



# Science Media Centre

Where science meets the headlines

“There is no challenge that we will face over coming decades that does not depend on science. It will be critical to our economic, environmental, social and cultural development. Science has a critical role to play in the public dialogue as we develop a national consensus on how best to manage essential trade-offs. All of this must require a much more scientifically aware, literate and engaged population.”

- Professor Sir Peter Gluckman,  
Chief Science Advisor

## What is the Science Media Centre?

The Science Media Centre is an independent, not-for-profit resource for the media that promotes evidence-based science and up-to-date research to inform public debate on the major issues of the day.

The SMC works proactively with journalists to help them cover science as well as identify the science angles in everyday news stories and works with the scientific community to help them interact more effectively with the media and ensure that their voices are heard on issues of national importance.

The SMC has made an impressive impact since opening in 2008, having injected evidence-based comment into more than 12,000 news reports and informed more than 250 mainstream issues such as:

- natural disasters
- food safety
- climate change
- stem cell research
- nanotechnology
- genetic modification
- immunisation
- earthquake risk
- water quality
- mobile phones and cancer
- obesity and diabetes
- fisheries sustainability

Effective reporting on science and technology in the mainstream media is an essential element for public understanding of – and support for – the research and evidence-based knowledge that underpins our society.

Yet media coverage of these critical areas is increasingly under-resourced and under threat.

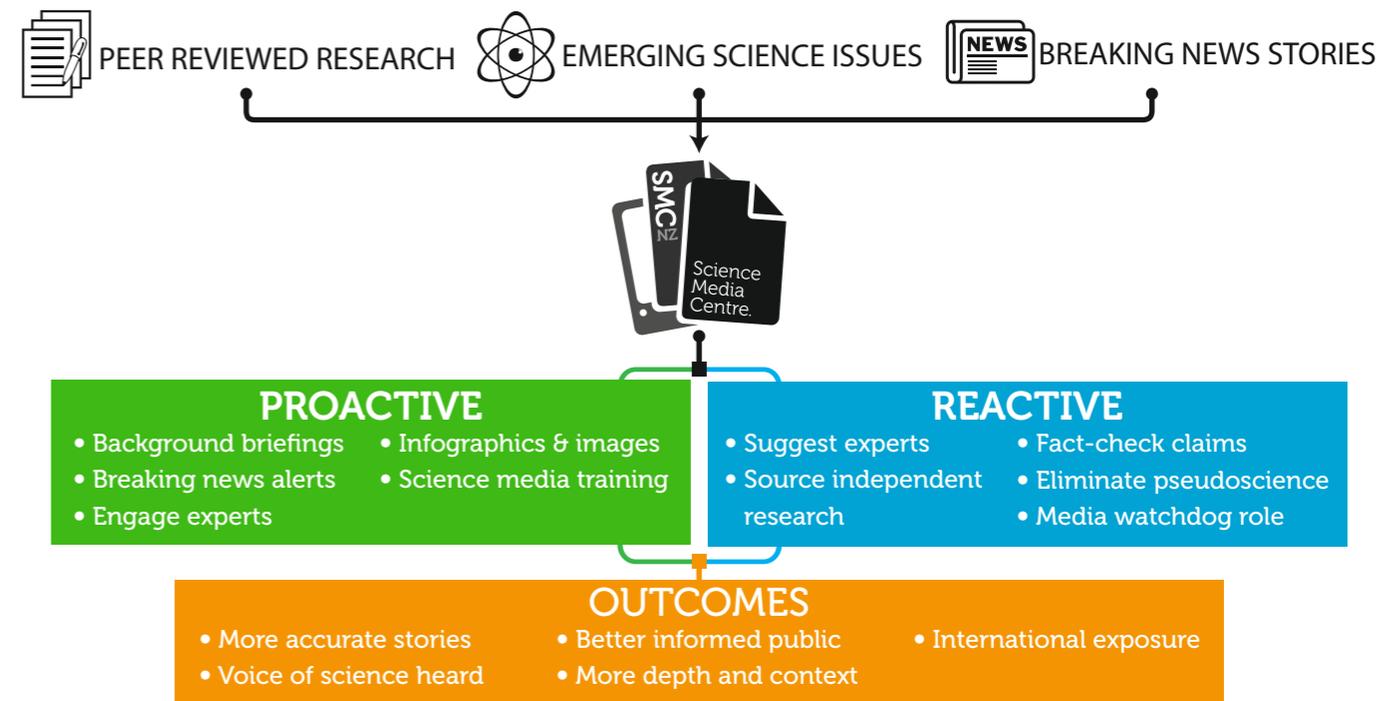
Mainstream media organisations face fundamental change in their business models, which has resulted in less resourcing of specialist areas such as science and health coverage.

