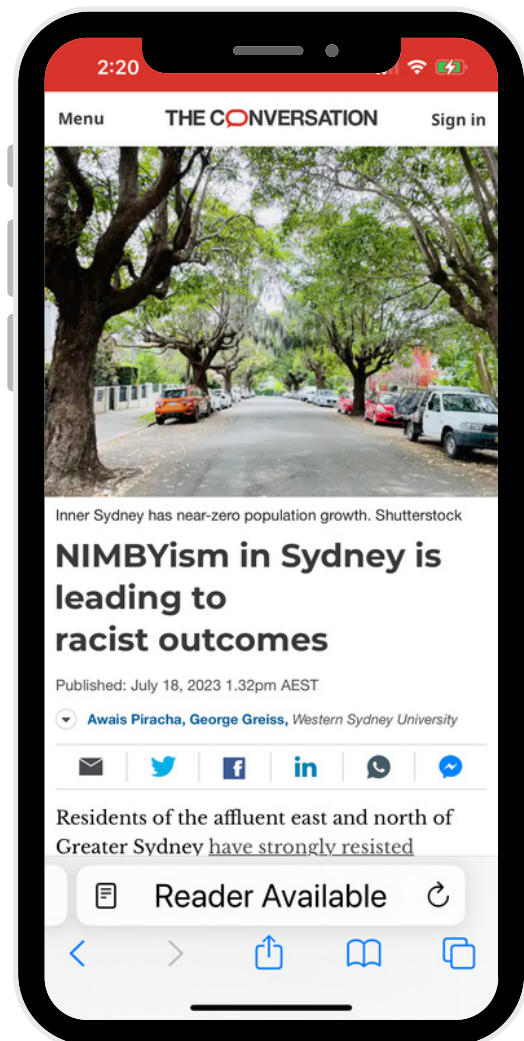
Our authors provided evidence-based information to parliament

After [Awais Piracha](#) and [George Greiss](#) (Western Sydney University) explained how [NIMBYism in Sydney is leading to racist outcomes](#), the NSW Productivity Commissioner invited Awais to be on a panel on the Housing Symposium at NSW Parliament House. The authors have also partnered on a journal article with top racism scholar Kevin Dunn, and presented findings from the article at the 59th Congress of the International Society of City and Regional Planners in Toronto.

“There has been great interest and engagement with the theme of the article from my university colleagues and professional planner acquaintances.”
– [Awais Piracha](#) (WSU)

Our authors were invited to share their research at conferences

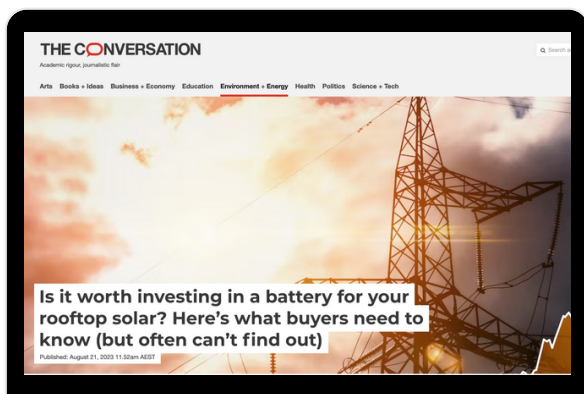
After [James Lesh](#) (Deakin University) explained how [you can have both heritage protection and more housing](#) he was invited to give talks at two conferences, including the ACT Region Heritage Symposium.



Building Better Cities

Industry and not-for-profits contacted our authors for expert opinion

After Asma Aziz and Daryoush Habibi, Edith Cowan University, explained what buyers need to know about investing in a battery for rooftop solar they were contacted by Pacific Blue to discuss battery integration in the Australian network, and by Amber.com to discuss looking more closely at battery optimisation and ways to maximise the value of batteries and solar power.



After (Matthew) Tepi Mclaughlin, The University of Western Australia, and Peter McCue, UNSW Sydney, explained how we can reverse the decline in cycling they were contacted by several not-for-profits, including Cycling and Walking Australia and New Zealand and Westcycle in Western Australia. Tepi was also invited to present a webinar on research translation at the International Society for Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity.

“The Conversation is a very helpful vehicle for us, especially being able to explain our research to a lay audience that then can be picked up by other outlets.”

– Patrick Harris (UNSW Sydney), co-author of By gutting the Greater Cities Commission, the NSW government is setting up itself and Sydney for failure

The Conversation articles are widely shared by global media outlets

The Better Cities articles were republished by media outlets around the world reaching more than a million pageviews. Republishers included ABC, Stuff (NZ), Phys.org, RNZ, The Spinoff, Publico (Portugal), Flipboard (USA), NewsBreak (USA), One Step Off the Grid, Architecture & Design and Australian Geographic.

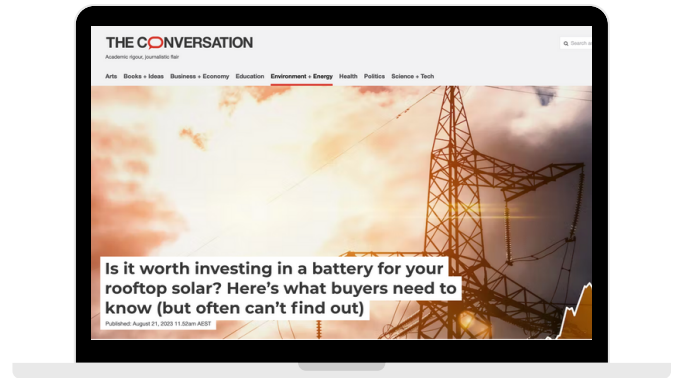
Authors were interviewed on 7 News and ABC TV; ABC Radio National; ABC local radio Gold Coast, Adelaide, Gippsland, Canberra, Newcastle, South Australia Regional, Tasmania, Brisbane, Wagga Wagga, Perth; Radio New Zealand; and commercial and community radio including 6PR and Shoalhaven Community Radio.



