

## Community highlights

Written by Cory Zanoni, Community Manager, The Conversation

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The Conversation receives a lot of comments each day and you can't read everything. That's why we occasionally end the week with a selection of community highlights: comments we enjoyed or thought discussing.

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### [How to keep more women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics \(STEM\)](#)

Merryn McKinnon's [article](#) discussed the problems faced when trying to keep women in STEM careers. More women are getting undergraduate degrees in the area but that's not translating to higher-level employment:

Higher Education Research Data from 2014 shows more females than males were being awarded undergraduate degrees in STEM fields. Early career researchers, classified as level A and B academics, are equally represented in the genders.

At senior levels, though, the gender disparity plainly manifests – males comprise almost 80% of the most senior positions.

Maureen McInroy [shared](#) her time at the Australian National University and the lack of women scientists:

In 1984 I was appointed EEO Officer at the ANU. We did not use the acronym STEM or STEMM in those days. But the numbers were the same. Women who were mothers and scientists having tenured positions were always as scarce as hen's teeth.

With the cooperation of successive Deans of Science and heads of science based Research Schools, capable women were identified and appointed. But that was more than a generation ago and many of those women would now be retired.

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I believe it is a systemic problem and the root causes remain unaddressed. The resistance to quotas has always been there and individuals choose to interpret it as contrary to merit in appointments. And round and round the argument goes without changes being made and sustained.

Personally I find it disappointing that we continually see the same problems arising and fail to learn the lessons of history. I suspect it was ever thus.

Jennifer Seberry [discussed](#) women working for themselves in the tech industry and the disadvantages they face:

When we consider the IT industry most people work invoicing their own small private company. They do not have a “job” or a “supervisor”. Now a female owner has to quote for work against males who do not have to worry about childcare, child illness, pregnancy, school holidays etc. They start business with a very marked disadvantage. Articles about attracting and retaining female STEM workers assume they work like teachers or nurses. STEM workers need business skills and actual equal opportunity. They do not have this. The market place conditions for female Engineering and IT workers, plus their child care burden is often too great.

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## [Greening cities makes for safer neighbourhoods](#)

Greenery isn't just aesthetically pleasing: it can make for safer neighbourhoods. An [article](#) from J. Morgan Grove and Michelle Kondo discussed the research finding this:

This research is becoming increasingly widespread and sophisticated. According to Kathleen Wolf, a research social scientist with the University of Washington and the US Forest Service, this is “part of a movement to understand the role of nature in public health”. Wolf observes:

Now that we're in the era of Big Data, we're seeing an acceleration of crime-related research in

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a wide variety of disciplines and fields. We're also incorporating data on things like disparities of green in urban communities.

Not only do healthy, well-maintained trees provide shade and benefit the ecosystem, they can have a social meaning: that people in that neighbourhood look out for each other.

Marco Amati [raised](#) high-crime areas with existing greenery and how that fits in with the research discussed in the article:

This is an interesting article - thanks. It sounds like the theory for this is a 'broken-windows' in reverse. I.e. you concentrate on making ambient changes to improve the neighbourhood that will have a tenuous causal relation with the problem (e.g. homicide rate). Overtime, things should improve. I think anyone can attest to the power of greening in bringing people onto the street for activity (planting or otherwise) and reclaiming the street. But how can we justify this activity when neighbourhoods with high crime rates exist with rich existing greenery (usually on 'wasteland' sites or parklands that have become no go areas)?

To which J. Morgan Grove [responded](#) :

You raise some important points about both "wasteland" areas and parklands that have become no go areas. In both cases, we need to add the consideration of management to the presence of absence of greenery. Management has structural and symbolic significance. Vegetation that obscures sight lines and reduces visibility is an issue (structural). Vegetation that suggest that the area is not cared for suggests that people will not report crimes if they happen (symbolic cues to care). In both cases, increasing management of existing greenery can be an important element to reducing crime. We have a paper about this if your are interested. Troy, Austin, Ashley Nunery, and J. Morgan Grove. 2016. "The Relationship between Residential Yard Management and Neighborhood Crime: An Analysis from Baltimore City and County." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 147: 78–87. and can be found [here](#) .

Complement this article with one from the Grattan Institute on how the Turnbull governemnt could make [cities work better](#) .

### Just how representative are the houses of parliament of how Australians vote?

Tim Trudgian analysed voting patterns to determine how representative the Australian government is of the countries voters and their intentions. Not very, it turns out:

How representative are Australia's elected representatives of the population as a whole? There is a clear disparity between the support of a party, in terms of popular vote, and seats won, in the results of the 2016 federal election.

[Stephen Ransom](#) shared his voting methodology and the potential problems in analysing primary voting rates:

The analysis rests on the assumption that the primary vote reflects the intention of the voter.

In my case I vote first away from the major parties to try and send the message that I am not in complete agreement with the policies/structure of either of them. I do so in the knowledge that my vote will eventually flow through to one of the major parties and so my "vote" is really going to be used to elect the candidate multiple levels down the list.

Given that nearly 25% of voters in the current election have also chosen not to cast their primary vote for one of the major parties suggests an increasing number of voters thinking along similar lines.

If we leverage that (and assume that there has been a higher shift from those who previously had used their primary vote for the Labor candidate) then that explains the apparent gap between seats and (primary) vote. The (Labor) votes are still there but not realised until the protest votes are discounted.

### [Health Check: which fruits are healthier, and in what form](#)

Finally, this week's [Health Check](#) looked at the various (and surprisingly complex) nutritional values of fruit:

Nutritional qualities of fruits vary and it is hard to predict which fruit might be best. Generally, the more different types of fruits you can include in your diet, the better. For many fruits, eating fresh at its correct ripening stage may be more beneficial, perhaps more for taste than nutrition.

Overripe fruits may be still good to eat or easily convert into smoothie, juice or used as an ingredient such as in banana bread. Eating an over-ripe fruit such as a banana does not mean that you are putting more sugars into your body as the total amount of carbohydrates in the fruit does not increase after harvesting.

Simon Peter Kimberley [asked](#) something I've always wondered:

What's your opinion on dried fruit ?

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I eat a lot of dried apricots and prunes since they are both very low GI.

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and sometimes I scoff dried goji berries by the fistful ...

Rosemary Stanton [responded](#) :

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Dried fruit is just the fruit with some of its water evaporated. Nothing is added. Some of the vitamin C is lost but can easily be supplied by fresh fruits or vegetables. Dried fruit is fine (in moderation) but if bits get caught in the teeth, the sugars can be damaging. A good swish of water may help - and also supply the water missing from the fruit.

Watch out for so-called dried cranberries though as they often are only 60% cranberry and 40% added sugar.

As [did](#) Duane Mellor, one of the article's authors:

I agree Simon with Rosemary about being careful about the added sugar, so worth checking on the label.

Serve size is the key, removing water makes each piece of fruit much smaller think of a grape compared to a sultana or raisin for example. A serve of grapes is 10-15 thats not many raisins!

About the sticking, there is mixed research, some funded by dried fruit growers. Also bananas have been shown to stick to teeth and have similar effects. So the advice of drinking water is great. It is worth noted cleaning teeth may not be so good straight after fruit though as the acid may be abrasive with the brushing on your teeth enamel, best wait 30 minutes or so.

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See you next week. Read any interesting comments? Share them below.

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