The internet's 24-7 news cycle has put pressure on media outlets to deliver accurate and in-depth news coverage with ever-tighter turn-around times.

Upheaval in the media has led to an exodus of talent and experience leaving younger, less experienced and non-specialist reporters to deal with complex science-related issues.

In a media world where opinion is becoming increasingly dominant in the news stream, the facts on important issues that are underpinned by science can easily get lost.

## How we Work





The Science Media Centre champions evidence-based dialogue, raises the profile of relevant research, and works to ensure the voices of scientists are heard on the important issues affecting society.

## What we offer

### **Independent, neutral platform for experts and ideas**

The SMC is a trusted source of information for media, which means we are uniquely placed to provide an independent platform for:

- promoting evidence-based coverage of contentious issues,
- responding to confusion and pre-empting the spread of misinformation in media reporting of complex topics,
- launching major research results and reports from cross-sector collaborations

### **Regular updates on research news**

Special working arrangements with publishers of major scientific and medical journals give us insight into upcoming, newsworthy publications. As part of our service to journalists, we highlight research from New Zealand scientists,

and provide local expert commentary to media on international research.

### **Opportunities to partner for online briefings**

Our regular media briefings offer background on major science-related issues or often act as a launch event for newly-published research.

### **Email alerts: comments from experts on breaking news**

Our SMC email alerts, in which we round up comment from scientists on breaking news stories, provide much needed background and context when the media need it most.

### **Media training support for scientists**

The SMC offers 'introduction to the media' training sessions for scientists that provide basic skills for working with news media, as well as more intensive two-day Science Media SAVVY workshops.

### **Science information for media and public**

Journalists registered with the SMC receive weekly email updates highlighting new research, reports and related material being published in scientific journals around the world.

The SMC's website, weekly public newsletter (distributed to 1600 subscribers) and public science events calendar, target information about important research and upcoming events to media and key stakeholders.

