



Ri Aus

**THE ROYAL INSTITUTION
OF AUSTRALIA
ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The last 12 months have seen the Royal Institution of Australia continue to operate due to a funding injection from the new South Australian government.

Without this funding injection, the RiAus would undoubtedly have had to cease its operations and close at the beginning of this financial year, denying the country its flagship science communication and science education products.

The Royal Institution is an organisation that exists to drive social benefit for Australia. This benefit, put simply, is to bring science to the people and people to science.

Recent times have highlighted the importance of the population having knowledge and general comfort with science and its methods, not only to inspire but as a matter of practicality. It is due to comfort with science and scientists during the pandemic that has largely seen the majority of the Australian population adhere to the best scientific advice recommending us to be vaccinated to levels that are envied worldwide.

Increasing comfort with science during the pandemic, achieved mainly through sophisticated scientific communications, has also provided the population with hope; hope that the pandemic, when managed by science, will pass, eventually returning our lives to normality.

The RiAus played a vital role in the national science communications endeavour, supplying our content to millions of readers through our platforms and publications across Australia free of charge.

RiAus exists for a social benefit, distinct from most communication organisations in the country, whose primary operating goal is commercial.

The primary focus of our operations is our content and the benefit this content can bring to the well-being of Australians.

Although some of our operations are commercial, much of

what we do depends on the community's support, who, like us, see the importance of communicating science widely.

Even though the organisation has been financially challenged in the past few years, its output and thus its measurable social impact is unprecedented in its 14-year history. Our daily digital content publishing, through cosmosmagazine.com, produces impressive amounts of world-class science journalism stories each week and has the most extensive digital readership that we've ever had in the history of the organisation, which is growing monthly.

Impressively, the access to our material through a wide range of popular digital platforms is also growing. These platforms, which include popular social media platforms, are often platforms of uncurated information and untruths. The presence of our factual content on these social media platforms makes the RiAus a vital part of a national effort to counter misinformation.

The wider community is starting to be acutely aware of the danger that misinformation spread through digital channels has on our society, a threat that distracts and divides the society from agreeing to the most beneficial and harmonious course.

The world these days accesses information through a wide range of mediums, often when mobile. One such popular medium for accessing information is through digital audio products or podcasting. Another sees the enjoyment of our science content through short- and long-form videos.

We are regularly producing multiple times a week, both short explainer video programs and more extended form interview programs featuring scientists themselves, deepening the relationship with scientists and the community.

The organisation has also entered into an innovative co-production agreement with Southern Cross Austereo (SCA) to produce high-quality podcast programs for SCA's LiSTNR platform. This creative agreement benefits not only by introducing our content to new audiences but also producing revenue through SCA's sophisticated advertising platforms. This agreement with SCA highlights what's possible for the RiAus; agreements with mainstream communications organisations that allow us to both extend the reach of our content, building upon and deepening our social benefit, but also participate in commercial activity that secures our future.

SCA has been an excellent partner in this podcasting venture. The board has taken a disciplined view that when it comes to the quality of our science journalism, the content we produce cannot be compromised in any way through our commercial activities. That would undermine our reason for being.

SCA is enormously respectful of this view, believing, as we do, that science content for a broad audience can have a sustainable commercial outcome without compromising its integrity.



In this co-production relationship, we develop excellent content, and we have tasked our journalists with writing content and presenting it in audio form. SCA lend their impressive audio content production experience, marketing, and commercialisation skills to the venture.

In the past eight months, this venture has already seen us produce two programs; both published multiple times per week. The audience for these programs has been growing impressively.

The challenge for the RiAus will be finding other relationships for its content – not only commercial production relationships but philanthropic support to give the organisation the runway to find and build these virtuous commercial relationships.

These virtuous commercial relationships take time to find and build, especially if the organisation is to find relationships that are as respectful of our mission and content as our podcasting relationship is.

RiAus exists for a social benefit, distinct from most communications organisations in the country, whose primary operating goal is commercial.

Community and philanthropic support also give us the means to engage those programs in communicating science to the community that don't necessarily have clear avenues to commercial support but have an obvious social benefit. Education RiAus is one such program.

