

The Conversation will no longer be publishing columns

Written by Misha Ketchell, Editor, The Conversation

When we started The Conversation, people scoffed at the idea we'd be able to convince academics to write articles within a few hours of sending a request. They turned out to be wrong, in no small part due to the efforts of the authors who went on to become our first columnists.

They were the ones who just go it, the early adopters from academia who could respond quickly to news events. But we no longer face the challenge of getting academics to write quickly. We receive hundreds of pitches a month, and with our team of 22 editors there's a limit to the number of articles we can edit. This means we're favouring articles that draw more heavily on research over fast, informed opinion.

For these reasons we recently made the decision to discontinue columns in their current form at The Conversation Australia. We will continue to publish our usual range of analysis articles, videos, podcasts, interactives, animated explainers, and other specialist products. Many of the academics who currently write columns will continue to contribute regularly in all these formats, but their former columns will be archived. This means the columns will remain available to read online but we won't be adding new contributions to them.

So what will be different? Not much. You will still be able to read new articles by most of your favourite columnists on The Conversation. There are only two real changes: the presentation of the articles will be slightly different and we are changing how we work behind the scenes. At The Conversation, columnists have been able to submit pieces without an editor giving a green light first. The decision to end columns as a separate type of content will end these special rules and ensure columnists are treated the same way as other contributors. As we've grown our audience we've established a reputation for attention to detail. We think academics who contribute columns need to be backed up by the same editorial rigour we apply to all our articles.

Among our current columnists are many of our most talented academics and writers whose work has built The Conversation's reputation for quality. We want them to continue to write for us, and we'll be reaching out to all of them individually to discuss how.

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