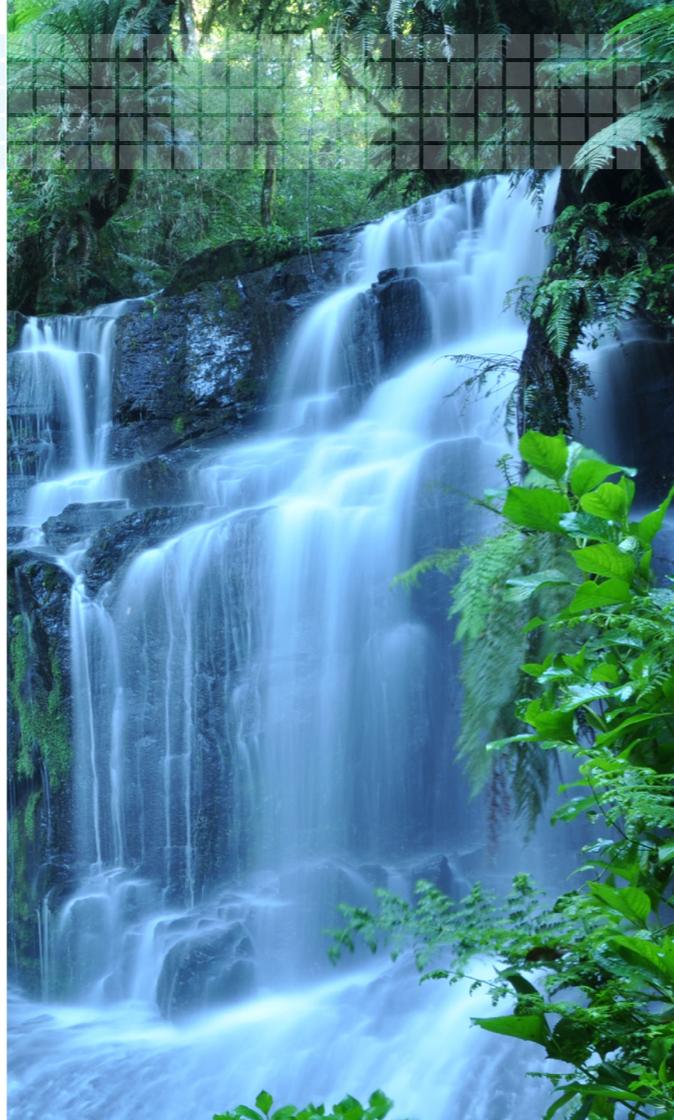
## Trusted, credible, peer-reviewed

We consistently strive to promote the most credible experts and reflect a broad spectrum of informed scientific opinion.

As the media's business models come under increasing pressure, and journalists have fewer resources to draw on, their ability to fact-check and provide independent analysis on complex issues is threatened.

Straightforward, accurate information on science-related issues can be difficult to access on deadline. The SMC is a trusted source of independent experts, research and science information. In our day-to-day operations, we draw on a Science Advisory Panel that includes top scientists in a comprehensive range of fields.

The SMC is operated by the Royal Society of New Zealand with an independent advisory board. The SMC does not represent any particular agenda within science, and has a strong track record of independence.



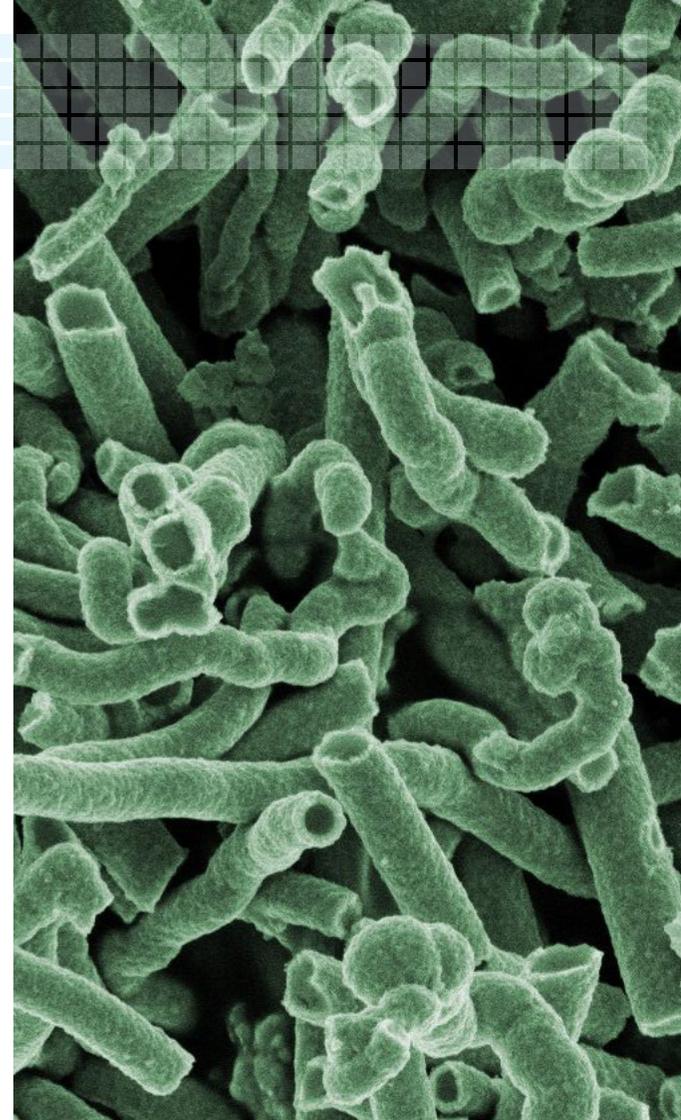
## Science in society

Scientific institutions and industry groups are increasingly recognising the need for an informed society that values science.

