

CONTRIBUTING TO POLICY MAKING



Are academics contributing enough to wider public and policy conversations? If not, how do we do it better?

Tim Dodd, Higher Education Editor at *The Australian*, suggests barriers include the hollowing out of expertise in the public service and its politicisation, and the rising power of political advisors who may be inexperienced in policymaking.

He sees a huge role – ideally played by academics with expertise in their field – in advising people who are devising policies. But that does not happen enough.

‘It’s something that everyone has to work at – from those in government, to those in academia, to those in the media, to those who have any sort of a platform or influence.’

Associate Professor Steven Rowley of Curtin Business School believes the difficulty of communicating directly with policymakers means relying on your research publications reaching them, which can sometimes happen through the links of research funders or platforms like LinkedIn.

So, what are the best pathways to policymakers?

An analysis of 5% of the searchable database of impact case studies, compiled by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2015, found those most commonly cited by researchers were:

- Publications – particularly peer-reviewed journals
- Advisory roles – contributing to inquiries, reports, panels and committees
- Media coverage
- Partnerships and collaborations with industry and NGOs
- Presentations with industry, the public and government.

We can debate the merits of each pathway but, for many academics, media coverage is often the best bet in the absence of direct access to policymakers.

From Tell Us: What are you doing? Improving how you communicate your academic research, relevance and expertise by Leslie Falkiner-Rose. Available at abdc.edu.au/shop and online bookstores.

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