Education RiAus takes our science journalism and, in the hands of our science educational specialists, forms this content into teaching materials for mid-high school science teachers. These teachers don't necessarily have a background in science. We support over 6000 teachers with these materials, many in rural and regional Australia and many in disadvantaged schools and communities.

The success of this platform depends on making the materials as accessible as possible. To directly commercialise these materials by, for example, making the Education RiAus platform a fee-for-service platform would possibly render the service inaccessible to the communities who need it most.

Thus, initiatives such as this one are best served through the community's support, who, like us, see the importance of quality teaching materials to inspire young Australians.

In addition, our SCINEMA International Science Film Festival - the largest science film festival in the southern hemisphere, continues to reach thousands of viewers - in particular school students. It's the kind of outreach activity that further builds on our objectivity to bring science in all its forms to the Australian public.

The generous support of the South Australian government this year has not only allowed us to operate, sustaining all of our products to market, but given us some runway to forge those philanthropic and commercial initiatives that will provide the organisation with the best chance of being able to carry out its operations into the long term future.

The most recent plans developed by the organisation's management show a path to a sustainable future. However, the best of these predictions shows that the organisation will require at least three years to build commercial and philanthropic relationships, such as our podcasting endeavour, to sustain itself. The broader media landscape is turbulent and subject to massive transformation and change. This change is daunting, not only for small, socially-driven organisations such as our organisation, but for the most significant players. In this light, our existing revenue-generating activities need constant reinvention. While our subscription products have held in their numbers, they need reinvention if they are to contribute to the future of the organisation effectively. Again, the South Australian government's funding affords us some continuity to the task of this reinvention. However, ongoing success will need a runway that philanthropic and community support can provide us. The task of developing this runway through philanthropy and community support is well underway. It is a difficult task. There is much in our society that needs help, and like us, dependent on it, so we compete with many other good and essential causes.

I must pass on my gratitude and gratefulness to my fellow council members who are providing their experience and counsel in our efforts to seek this funding. During the months before the South Australian government funding injection, when at times it looked more likely than not that the organisation would close, our council remained engaged and abreast of the plans required to navigate the future of the organisation. Their advice through this was essential. I'm also grateful for the tireless work of the team at the RiAus, who has built and grown the product base of the organisation and the audience for these products and the budding commercial relationships we need for the future.

The passion of the team is among the greatest assets of the organisation.

While our long-term future is far from being guaranteed, we have some runway to be able to forge the elements we need to sustain ourselves for the future. However, the next stage of our program to maintain the organisation, as discussed, will be to secure philanthropic and community support to further our development and allow us to build virtuous commercial relationships.

Our mission is an important one to Australia. We are confident that there are those in the community with the means and the shared belief in our mission who will assist us, and we would welcome those who wish to support us into the future.

– Peter Yates AM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

During this reporting period, the RiAus has engaged in perhaps its most intensive operations since its inception as it has embarked on a significant transformational and fundraising campaign to ensure its survival.

As detailed in last year's annual report, if the organisation did not get new funding, it would have had to have closed at the beginning of the new financial year, and plans were prepared for this contingency.

As the Chairman has explained in his report, the organisation was able to secure a significant one-off funding grant from the new South Australian government, as well as some minor contributions from the corporate sector to allow it to continue its operations, continuing delivering a social dividend, building, and initiating long-term funding arrangements for the future.

We've always been clear in our planning and funding discussions that the journey to these long-term sustainable funding arrangements is a three-year journey. Disruptions to our historical operating model and the pandemic are not overcome overnight.

Our South Australian government funding and the other grant funding we've secured are designed to allow us to operate for 12 months. With some efficiencies and our revenue growth, we can stretch this funding to work for a further four months before we need to secure another significant funding injection.

Work is underway on building up our long-term revenue sources and another injection of funding to give us the runway to mature the self-sustaining measures we have in our plans.

Long-term funding will come from having organisational products in our educational and publishing activities that have strong community connections and resonance and deliver our important social dividend of ensuring all Australians have access to the facts and perspective that science provides them.

This is the reason why we exist.