From immunisation and climate change to "fracking" and 1080 pesticide, numerous science-related issues divide the public, highlighting the need for evidence-based information and timely engagement from the science community.

New Zealand's national strategic plan for Science in Society recognises that effective public engagement with science requires that the quality, breadth, and depth of science communication by the media and scientists is enhanced.

The SMC plays a key role in supporting New Zealand's Science in Society strategy, building capability in the media to cover science and helping scientists to engage with the media when their expertise is most needed.



## Value and impact

### Ongoing feedback from media and scientists indicate widespread support and endorsement of the SMC, its role and the services it provides.

This is backed up by independent evaluations of the centre completed in 2009 and 2012.

Our proactive and reactive services are both highly valued. These serve to inform the media of new and emerging scientific issues, and have frequently led to stories being covered that would otherwise have been missed.

We are regularly commended on the timeliness of our services, as well as the quality and relevance of the experts we refer.

We excel in the use of new and social media and have helped hundreds of scientists improve their science communication skills. The Sciblogs network which we oversee has produced over 8,000 articles in its five year history, currently boasts a stable of 30 scientists and science writers and is the 8th most popular blog in New Zealand.

### Science Media Centre impact 2008 – 2014:

8,300 media enquiries

12,000 media items

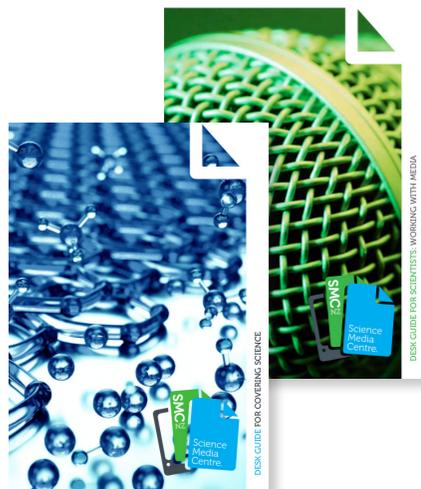
460 reg. journalists

Our considerable impact on science in the media nationwide over the past four years has resulted from the dedicated work of a small team. As an organisation, we are extraordinarily prolific, productive, flexible and lean.

## Upskilling scientists and journalists

### Desk Guides

Free, handy reference guides are available from the SMC, filled with practical tips for journalists covering science and scientists working with media.



### Science Media SAVVY

Our Science Media SAVVY workshops are designed to help researchers gain the confidence and skills they need to engage effectively with media and communicate their science in public.

More than basic media training, our courses are designed to meet the specific needs of scientists. We offer practical exercises to help researchers explain complex ideas clearly, introduce tools and strategies for connecting with new audiences, all while providing feedback and support from fellow researchers.

Our full workshops offer a unique chance to make valuable media contacts and gain first-hand insight into news media practices. A range of SAVVY short courses introduces researchers to new skills in science blogging, podcasting, animated video production and public presentation.

### SMC Expert Encounters

The SMC hosts regular events in Auckland and Wellington to help engage media with science and support more in-depth coverage of science-related topics. These free-ranging Q&A sessions invite journalists to meet dynamic local experts and visiting international scientists, discussing a range of topics from climate modeling and epigenetics to antibiotic resistance. Expert encounters are organised in partnership with supporters, including the MacDiarmid Institute and the Royal Society of NZ.

For more information visit

[www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/resources](http://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/resources)

## Introducing Scimex – the Science Media Exchange

Scimex is a central hub designed to increase access to research news for reporters covering science.

A two-way platform, Scimex encourages greater interaction and collaboration between scientists and journalists.

Contributors can upload embargoed information and multimedia to the site for use by registered journalists.

Once the embargo for news stories has lifted, the information becomes publicly available.



### Scimex features:

- News content from a range of registered contributors
- Password protection for sharing of embargoed content
- A multimedia library of downloadable visual content
- A directory of media savvy scientific experts
- Advertising and branding opportunities
- A calendar of science events.

