# Science communication for EMCRs

## Why communicate your science?

Getting your research in the public domain doesn't have to come at the expense of science. Engaging with the community is essential and part of many academic job descriptions. Here are 5 reasons why you should communicate your research to the public:

1. Communicating about your work is an opportunity. Research shows that Australians are very interested in science, and welcome any effort you make to put your work into the public discussion of science.
2. As most research is publicly funded, we have a responsibility to communicate our findings to the public.
3. Communicating broadly brings more attention (and citations) to your research.
4. Don't know the best way to communicate? Outsource it. Go to: www.asc.asn.au.
5. Communicating widely about your work can be motivating—it also allows you to influence the mainstream discussion and agenda around your research field.

See more at 5 Reasons why EMCRs should communicate.

## Tips for effective science communication:

- Remember you are… writing for *real people.* Put yourself in their position.
- Never talk down to your audience.
- Make it personal: Tell a story and introduce characters that the reader can identify with to help them understand how your science relates to them.
- To write well, you need to read widely.
- Develop a platform. That means you need to be noticed, and to be noticed you need to be 'someone'; become 'talent'. To help you do so, try these steps:

    1. Be yourself. Nothing is more convincing than your genuine enthusiasm and commitment for what you do.
    2. Develop a vibrant and consistent online profile. Start a blog, twitter, tumblr, flickr.
    3. Give talks to a range of audiences (NOT just to peers on campus or at conferences).
    4. Find an audience who don't know you, or anything about your area, and get them excited and asking smart questions. This is a sign of a good communicator.
    5. Recapture the spark that made you want to do a PhD. Be able to communicate this, then you can get any job, grant, etc.
    6. Practice makes perfect. Write a letter to the editor, blog entry, online article for *The Conversation*, opinion piece for a major newspaper.
    7. Phone in to a radio talk back show.
    8. Accept invited radio appearances (go to the station in person).

Good communication is critical if we want to influence government policy and raise public debates about important issues. If we don't like the conversation, **we should be the ones to change it**. If you don't enter debates, then someone else will fill the space. You might not like what they have to say!

## Resources

- The Australian Science Media Centre (AusSMC) is a mediator between science and the media which provides evidence-based information to journalists.
    - Science Media Exchange (or Scimex) connects scientists with journalists
    - Science Media Savvy helps scientists work effectively with the news media
- Australian Science Communicators support and represent those who make science accessible.
- The Australian Academy of Science's science outreach website Nova: science for curious minds and is looking for scientists to contribute. Contact them through their website or by email at nova@science.org.au.
- Coalition for Life Scientists is made up of professional organisations in the US working to foster policies which advance biological research. Their site has tips for advocating for your work and contributing to policy development.
- Read Why biologists should be political? (*Cell*) and The Geek Manifesto by Mark Henderson.

This brief summary was produced by the EMCR Forum from the conference: Science Pathways 2015: Effective Science Communication for EMCRs. For more details read the full conference report.