Over the past 12 months, our organisation's transformation, designed to achieve the above aspiration, has been very successful. Our output is reaching a greater number of Australians than at any other time in the organisation's history.

We also have a greater depth of digital reach and engagement, meaning that we are reaching more diverse populations within the country, deepening our effect and social dividend.

On top of the extensive products we developed in the

last reporting period, we now produce three podcasts available multiple times a week. Two of these programs are co-produced with LiSTNR, the Australian podcasting platform created and operated by Southern Cross Austereo, one of Australia's primary national radio and audio production and distribution companies. The LiSTNR platform is Australia's largest and most popular curated digital audio platform. Our relationship with LiSTNR and the promotion our programs get through Southern Cross Austereo's popular radio stations throughout the country allows us to reach an audience with quality science programming that we, on our own, could not necessarily reach, deepening the cross-section of the population that we inform. Our co-production arrangements also present opportunities for us to secure long-term revenue through Southern Cross Austereo's sophisticated advertising platforms, which will allow us to earn advertising revenue from our podcast that is respectful of our content and mission.

Our subscription products, namely our quarterly magazine, in both print and digital, and *Cosmos Weekly*, continue to deliver subscription revenues for the

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organisation. Subscription numbers are stable, and efforts are underway to initiate campaigns to grow these subscriptions and house these publications in a more sophisticated digital application to broaden their reach and saleability.

As we've noted, our reach through our daily digital publishing, free through our websites, continues to grow. We've spent many months where our readership now surpasses 1 million reads of our content per month. This growth in regular readership comes from comprehensive demographics and reinforcing the social good we deliver to the country. Also, as we began doing during the pandemic, we've made our content available to other media outlets at no charge. This furthers the reach of critical scientific facts deeply within Australia to media organisations that, without us, would not publish science content – when scientific knowledge is essential to the population.

The media organisations that take advantage of this free syndication are primarily based in rural and regional Australia. And our content is distributed across over 200 different mastheads, in digital, print and radio.

There are 1000s of citations and uses of our content each month, reaching vast audiences through the length and breadth of the country. This syndication, like our podcasting, allows us to get to audiences that, on our own, we would not reach.

This syndication dives deeply into the delivery of our social dividend. However, this extensive reach also drives awareness of the organisation. This drives viewership to our publications, thus presenting more robust, sustainable ways to produce income through advertising, subscriptions, and donations.

This interleaved strategy is front of mind in our current work. Now we've stepped back from having to close the organisation and have a degree of stability due to the South Australian government funding; we can focus on the long term.

This stability has also allowed us to take a more detailed view of our educational activities. Education RiAus is a platform that draws on our extensive publishing activities to produce quality teaching materials for teachers who may not necessarily have qualifications in science. We focus on middle high school students, an age group our research tells us are neglected, yet are at a time in their lives where they're making decisions about future education and career. We want teachers to be best prepared to inspire students interested in science to continue their education in STEM. We have over 6000 teachers registered on our platforms, and over 50% of these teachers are based in rural and regional Australia. Usage of the platform by teachers continues to increase, exceeding our internal key performance indicators. Our educational activities are core to the social dividend that we deliver to the nation and reinforcing them is at the heart of our strategy to secure long-term financial support for what we do.

Recently, we've taken our educational initiatives into the academic community to national educational conferences and forums. This re-engagement with the community of educators is well overdue but delivers fruitful partnerships and connections for the organisation.

I firmly believe that what we do is of national importance to Australia. Australia needs a flagship science communications organisation, and all Australians need and deserve access to the facts and awareness that science journalism brings to them.

Our future national prosperity depends on this access. Without it, we are all ill-prepared to make the critical decisions we need to navigate our society into a prosperous future.

The Royal Institution of Australia's long-term future is far from assured. With the funding from the South

Australian government, we have a greater chance to demonstrate our belief in the importance of scientific communication to all Australians – and to also show our skill in delivering a dividend on this belief.

Our future depends on philanthropy, business, and a broad cross-section of Australians sharing our beliefs, seeing our value in this belief, and providing our organisation with the resources we need for the future.

