



The Australian Skeptics Guide to

DOWSING

Dowsing, (also known as Divining) is widely practised in Australia.

Dowsers claim the ability to detect useful substances in the ground using processes which are not able to be explained by current scientific principles.

The most frequently dowsed substance in drought-prone Australia is water. Many Australians can claim a friend or relative who is a water-diviner.

Australian Skeptics have long been interested in dowsing. It clearly lies within the range of paranormal activities which come under scrutiny. We offer a sum of money, (currently \$110,000) to anyone who can demonstrate paranormal ability of any kind. Our only stipulation is that candidates must pass a proper scientific test, the protocols of which have been agreed upon by all parties before the test commences. Most acceptors of this challenge have been water-diviners; probably because they are genuine people who believe in their abilities, and are as interested in being tested as we are to test them.

Australian Skeptics have staged several such tests since the early 1980s. Dowsers have been invited to try their skill by discriminating between randomly placed containers which either did or did not contain water. These tests were conducted on the "double-blind" principle: neither the dowsers nor the people conducting the test actually knew what each container held. Each dowser was free to employ whichever techniques or range of methods seemed appropriate to them.

In hundreds of tests thus performed, no-one has yet demonstrated a statistically significant ability to "divine" water. The physical set-up of each test has been open to criticism, with modifications being employed in later tests where possible and fair.

True Skeptics will always allow for the possibility that "there may be something in it"; however the success of dowsing has yet to be demonstrated, and a physical basis for the validity or methodology of dowsing has yet to be established.

There seems no doubt that some water-diviners are good at finding water. Is this because they have a gift beyond the scope of current science, or do they just have well-developed skills of observation and are consummate practical geologists?

If this topic interests you, we invite you to delve further. Ask about The Australian Skeptics Divining Video or DVD.

These links lead to sites which are either skeptical to or supportive of dowsing.

<http://www.skepdic.com/dowsing.html>

http://www.keypoint.com.au/~skeptics/Mitta_Mitta_Muster

<http://www.randi.org/jr/011102.html>

<http://www.dowse.com/dowsing.html>

<http://www.drilshop.com/holes/bates1.html>

http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/items/article/item_6682.html

<http://www.abc.net.au/goulburnmurray/stories/s712632.htm>

www.skeptics.com.au

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