

Speaking with: Andrew Leigh on why we need more randomised trials in policy and law

Written by Fiona Fidler, Associate Professor, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne

[Randomised controlled trials](#) are the gold standard in medical research. Researchers divide participants into two groups using the equivalent of flipping a coin, with one group getting a new treatment and a control group getting either the standard treatment or a placebo. It's the best way to prove that a new treatment works.

But the benefits of randomised trials aren't limited to medical applications. Big businesses – like Amazon, Google, [Facebook](#) and even media organisations – are increasingly [using randomised trials](#) to test designs and processes that increase their engagement with users and customers. Every time you Google something you're probably participating in a randomised trial.

And that world of randomisation is the subject of Andrew Leigh's new book, [Randomistas: How radical researchers changed our world](#). Leigh is the current federal member for Fenner, and Labor's shadow assistant treasurer. But prior to his political life he was a professor of economics at Australian National University.

He spoke with the University of Melbourne's Fiona Fidler about how we should be using randomised trials more to drive decisions and policy in public life and why we might be missing out on better results in social policy because we're afraid to test our assertions.

Andrew Leigh's [Randomistas: How radical researchers changed our world](#) is out now from Black Inc books. His podcast on living a health, happy and ethical life, *The Good Life*, is available on [Apple Podcasts](#) or wherever you stream your podcasts.

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Authors: Fiona Fidler, Associate Professor, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne

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