I firmly believe that what we do is of national importance to Australia. Australia needs a flagship science communications organisation, and all Australians need and deserve access to the facts and awareness that science journalism brings to them.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of my colleagues in the Royal Institution for their tireless work in advancing our social dividend. Without the effort of its staff, this organisation would not have survived nor continue to produce the quality materials that it does. I'd also like to thank the management team that works with me, who go above and beyond what would usually be required in a job. Their passion and dedication to our future is admirable.

And the country should be thankful for the team's work in ensuring that Australia is educated and informed with world-class science journalism.

– Will Berryman



COSMOS

THE SCIENCE OF EVERYTHING



The excitement of new editorial frontiers in 2020/21 has continued into 2021/22, with newsroom initiatives bringing opportunities for editorial staff to extend their boundaries into new media forms.

It's pleasing that we've handled new editorial challenges through a period of constant change. Our three-journalist newsroom altered shape with two departures, Deborah Devis (who went to Flinders University) and Lauren Fuge (now writing a PhD). In the second half of the reporting period, staff changes were regular but have since settled.



It has been the year of podcasting with *Huh? Science Explained* (above) our first SCA/LiSTNR release.

In spite of changing newsroom personnel, we've continued to innovate, and arguably the most prominent new feature is our move into 'proper' podcasting through the partnership with Southern Cross Austereo's LiSTNR platform.

There are now two LiSTNR/Cosmos science podcast brands – *Huh? Science Explained* and *The Science Briefing* – broadcasting twice weekly; both have been well received and have growing audiences.

The *Briefing's* audience reached 15,899 unique listeners and 24,264 downloads in only its second full month; the first critical commercial threshold for LiSTNR pods is 20,000 monthly unique listeners and confidence is high the *Briefing* will quickly reach that stage.

Huh? launched several months ahead of the *Briefing* and its numbers are smaller but also steadily building. *Huh?* is a shorter podcast and has less refined production values – possibly reasons its audience is slower to build.

A chance conversation with Professor Euan Ritchie from Melbourne Uni saw us launch the inaugural Australian Mammal of the Year competition – AMOTY to staff – which ran on the daily news website between early May and the end of August. The competition and its winner – the southern bent-winged bat – proved to be unexpected, and an unexpectedly public, success. The competition culminated in August – aka the Month of the Bat – when AMOTY finals fever saw the newsroom double its average media and syndication hits. Cosmos featured in 261 radio (the equivalent of 8.4 radio spots a day) and 51 TV appearances. Syndicated stories appeared online 1003 times, and in print 188. At month's end, AMOTY stories and voting had generated than 124,000 web page impressions, and many of the species stories are timeless and still being read.



The Science Briefing (left) became our second SCA/ LiSTNR release, while our magazine continued to deliver the best in long-form science journalism - and even a AI-generated cover (below).



Part of AMOTY's success has to be attributed to the successful growth of our syndication relationship with Australian Community Media. Our first joint project – Summer of Science – had readers asks us questions, many of which formed the basis of early *Huh* episodes. Cosmos stories are now published in regional papers across Australia more than 1000 times online and at least 120 times in print each month.

Cosmos magazine, our flagship product, is also performing strongly and demonstrably gaining attention. The March 2022 announcement by Roy Morgan of annual magazine readership figures noted that *Cosmos* had recorded 124% readership growth year on year – the largest of any magazine in any category in Australia. In contrast, throughout the year there's been a slight softening in the magazine's retail and subscription sales, which we're working to arrest. Important to note that the *Cosmos* feature story "Role models in a time of pandemic", written by Dyani Lewis, won the 2021 Eureka Prize for long-form journalism, and "The virus detectives", written by Fiona McMillan, was shortlisted for the 2021 UNSW Press Bragg Prize for Science Writing. Paul Biegler's original *Cosmos* story "Inside biology's black box" was included alongside McMillan's in *Best Australian Science Writing 2021*, which Lewis edited (and thus did not contain her Eureka winner).

