

AUSTRALIAN SKEPTICS - NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2008 - ADELAIDE SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The 2008 Australian Skeptics National Conference is being held on Saturday 11th October and Sunday 12th October 2008 at the following times

Saturday: 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Sunday: 10.00 a.m. to 4.15 p.m.

Lunch 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. on both days.

COST OF ADMISSION:

The cost of attendance at the Conference is as follows: -

- Attendance on both Saturday and Sunday - \$110.00.
 - Attendance on one day, either Saturday or Sunday \$70.00
 - Attendance to any half-day \$35.00
 - Children under 12 free when accompanied by paying adult.
- Lunch and Morning and Afternoon teas are included in admission cost.

PAYMENT:

Pre-payment by bank cheque or money order made out to Skeptics (SA). Credit card payments can be made to Australian Skeptics.

Cash payments will only be accepted during both days of the conference.

BOOKINGS:

You can book through the Australian Skeptics secure shop at

<https://secure5.ozhosting.com/skeptics/shop/convention2008.htm>

LUNCH, MORNING AND AFTERNOON TEAS:

Lunch, Morning and Afternoon Teas will be provided on both days,

PUBLIC TRANSPORT:

Routes 122; 123 and 125 run west-east along Currie and Grenfell Street and Bartels Road Adelaide, and along Flinders Street Kent Town to The Parade, Norwood. Bus stops #2 and #3 are located respectively 50 m. west and 100 m. east of the Flinders Lodge Motel, while bus stop #9 is located in front of the Norwood Mall and the Town Hall.

LOCATION:

The Norwood Town Hall is at 175 The Parade, NORWOOD, 5067, on the north-west corner of George Street. Entry to the Concert Hall is off George Street; the Concert Hall is located on the 1st floor, with access by stairs or lift, (take lift to 1st level).

HANDICAPPED:

Direct access to the Concert Hall is available for handicapped by taking lift to Level 2. Front row seats will be reserved for handicapped persons and their partners, (please advise when booking).

PARKING:

There are two parking stations adjacent to the Norwood Town Hall. The council operated parking station located between Harris Street and Webbe Street. These two streets are one-way and run parallel to the Parade, (Harris Street - east to west and Webbe Street - west to east). Parking times are as follows: -

Ground Level (undercover) 2 hours parking;

Upper Level 1: Free all day parking;

Top Level: First 2 hours free, 2-3 hours \$1.00; 3-4 hours \$2.00; maximum cost for 4 hours or more — \$4.00.

Access to upper parking levels off Webbe Street ONLY

There is a parking station on the north-eastern corner of The Parade and George Street, however there is no free parking available in this station.

CONFERENCE DINNER:

In addition to the Conference itself, a special Conference Dinner has been arranged. Details of the dinner are as follows:

Location: The Exhibition Hall and Pod 3 located on the 1st Level of the Wine Centre, Hackney Road, Hackney.

Time: Pre dinner drinks will be available from the bar in Pod 3 area from 7.30 p.m. dinner will commence at 8.00 p.m. The Wine Discovery Journey, which includes displays and an interactive computer hologram display, taking you through the stages of winemaking from growing the grapes to the winemaking process, will be open until 8.00 p.m. for those who would like to tour the Wine Centre.

Meal: Roasted Butternut Pumpkin Soup, a choice of Grilled Chicken Breast with roasted pumpkin and sage, or Rosemary Baked Lamb with roasted chat potatoes, two side dishes, and White and Dark Chocolate Mousse for dessert.

Cost: \$60 per head. Drinks are not included.

Post-Prandial Entertainment:, Nicholas Tweedy, Magician.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Should you require any additional information contact Mr. Eddie on (08) 8272 5881 or check the Conference Web Site at www.skepticssa.org.au All mail to – Skeptics (SA) 52B Miller Street, Unley SA 5061

SATURDAY 11 TH OCTOBER			
#	Time	Speaker	Topic
1.	0900-0945	Debra Panizzon	Engaging Students in Science Education: A role for all in 'stemming the tide'
2.	0945-1030	Kylie Sturgess	On Sex, Smarts and Where The SkepGrrls At: An Investigation into Gender Differences and Belief In Weird Things
Morning Tea 1030 - 1100			
3.	1100-1145	Margaret Kittson	Brain Gym – A Cautionary Tale
4.	1145-1230	Mike McRae	Thinking for Sale: Creating a Critical Culture
Lunch 1230 - 1330			
5.	1330-1415	Rob Morrison & Deane Hutton	Earth, Air, Fire and Water: The elements of Energy.
6.	1415-1500	Richard Saunders	Mystery Investigators
Afternoon Tea 1500 - 1530			
7.	1530-1655	Flock of Dodos	DVD
8.	1655-1700	Flock of Dodos	Summation

