

# Research Informing Policy

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1. The complex nature of policy making and factors influencing decisions
2. How to be more strategic and savvy when presenting the evidence base to decision makers
3. Anna Maria's top 5 tips on how to use evidence to influence policy



One Vision

# The Shine Dome

# School Education Programs



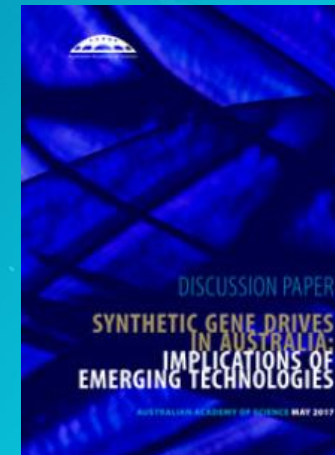
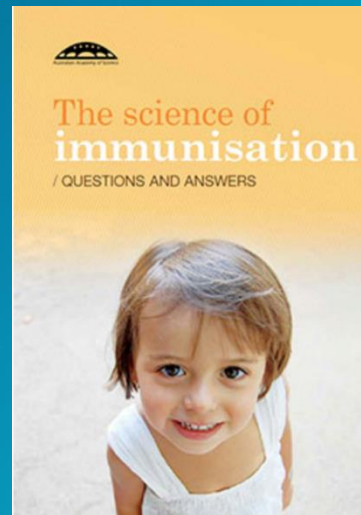


## Diversity and Inclusion

- Science in Australia Gender Equity (with ATSE)
- Women in STEM Decadal Plan
- Early- and Mid-Career Researcher Forum