Also eminently worthy of mention is the *Cosmos* Greenlight Project – a year-long look at climate change response in regional Australia with special attention paid to agriculture, energy, regional mining and industry, and First Nations Australians' perspectives. Funded by a \$120,000 grant from the Walkey Foundation/ Meta, Greenlight stories are running at the rate of 2–4 per week on the daily news site and in *Cosmos* Weekly. We're particularly pleased that we partnered with the WA-based National Indigenous Times for Greenlight First Nations coverage.

The daily news website continues to grow with consistently strong output from the outstanding team. We have also focussed on driving referral traffic to the website and forming new aggregation partners such as Flipboard and Apple News. *Cosmos* Weekly has also enjoyed steady, albeit low, numbers throughout the period.

In the current reporting period, we look forward to increasing podcast listenership to levels that will drive revenue, implementing regular advertising across our media platforms, and to increasing and diversifying our multimedia output with grant support.

BY THE NUMBERS

21/22 total page views: 8,561,203

Biggest month: March 2022
(1,181,258 page views)

Most read story: Is Elon Musk's Starlink network under attack from Russia? (218,555 page views)



The Royal Institution of Australia (RiAus) is an independent charity established to advocate for science. Our nation has an opportunity to use science as a path to the future for our children, our manufacturers, and our businesses, to stay competitive on a global stage.

RiAus has an essential mission: to report on science's role in national development in the crucial years ahead.

COSMOSMAGAZINE.COM

Free daily news on the latest science from Australia and around the world.

EDUCATION

Articles are transformed into curriculum-linked resources, teaching the Australian scientists of tomorrow the science of today through 6000 teachers.

SYNDICATION

Our stories are regularly republished in 140 regional and rural newspapers nationally.

COSMOS WEEKLY

A subscriber e-publication covering the science behind the news of the day, with expert commentary and analysis.

VIDEO

Filed interviews, explainers and mini-features films show the face of Australian science via Youtube and syndication.

COSMOS MAGAZINE

Australia's last print science magazine; the journal of record for the Australian science that's changing the world.

PODCASTS

In partnership with SCA, *Huh? Science explained* and *Science Briefing* bring science to a new listenership twice weekly.

SCINEMA

The largest science film festival in the Southern Hemisphere.

SCINEMA

INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FILM FESTIVAL



The 2022 SCINEMA International Science Film Festival faced some interesting challenges but still came through to outperform the majority of National Science Week events.

Because of staff changes and the 50% drop in digital and in-person National Science Week events, our main focus was to ensure that SCINEMA maintained its profile and status rather than treat the year as one for growth and expansion.

Over 100 films were received from 15 countries, and the excellent standard of entries continued.

Once the festival commenced, registrations were consistent and strong, right through the August screening



BY THE NUMBERS

Total Audience: 71,359
Total films submitted: 103
SCINEMA Junior submissions: 33
Total films in playlists: 63
Schools registered: 329
Screenings: 2,107
Registrations: 617

period. More than 20 public events were held around the country at libraries and community centres, promoted through National Science Week, along with 329 schools held multiple screenings, and the final aggregate audience of 71,359 was well above initial expectations.

Moving forward, with a dedicated resource behind the festival, there are a significant number of changes planned for 2023. From a return to live screenings at the Science Exchange and expanded social media presence, to a relaunched and simplified website with content designed to make the SCINEMA brand live year-round (rather than just as a festival in August), there are some lofty targets in place.

Secrets in the Scat took out the best film prize and featured wildlife biologist Scott Burnett, aka Scat Man (above), while Ema Poposka's *The Living Sea* won SCINEMA Junior (left). *The Lake At The Bottom Of The World* (top left) took home the Social Impact Award.

Ri Aus The Royal Institution of Australia
BY THE NUMBERS

Our content is featured on Australian radio all states and regions
100+ times each month

6000+ Teachers signed up to Education RiAus, a platform supporting science teachers without a science qualification.

360,000 Australian students supported by Education RiAus

50% of the teachers signed up to Education RiAus are located in regional Australia

Our content is republished in Australian regional digital newspapers
1500+ TIMES EACH MONTH

Our content is read, viewed and listened to more than
12 MILLION times every year

100+ times each month our stories are republished in Australian regional print newspapers

35+ original science stories per week from the Cosmos Newsroom on cosmosmagazine.com

4 high-quality, award-winning print editions of Australia's last science magazine per year

3 popular weekly science podcasts available on all major platforms

1 weekly digital publication on science and the economy – Australia's only publication of its type.

