



AUSTRALIAN SKEPTICS' A\$100,000 CHALLENGE

Skeptics' challenge

Since 1980, Australian Skeptics has issued a challenge to people who claim to have extraordinary powers, to demonstrate their ability under proper observing conditions. The first person to do so will receive a great deal of recognition and prestige as well as meeting the requirements for the awarding of A\$100,000.

Why do we offer the Prize?

We make this offer because we are sincere about seeking out the truth of claims that might be described as paranormal or that confront accepted laws of science. We see many such claims made by professed psychics, healers, witnesses to paranormal events and those selling devices which do the apparently 'improbable' or even 'impossible' (ie defy scientific laws). If there really is a way to generate free energy or read minds, to communicate with extraterrestrials or to tell the future, we want to tell the world, and in our own way give the claimant proper recognition.

On the other hand, if a claim is proved to be unfounded or fraudulent,

we would reserve the right to expose this situation so that clients do not waste their money and time on a product or service that fails (and can only ever fail) to deliver what is claimed for it.

In either case, we think the public deserves and has the right to know the truth. Consequently, the Skeptics' Challenge is a genuine and serious undertaking, and the \$100,000 prize a genuine offer.

What will qualify?

Do you have psychic or paranormal powers? We are not referring to the performance of stage magic (conjuring) or illusion – while very convincing when skillfully done, this skill does not challenge known scientific principles.

The A\$100,000 prize is for successfully demonstrating any phenomenon which really lies outside the current knowledge of science. This includes paranormal powers like extrasensory perception, telepathy, telekinesis, divining for water or metals, clairvoyance and predicting the future. Also included are miracle cures not supported by any known theory, such as copper and other bracelets, homeopathy and therapeutic touch.

We also include things on the fringes of science that are not yet explained but might turn out to have a physical cause, such as energy from nothing, cold fusion, chi energy, fuel savers and electromagnetic radiation protectors.

How do you apply?

Our aim is simply to test the phenomenon under proper observing conditions, so that everyone can have confidence in the result.

Firstly, you should contact the [Challenge Coordinator](mailto:challenge@skeptics.com.au), by email (challenge@skeptics.com.au) or in writing (PO Box 20, Beecroft 2119) to identify yourself and clearly state what your ability is. This should include something that is not explained by simple means, for example if predicting an earthquake you would need the specific date, place and intensity. For palm readers, generalities like “you have an outgoing personality” are not sufficient, but “you have 3 sons and 2 daughters” would be more convincing. A reference from someone who has seen your powers would help, in order to screen applicants who merely think they could do something.

We would also like to hear about your background: perhaps you give readings at fairs and charge a particular amount; you might have developed or be selling a particular product. It would be useful if you could include links to a website or copies of media clippings, and any other such evidence.

All evidence provided will be followed up prior to any test to assess their bona fides.

Note that Challenge tests will only be conducted in Australia with claimants who are residents of Australia. This is for logistical reasons, and because there are other challenges in other parts of the world.

Test Protocol

Firstly, a protocol (test method) will be negotiated between the claimant and Australian Skeptics. We have no restrictions except to ensure confidence in the result, and with manageable logistics.

In the case of psychic or paranormal abilities, the claimant might not expect to always be right for every prediction. Then there must be an agreed threshold for success – for example, 80% of trials – to avoid inconclusive outcomes.

A sound protocol will guard against false positives (showing ability where there really is none). With our reputation and challenge reward at stake, we aim for odds of a million to one. This will also guard against false negatives (ie rejecting your ability if it is really there).

For physical devices such as fuel or energy savers, then our emphasis will be on valid scientific methods.

We will undertake a preliminary test so that we understand the specific skills or claim being made, to assess specific circumstances which might arise, to formulate acceptable success rates and, frankly, to eliminate from the Challenge process those claims and claimants who cannot show any noticeable, significant or measurable ability. This can be regarded as similar to a pretrial or 'discovery' stage of a judicial trial.

Once there is an indication that there is a measurable and significant ability, we will develop a more elaborate protocol for a trial. A successful applicant at this stage will be awarded the A\$100,000 prize.