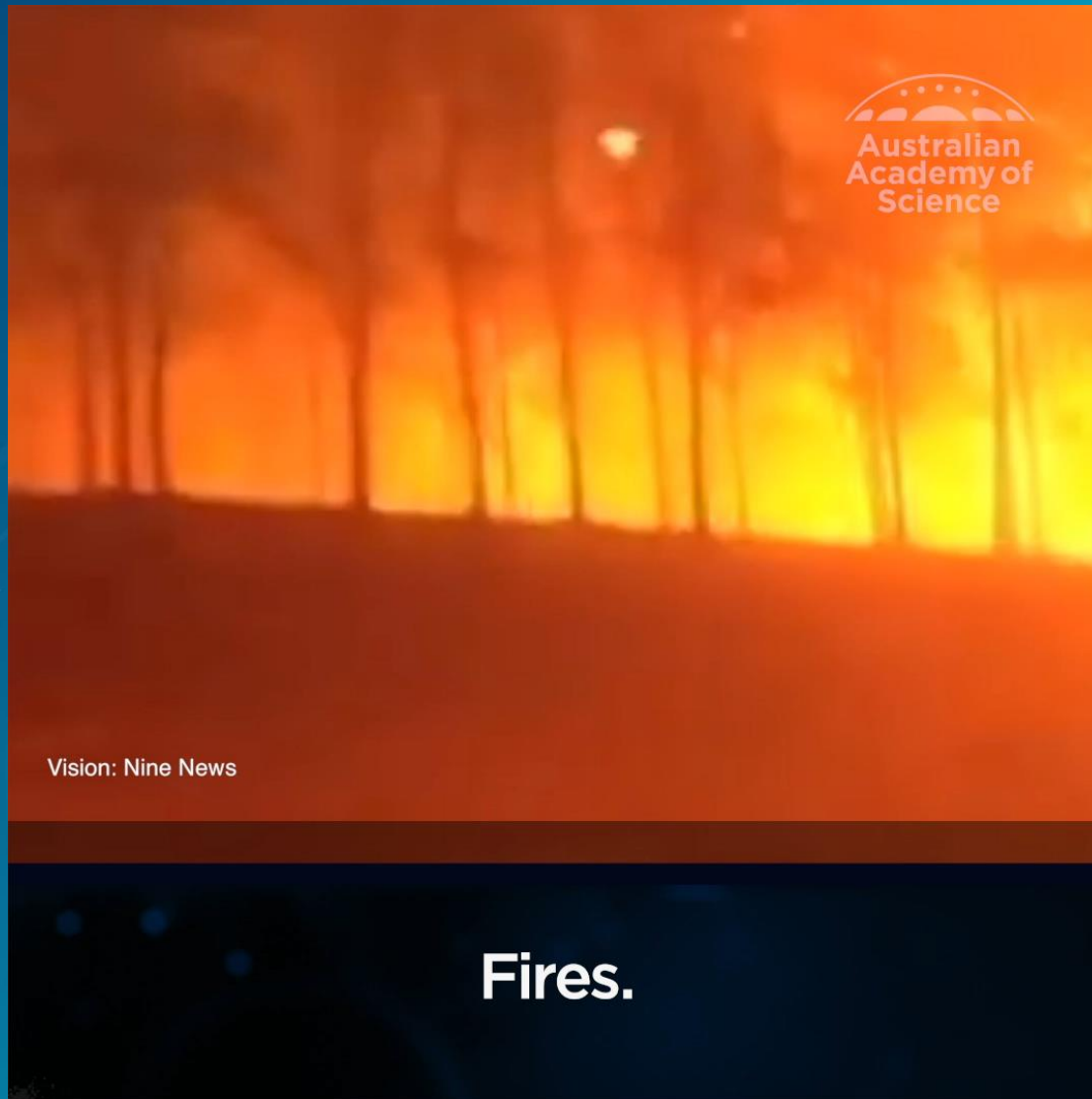
# Policy and Advocacy



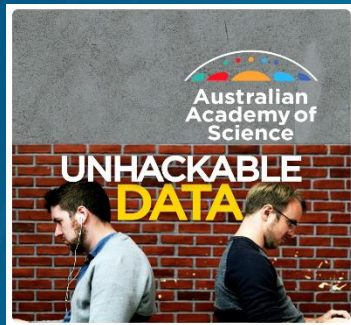
# Support for Scientists

- Honorific awards
- Research funding
- Conference support
- Travelling Fellowships and bursaries
- Support for Women and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers







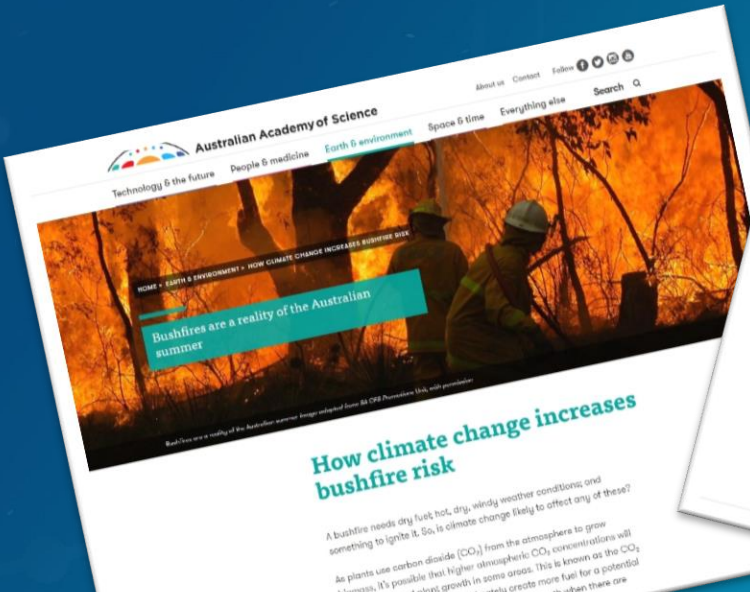


## CONTENT OVERVIEW

In October 2017, Australian Academy of Science launched high-volume, short-form videos for social and mainstream media audiences. These videos satisfy wide audiences and lead them back to quality, evidence based information.

We have over 711,000 Facebook followers – and growing!