4+ short-form videos each week

EDUCATION RiAus

SUPPORTING STEM LEARNING

The past year saw a change in our education manager providing an ideal opportunity to reflect and evaluate the education product. Changes to processes and product were enacted to streamline and maximise impact.

2022 welcomed the return of most, if not all, pupils and teachers to the classroom. Despite this, the requirement for digital material for use in a hybrid setting remains high. Most schools have adopted this way of working choosing to continue utilising apps and platforms introduced in times of virtual and remote learning.

Illness due to the COVID pandemic and influenza alongside vaccination mandates created a pressure on funding available for professional development, as such there has been a decline in educators participating in events. Happily, attendance at events has steadily increased throughout term 3 and we are now seeing delegate numbers close to pre-COVID times.

For SCINEMA 2022, our education manager was fully immersed in the festival as one of this year's judges. Education resources for this year's event were revised to create a user-friendly resource that could be utilised with other educational film content. The SCINEMA Film Festival and the use of SCINEMA films in classroom were promoted through attendance and delivery of workshops at the SASTA Annual conference. Our education manager's workshop walked delegates through how to use SCINEMA films in the classroom and highlighted the importance of film as a teaching tool.



Education RiAus have continued to develop resources in partnerships with the Australian Antarctic Division (right), the Jane Goodall Foundation resource box project (inset right), and Wild Dingo Press through our In Class With... series (above) providing inspirational and relevant content for classrooms across Australia.



BY THE NUMBERS

6000+ educators subscribed to use our resources

360,000 students supported by our resources

Education website pageviews increased to 333,132

In 2022 Education RiAus attended (including sponsorship) more conferences and events than ever before, reaching a wider audience. This includes the recent CONASTA 69 Australia's largest education conference with delegates from across Australia.

Other events attended this year include:

- SASTA Annual Conference
- STEM Day Out
- Science Alive
- STEM Aboriginal Learners Congress
- SASTA Modelling Stem Conference

Such events create greater engagement and connections with local and national education services. This year has also seen a stronger presence from Education RiAus in Adelaide and thus an improved relationship within the local science network and colleagues from across the cultural precinct. This included attendance at Inspiring SA meetings and as members of the Organising Group for the National Conference of Science Teachers, CONASTA 70 (to be held in Adelaide July 2023), in which our education manager was selected to introduce next year's event whilst attending CONASTA 69.

INCOME STATEMENT	2022	2021
Income		
Donations	37,984	562,105
Funding/Grants	130,000	450,021
Publishing	384,682	415,867
Membership	0	48,154
Investment Income	231,933	138,818
Venue Hire	-	27,123
Other	72,601	347,731
Total Income	857,200	1,989,818
Expenses		
Programs & Publishing	1,359,539	1,030,255
Management & Administration	1,059,664	1,461,857
Investment Costs	15,505	25,200
Venue Hire	-	3,461
IT & Website	147,048	140,922
Depreciation	49,092	90,017
Other	36,708	139,099
Total Expenses	2,667,557	2,852,289
Net Operating surplus/(deficit) (1,810,357)	(1,810,357)	(862,471)
SUMMARY OF POSITION	2022	2021
Current Assets		
Cash	1,409,553	76,249
Other Current Assets	194,407	207,886
Non-Current Assets		
Investments	-	3,168,261
Property, Plant & Equipment	65,003	113,005
Other non-current assets	-	-
Total Assets	1,668,963	3,565,401
Current Liabilities	650,510	620,718
Non-Current Liabilities	18,273	29,099
Total Liabilities	668,783	649,817
Net Assets	1,000,180	2,915,584
Total Equity	1,000,180	2,915,584

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Government of South Australia

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South Australia, National Science Week

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The Royal Institution of Australia Inc., 55 Exchange Place, Adelaide, SA 5000
08 7120 8600 | science@riaus.org.au | riaus.org.au