SUNDAY 12 TH OCTOBER			
#	Time	Speaker	Topic
9.	1000-1130	Ian Plimer and Barry Brook	Climate Change Debate
10.	1130-11 50	Break (Note 20 min)	Committee prepares Questions submitted by audience
	1150-1230	Questions	
Lunch 1230 - 1330			
11.	1330-1415	Nigel Dobson-Keeffe	Rational Irrationality: The retreat of reason?
12.	1415-1500	Glen Smith	We are all human: Perception
Afternoon Tea 1500 - 1530			
13.	1530-1615	Loretta Marron	Jelly Beans and Other Drugs

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

Professor Barry Brook – Science Challenges the Skeptics on Climate Change:

Professor Barry Brook holds the Foundation Sir Hubert Wilkins Chair of Climate Change and is Director of the Research Institute for Climate Change and Sustainability at the University of Adelaide. He has published two books and over 120 peer-reviewed scientific papers, and regularly writes opinion pieces and popular articles for the media. He has received a number of distinguished awards in recognition of his research excellence, which addresses the topics of climate change, computational and statistical modeling and the synergies between human impacts on Earth systems.

In 2006, he was awarded the Australian Academy of Science Fenner Medal for distinguished research in biology and the Edgeworth David Medal by the Royal Society of New South Wales, and in 2007, the H.G. Andrewartha Medal by the Royal Society of South Australia and was listed by Cosmos as one of Australia's top 10 young scientists. His area of expertise is climate change, global change biology, and the synergies between different human impacts on Earth systems. Specific topics include analytical and computer simulation modeling for risk assessment of climate change impacts, understanding the relevance of past extinctions to the present biodiversity crisis, tropical ecology and wildlife management.

Dr Rob Morrison and Dr Deane Hutton - Earth Air, Fire and Water; the Elements of Energy.

Earth, Air, Fire and Water were once thought to be the four elements from which the world was made but, as we now know The chemical elements are very different from these four, but Earth, Fire, Air and Water remain dominant themes as we confront climate change, the need for energy, environmental degradation and much more. In this hands-on science show, Deane and Rob from the *Curiosity Show* will explore these four ancient elements and the part they have played in science and technology through the ages.

Richard Saunders – Mystery Investigators

Richard Saunders, TV Skeptic and educator, is known far and wide as an international author and origami expert with 30 books published. Richard was awarded Life Membership of Australian Skeptics in 2001 for his work on The Great Skeptic CD and since then he has created the Great Skeptic CD2, the Great Water Divining DVD and video. In his spare time, Richard is one of the team at the Mystery Investigators. Recently he has been seen on

national TV as the skeptical judge on 'The One'. He will talk about what it's like to reach out to the public especially in schools. This talk includes demonstrations and reports from paranormal investigations.

Debra Panizzon - Engaging Students in Science Education: A role for all in 'stemming the tide'

Associate Professor Debra Panizzon is the Deputy Director for the newly established Flinders Centre for Science Education in the 21st Century. International comparisons (e.g. PISA, 2006) of student achievement in science indicate that Australian students are outperforming many of their peers in OECD countries. However, student attitudinal surveys indicate that our students (along with those from other OECD countries) are not considering careers in science with many unconvinced about the value of science in their lives. Research in science education identifies the complexity of issues around student choice in science highlighting the important role that we can all play in 'stemming the tide of students' away from the enabling sciences.

Kylie Sturgess - On Sex, Smarts and Where The SkepGrrls At: An Investigation into Gender Differences and Belief In Weird Things:

Callisto: "Why are men always more skeptic than women?"

Robert M: "We're smarter. Not naive."

Does Yahoo Answers really supply the answer to this question? After seven years teaching at an all-girls' school and studying superstitions for an M.Ed, Kylie Sturgess investigates the contribution of women to skepticism and some of the unanswered questions that may lead to such persistent stereotypes.

Kylie Sturgess credits her childhood enthusiasm for the long-running consumer affairs program 'The Investigators' on Australian television for her life-long interest in consumer education, media claims and how we are led to believe 'weird things'. A former high-school teacher turned educational researcher, she is currently working on a survey with Dr Martin Bridgstock on paranormal, pseudoscientific and conspiracy theory beliefs.

Loretta Marron - Jelly Beans and Other Drugs:

Our 2007 Australian Skeptic of the Year, Loretta Marron, has had another action packed year in her fight for improved consumer protection. Also known as the 'Jelly Bean Lady', Loretta has continued to live up to her reputation as the 'Terror of the TGA'. Now considered one of Australia's highest profile informed consumers, this retired scientist and businesswoman has successfully targeted and exposed many dodgy health products and practices.