Running the Test

You will be welcome to bring observers and supporters. However, there may be conditions applied to their involvement or presence to prevent any unwarranted interference.

Australian Skeptics will, where appropriate, obtain an independent adjudicator to audit the results.

We will record or film the test to ensure a reliable record.

Media may be invited to film the test if mutually agreed.

If the challenger is found to be cheating, the test is immediately terminated.

If you are successful, you will be awarded A\$100,000.

The results of this test, whether successful or not, will be published in [the Skeptic](#), the magazine of Australian Skeptics.

What if I live interstate?

Most of our testing committee members are based in Sydney.

If you live elsewhere, there are several options. A self-test at home, assisted or witnessed by a friend, would be a start.

We have colleagues in most capitals who may be able to run or witness a preliminary test.

Our committee travel occasionally, so that may be an option for a preliminary test by one or more Challenge committee members.

Ultimately, for a final test, you would need to travel to Sydney at your own expense.

Notes on the challenge

We restrict claims to those made in Australia by residents of Australia. This is simply because there are other prizes offered in other countries, and the logistics of a claimant travelling from overseas would be prohibitive.

Australian Skeptics is a not-for-profit organisation, so any costs involved have to be borne by the applicant, unless we agree to other arrangements.

If you would like to receive more information about the Challenge, please e-mail the [Challenge Coordinator](#) or contact your local branch. See the [contact](#) page on Australian Skeptics' [website](#) for email addresses.

The A\$20,000 Spotter's Fee

Australian Skeptics offers a A\$20,000 spotter's fee to anyone who nominates a person who successfully completes the Australian Skeptics' Challenge. In that case, the challenger will receive A\$80,000 if successful.

If you know someone who claims to have special powers, we encourage you to alert them to our Challenge, and let us know that you have done so. You should be very skeptical of people who make extraordinary claims, but who are not willing to be tested.

Specific Information for Diviners

You will appreciate that a full-scale field test of divining for underground water or mineral deposits would require much bore drilling, be very expensive and even then may be inconclusive. So some smaller steps are in order.

If the claim is divining for water or metal, it would be well worth your while to buy our Water Divining DVD, which shows our previous divining tests.

We will send you a Divining Self-Test to perform with an assistant, because we have had many who have not tested themselves and fail at the first blind test.

If you wish to proceed, we will then negotiate for a simple test – such as our demonstration test of divining, say, water bottles or minerals under plastic buckets or similar coverings. This would indicate that a test is worth or not worth pursuing.

Australian Skeptics in the past has carried out outdoor field tests involving water flowing in pipes, buried in bottles or bottles under buckets. You can view these in the DVD. Due to the resources required, we only carry these out every 10 years or so.

My contact doesn't want to be tested — is there anything I can do?

Many potential claimants, such as psychics, often see themselves as helping the community, and think that accepting money is improper for someone in their position. Others think that Australian Skeptics aims to ridicule them or their powers. Another fear they might have is that their livelihood might be in jeopardy if they fail the test.

To address some of these issues, the prize may be distributed in any way the successful challenger sees fit: to a trust, a charity or some other person. There is no need for the challenger to come in to contact with the money at all if he or she so chooses.

The money is offered in the genuine hope that we are able to advance the investigation into claims of the paranormal and the fringes of science. Australian Skeptics does not seek to embarrass or ridicule anyone.

But if the person nominated does not want to be tested, there is little that you can do about it. Given the above, however, you might consider why that might be. If there are other specific concerns about the challenge, call and speak with us. We will do all we can to help.

Isn't it just a publicity stunt?

It is clear that publicity for Australian Skeptics is involved, but we are more interested in actually seeing a demonstration of abilities that challenge science. We reserve the right to publicise the existence, method and results of the formal test for the Challenge, but all other media contact is by agreement among the parties involved.

Contacts

General information on Australian Skeptics is available at <http://www.skeptics.com.au>. General information on the challenge is available at <http://www.skeptics.com.au/features/prize/> .

Applications for the challenge should be directed to:

- Email: challenge@skeptics.com.au
- Mail: Australian Skeptics, PO Box 20, Beecroft NSW 2119
- Telephone: +61 2 8094 1894.