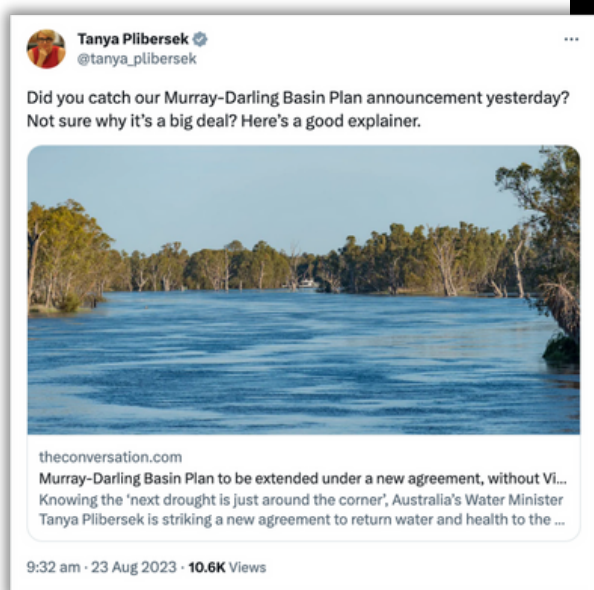
Influencing industry and educators

Our articles can be industry game-changers

Elizabeth Jackson (Curtin University) had an overwhelming response to her article, Why Australia banning live sheep exports may be a net loss for animal welfare, from the national agriculture/agribusiness community. The President of WAFarmers called to congratulate her and said the article would be a “game changer” for the industry, and he would pass it on to the Federal Minister for Agriculture.



82% of our readers say they trust The Conversation to present information accurately and without a political slant



Jamie Pittock (ANU), Murray-Darling Basin Plan to be extended under a new agreement, without Victoria – but an uphill battle lies ahead



Celeste Young, Nima Izadyar & Roger Jones (Victoria University), Worried about heat and fire this summer? Here's how to prepare

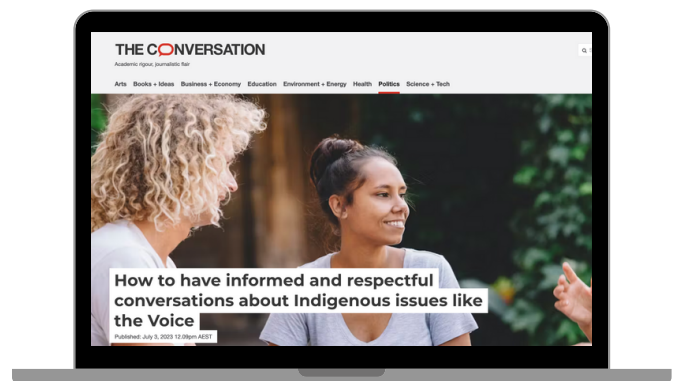
Conversation articles are often used as copyright-free resources in local and international educational settings

Cambridge University Press is using an extract from Meg Elkins (RMIT), Jane Fry (University of Melbourne) and Lisa Farrell's (RMIT) article Why reading books is good for society, wellbeing and your career in their educational title Global English Stage 10. Global English Stage 10 resources are for English as a Second Language learners and teachers in Cambridge ESL, international and English medium schools who are studying GCSEs and A levels in English.

Educational publisher Pearson is using an extract from a video based on Nick Haslam's (University of Melbourne) article Here comes the sun: how the weather affects our mood as an online exam, Pearson Test of English.

They are also used to support educators in best practice

For example, after Maryanne Macdonald (Edith Cowan University) co-wrote How to have informed and respectful conversations about Indigenous issues like the Voice she was contacted by the Editor of Agora, the professional journal of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria, and invited to write an article on developing Indigenous cultural competency, written specifically for history teachers.



Our articles are widely respected

Euan Ritchie's (Deakin University) article 'Gut-wrenching and infuriating': why Australia is the world leader in mammal extinctions, and what to do about it was selected to be included in The Best Australian Science Writing 2023, which celebrates the finest voices in Australian science writing.



Public-interest journalism powered by philanthropy

The Conversation's editors produce trustworthy journalism that helps you stay informed.

We do this as a not-for-profit publisher guided by a clear purpose: to provide access to quality explanatory journalism essential for a healthy democracy.

We are 100% independent, without on-site advertising or paywalls. All our work is free to read and republish under Creative Commons.

We can't do this work without the philanthropic support of our readers. If you believe in the importance of independent, fact-based journalism, please show your support with a donation today.

Scan the QR code to show your support.



For more about donations please contact:

Helen Johnstone
Philanthropy and Bequest Manager
helen.johnstone@theconversation.edu.au
or go to donate.theconversation.com/au



Leave a legacy of knowledge

Leaving a gift in your Will to The Conversation ensures your commitment to evidence-based news and analysis continues to live on through The Conversation.

If you believe in our work, and feel that it plays an important role in your life and those around you, please consider leaving a gift in your Will to The Conversation.

Further info at:
donate.theconversation.com/au/bequests

**There is no
Conversation
without you.**