Taking on the billion-dollar Therapeutic Goods Industry, the Government, Supermarkets and Pharmacies, Loretta frequently appears in newspapers, on television and radio and is a regular contributor to a variety of magazines and websites.

A diagnosis of cancer in 2003 gave her first hand experience of the scope of misinformation that contributes to the exploitation of our most vulnerable Australians. From her first contact with the Skeptics, when she asked for help to develop what has become the world wide No. 4 health directory (www.healthinformation.com.au), we join her once again to share her on-going exploits as she continues to take on the challenge of providing good consumer health information. In her presentation to the conference Loretta continues to crank up her fight against dodgy health products and practices; now published in the Medical Journal of Australia she has taken on a variety of new projects, which she will share with you.

Margaret Kittson – Brain Gym: A Cautionary Tale:

Margaret has over 30 year's experience as a teacher and librarian in a range of government and private schools, predominantly in Queensland. Back in the late 1970s, while working as a librarian at a large metropolitan high school, she had a number of run-ins with fundamentalist Christians, biblical literalists who tried their hardest not only to get 'creation science' material placed in the school's library, but to get what was already there relocated to a science number. For those familiar with Dewey, this means somewhere in the 500s. She had placed their material in the 200s (the division for religion), specifically at 213, the number for 'creation'. This had not gone down at all well with these people.

Things that upset her are people who think they know everything about education and teaching because they once went to school; people who believe that there are 'magic bullet' solutions to complex issues in educating children out there which just need to be imposed

on to recalcitrant teachers. Her presentation at this conference is inspired by a first hand experience with one such purported 'magic bullet' solution the Brain Gym a subtle form of Applied Kinesiology.

Nigel Dobson-Keeffe - "Rational Irrationality: The retreat of reason?"

Many people in the contemporary western world sees rationality as a desirable method of thinking or even a pinnacle in conscious thought. It is characterised by truth and logic and implemented by the application of considered, reasoned thought. However recent research is now showing that most of our decision making ability might not really be this well constructed. When tested we find that most humans do not make decisions as expected according to a rational model. Much of our decision making is made at a subconscious level and can be corrupted by other internal and external information we are not directly aware of. These biases in our thinking will be the topic of this talk with examples taken directly from the participation of the audience.

Ian Plimer - Human-Induced Climate Change: A Load Of Hot Air:

Professor of Mining Geology, The University of Adelaide and Emeritus Professor of Earth Sciences, The University of Melbourne Prof Plimer will look at some issues of Global Warming, arguing that climate change is a constant process on a dynamic planet. Climate changes in geological, archaeological and historical time frames have been far more rapid and greater than slight changes measured in modern times. Furthermore, over time the atmospheric CO₂ content has been up to 25 times higher than now. During recent interglacials, temperature and sea level were far higher than at present. The rates of previous climate changes were far greater than anything observed today. Previous climate change took place over decades to centuries; extinctions took place with coolings, life flourished with warming and humans, plants and animals adapted. Previous great changes were buffered by natural systems and tipping points and runaway greenhouse are unsubstantiated myths.

Glen Smith – We are all Human: Perception

Dr Glen Smith is a psychologist who has researched, taught and published in cognition and perception for decades. We are all human, so we all understand what humans do, don't we? But there are some surprising things in the way we interpret the world that show we actually make a lot of 'errors' in what we see and hear and understand. Some of these remain a problem even when we 'know' what they are. These are illusions, discrepancies between the 'real' world of physics and the results of our perceptual-cognitive system. This presentation will demonstrate a range of these effects. While they are fun and fascinating, knowing about them can help us avoid being too rigid and error prone in our thinking.

BOOK RELEASE

Announcing the release of –
A SKEPTICAL LOOK AT ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES AND BELIEFS.

This publication by Laurie Eddie examines a number of popular alternative therapies and beliefs. Its objective is to explain the mystical origins of a number of alternative therapies most of which have a basis in the Vitalistic theory of a "divine" or heavenly life-force, which, it is claimed, when it becomes blocked, produces ill-health. Most alternative therapists claim that, at such times, it needs to be "readjusted" using their particular form of alternative therapy

Subjects covered include - Acupuncture: Applied Kinesiology: Ayurvedic Medicine: Bach Flower Remedies: Colonic Irrigation; Crop Circles: Crystals and Gemstones: Homeopathy: Magnetism: Naturopathy: Numerology: Suggestion and the Placebo Response: Rei-ki; Reverse Speech: Therapeutic Touch; and Vitalism and the Origins of Magical, Mystical Energies and a host of other useful information.

This publication will be available for purchase at the Conference, price to be announced.