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HOME • EARTH & ENVIRONMENT • HOW CLIMATE CHANGE INCREASES BUSHFIRE RISK

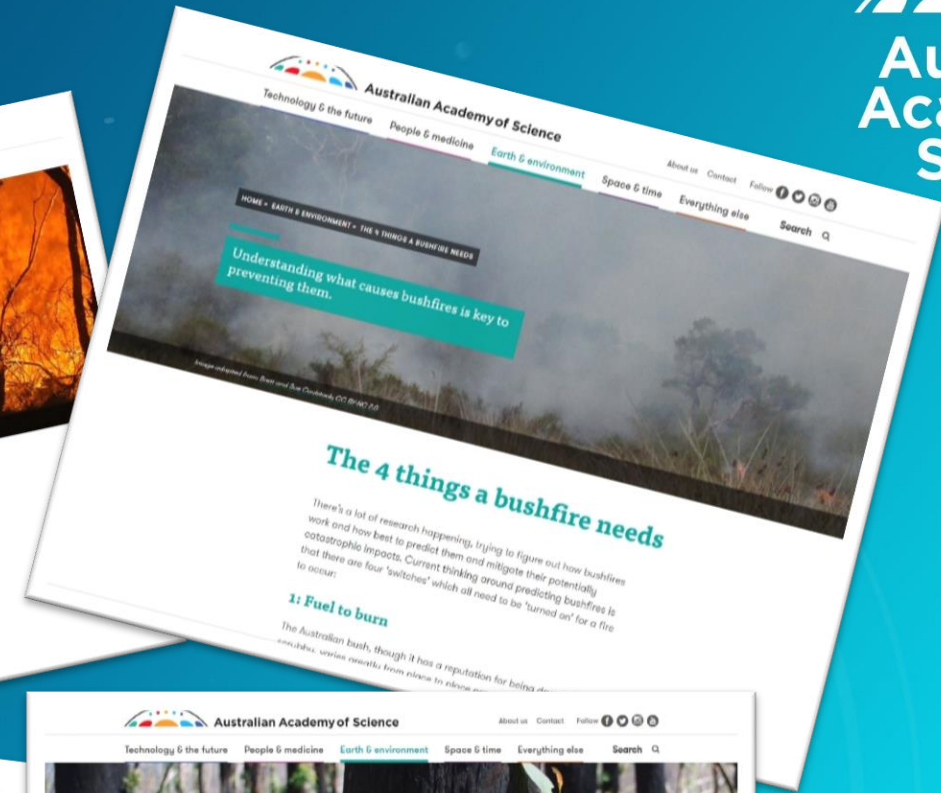
## Bushfires are a reality of the Australian summer

### How climate change increases bushfire risk

A bushfire needs dry fuel hot, dry, windy weather conditions and something to ignite it. So, climate change likely to affect any of these?

As plants use carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere to grow something to ignite it. So, climate change likely to affect any of these?

As plants use carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere to grow biomass, it's possible that higher atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations will lead to enhanced plant growth in some areas. This is known as a potential fertilisation effect, and it will ultimately create more fuel for a potential bushfire. However, this effect only improves plant growth when there are



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HOME • EARTH & ENVIRONMENT • THE 4 THINGS A BUSHFIRE NEEDS

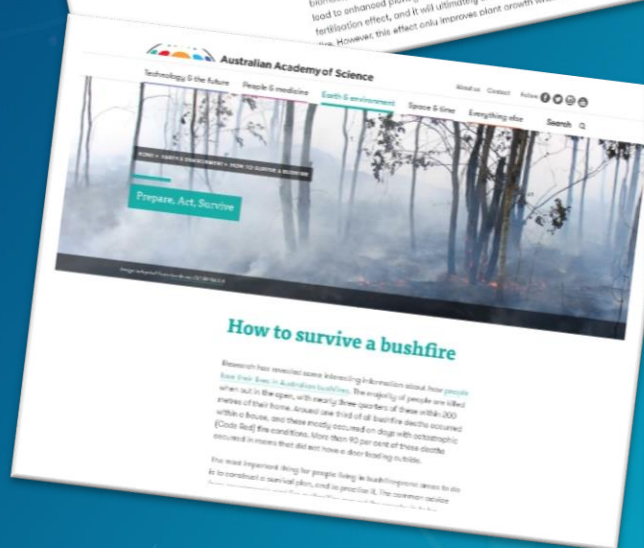
## Understanding what causes bushfires is key to preventing them.