A collaboration between the Australian and New Zealand Science Media Centres, Scimex helps journalists keep on top of newsworthy science and gives New Zealand institutions exposure to their research across Australasia.

Visit [www.scimex.org](http://www.scimex.org) to register for Scimex.

## Journalists

"We've found the centre and its people brilliant. Whether it's helping us find the latest research or the best scientist to explain questions from our readers, they're always quick and thoroughly professional. They understand how science and the media need to interact and strive for the best results."

**Glen Scanlon**, NEWS EDITOR  
Stuff.co.nz

"The SMC provides valuable resources for our programme. The frequent email roundups let me stay on top of breaking stories, and are great 'top-of-mind' way of making information accessible and easy to parse. The online briefings are great for getting me up to speed on particular issues where my knowledge is sketchy, backed up by the excellent website."

**Mark Cubey**, PRODUCER – SATURDAY MORNING WITH KIM HILL  
Radio New Zealand

"One of the things that's great about the SMC is its world view. The centre's ability to be able to tap into international resources and get views from experts no matter where they are has been invaluable."

**Mike McRoberts**, REPORTER AND ANCHOR,  
3 News, TV3

"The Science Media Centre is a great 'go to' for journalists who want an independent referral to Kiwi experts on local or international issues. They're across every story making the news, and readily supply contact details for experts in stories being worked on by reporters".

**Renee Graham**, ONE NEWS REPORTER  
Television New Zealand

"The Science Media Centre provides a valuable service highlighting newsworthy research and facilitating contact with experts. Our science coverage is richer as a result."

**Patrick Crewdson**, HEAD OF NEWS  
The Dominion Post

"The SMC's value has reached beyond offering advice, information, and connections to journalists researching stories and now acts as a valuable bridge between reporters and the scientific community. For this alone the SMC deserves credit in encouraging scientists to speak out about their work, confident that the centre has tapped into a pool of reliable and informed journalists."

**Andrew Stone**, FEATURES EDITOR  
New Zealand Herald

## Scientists

"The SMC has been a boon to journalism as it has (in the words of an editor of a major newspaper) stopped a lot of nonsense in the areas in which it has chosen to concentrate. By contacting people who actually know the facts, rather than people who feel they should be contacted because they have an opinion, the SMC has enabled a science voice. With the world and New Zealand crying out for reliable and credible information, the SMC has created and is now fulfilling a valuable role."

**Prof. Jacqueline Rowarth**, AGRICULTURAL SCIENTIST  
University of Waikato

"The Science Media Centre is what puts science in the media in New Zealand. The loss of specialist science journalists has been very noticeable over the last few years but thankfully the SMC have been able to bridge the gap between the new breed of general purpose journalists and scientists. Their ability to stay on top of breaking scientific issues is incredibly valuable to both the media and the scientific community. From a personal point of view, it was their establishment of sciblogs.co.nz that enabled me to become a commentator on the link between science and the economy."

**Prof. Shaun Hendy**, PROF. OF PHYSICS  
University of Auckland

"Our first port of call, when deciding that we needed to get our story out to the wider scientific community and the public in general, was the SMC. They provided a centralised location, with good facilities for hosting media (including radio, print and TV) as part of the press conference, and for distribution of the information further afield. The whole experience was positive, with the operational side run very smoothly, professionally, and with some humour! A very useful organisation and one which I would not hesitate to work with again".

**Dr Cornel de Ronde**, GEOLOGIST  
GNS Science

"New Zealand's future as a successful, sustainable, and healthy society depends on finding collective solutions to often complex problems as well as identifying promising opportunities and better ways of doing things. Science, in its broadest sense, is a core resource in all of these areas. The SMC seems like a highly cost-effective way of using the results of New Zealand and global scientific investment and making these resources more available to all of us."

**Prof. Michael Baker**, PROF. OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
University of Otago



## Science Media Centre

The SMC is an independent centre established by the Royal Society of New Zealand with funding from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Drawing on the expertise of 30 scientists through its Science Advisory Panel, the SMC helps journalists work more effectively with the scientific community. The SMC maintains one of the largest and most comprehensive databases of expert contacts on science topics in the country.

## Staff

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