### The 4 things a bushfire needs

There's a lot of research happening, trying to figure out how bushfires work and how best to predict them and mitigate their potentially catastrophic impacts. Current thinking around predicting bushfires is that there are four 'switches' which all need to be 'turned on' for a fire to occur:

#### 1: Fuel to burn

The Australian bush, though it has a reputation for being a tinderbox, varies greatly from place to place in terms of



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HOME • EARTH & ENVIRONMENT • HOW TO SURVIVE A BUSHFIRE

## Prepare, Act, Survive

### How to survive a bushfire

Research has revealed some interesting information about how people have their lives in Australian bushfires. The majority of people are killed when out in the open, with nearly three-quarters of these within 200 metres of their home. Around one third of all bushfire deaths occurred within a house, and these mostly occurred on days with catastrophic (Catastrophic) fire conditions. More than 90 per cent of these deaths occurred in areas that did not have a door leading outside.

The most important thing for people living in bushfire-prone areas to do is to construct a survival plan, and to practice it. The common advice



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HOME • EARTH & ENVIRONMENT • THE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT OF FIRE

## Australia is a land of fire with complex and evolved ecosystems

### The ecological impact of fire

Bushfires are a natural, essential and complex part of the Australian environment and have been for millions of years. Our country's first peoples lived seemingly hand in hand with fire, having developed complex fire management practices that complemented their deep understanding of the country and landscape in which they lived. Some of our ecosystems have evolved to be fire dependent, and require periodic activity of fire.

Since European settlement, many bushfires have been events to be avoided and not embraced with sustainable indigenous practices



# Informing policy

*There are two things you don't want to see being made – sausages and legislation*

- Otto von Bismarck -

*“There is nothing a government hates more  
that to be well-informed; for it makes the  
process of arriving at decisions much more  
complicated and difficult”*

- J.M. Keynes, 1937 -



Table 2

Importance attributed by state and federal officials to various means of obtaining research information.

Very important/important %	State	Federal
Searching the internet	94	93
Meetings with work colleagues in my department	91	91
Emailing or phoning colleagues in my department	88	90
Meetings with personnel from other departments	77	75
Involvement in forums/networks that share research	68	52
Conferences or seminars involving university researchers	63	54
My department's library	47	64
Active involvement in research projects with academics	44	29
Membership on expert panels or committees involving researchers	43	38
Commissioning private sector consultants	41	24
Commissioning university researchers	37	26
Emailing or phoning academics about their research	33	28

Table 4  
Levels of agreement with propositions about 'policy-making in your department'.

Strongly agree/agree %	State	Federal
Policy-making is driven by budgetary considerations	83	78*
Policy decisions are based on what is politically acceptable	80	66*
Responding to urgent day-to-day issues takes precedence over "long-term" thinking	75	64*
The timeframe to make policy decisions is too short in which to consider all policy options	61	54*
My policy-related work increasingly involves working with people across different levels of government or even outside government	60	54*
Research-based analysis is valued by decision makers in my organisation	60	68*
The media has too much of an influence over policy-related decisions	60	49*
Policy-making is crisis driven	56	46*
Senior decision-makers are usually generalists who may lack specialised content knowledge	41	35*
Policy decisions are based on research data and evidence about what works	41	39
Policy-making is captured by special interest groups	28	28
There are too many competing interests to consider when making policy-relevant decisions	25	22
There is very little benefit in using research to inform policy-related decisions because Heads of Departments and their advisors just ignore it	20	15*

\*  $p < 0.05$  (Pearson chi-squared test of independence).

- Policy decisions made under time pressure, by people non-experts
- There are always competing priorities
- There are almost always resource constraints
- Uncertainty about the precise nature of the problem and the likely outcomes of the decisions
- Evidence needs to be relevant & timely, and is unlikely to be actively sought out
- Decisions usually result in happy and unhappy voters.

# Tips for Influence

1. Get involved
2. Build relationships
3. Communicate clearly and widely



### 3. Clear communication

- Year 10 equivalent comprehension level
- Avoid technical terms and no acronyms!
- Graphics where possible
- Include key facts and stats
- Clearly state why the information is important and what it means for policy
- Two-pages, or a stand-alone executive summary

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2. Build relationships
3. Communicate clearly and widely
4. Be timely
5. Be relevant

## Advocating for change

- Collaborating with likeminded organisations – alliances work
- Build the case for change – define problems AND solutions
- Generate public interest and support
- Enlist champions and third-party supporters,
- Proactively engage with policy makers



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