

# Australasian Science

australasianscience.com.au

**EDITOR/PUBLISHER:** Guy Nolch

**conSCIENCE EDITOR:** Peter Pockley

**WRITERS:** Stephen Luntz, Peter Pockley,  
Simon Grose

**SUBEDITING:** Guy Nolch, Sally Woollett

**CARTOONS:** Simon Kneebone

**PATRONS:** *Australasian Science* is supported by Nobel Laureate Professor Peter Doherty and renowned science broadcaster Robyn Williams, representing excellence in science and its communication.

## EDITORIAL CONTACTS

Control Publications P/L, Box 2155,  
Wattletree Rd PO, VIC 3145, Australia  
Phone: (03) 9500 0015 Fax: (03) 9500 0255  
E-mail: science@control.com.au  
Web: australasianscience.com.au

**ADVERTISING:** Joanna Dettl

Phone: (07) 3511 6246 Fax: (07) 3511 6427  
Email: advertise@control.com.au  
Rates are at australasianscience.com.au

## SUBSCRIPTION PRICES

\$64 (individuals) including GST  
\$99 (schools) including GST  
\$209 (institutions) including GST.  
Refer to the form opposite for details.

**BACKISSUES** are available for \$8 each (incl. GST) from australasianscience.com.au or see the inside back cover.

**PUBLISHED** 10 times per year. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the publisher.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editor welcomes original articles of interest to the general public written by qualified writers on fields within their expertise. Writers' guidelines are available at australasianscience.com.au under "Contact". Prospective authors should submit an abstract to the Editor prior to submitting a manuscript.

© 2007 Control Publications Pty Ltd (ABN 46 006 591 304). All rights reserved. Authorisation to mechanically or electronically copy the contents of this publication is granted by the publisher to users registered with Copyright Agency Ltd (CAL). Special requests should be addressed to Control Publications Pty Ltd.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Gordon & Gotch Ltd

**PRINTING:** BPA Print Group, 11 Evans St, Burwood, Vic. 3125, Australia.

**PRINT POST APPROVED** PP 331379/0032

**ISSN** 1442-679X \*RRP \$7.95 incl. GST

At its national convention in November, the Australian Skeptics named science writer and broadcaster Dr Karl Kruszelnicki as Skeptic of the Year for promoting evidence-based thinking (see *Naked Skeptic*, p.46). "Dr Karl" came to national prominence when he landed a regular spot on ABC radio, which had pioneered science in the Australian media in 1964 with the appointment of Dr Peter Pockley.

However, the ABC is already an early contender for the Skeptics' next Bent Spoon Award after making the extraordinary decision to screen *Psychic Investigators*, a weekly program about the supernatural that has taken over the timeslot that has been occupied for the past two decades by the science show *Catalyst* and its previous incarnations.

This is an extraordinary insult to the intelligence of the public, let alone the ABC's own scientifically qualified and talented science reporters and producers on TV and radio.

Ironically, the title *Psychic Investigators* is similar to that of a former TV series by famed magician, James Randi, whose program debunked the psychics' claims to extraordinary out-of-body powers.

The direct swap of *Catalyst* for *Psychic Investigators* is a significant pointer to the quality of the ABC under newly self-crowned "Editor-in-Chief" Mark Scott, who came to the ABC as a broadcasting novice and rapidly nailed his colours to the mast as managing director for anti-bias. Scott oversaw the scheduling of *Psychic Investigators* for 11 weeks from 29 November.

Before being appointed to head the ABC, Scott was Fairfax Press's representative on the Board of the Australian Science Media Centre, which is dedicated to improving the quality of science reportage by emphasising the critical importance of reliable evidence. Clearly, he learned nothing from rubbing shoulders with real scientists.

*Psychic Investigators* is further evidence of a politically driven agenda to introduce "balance" to the ABC. Earlier the ABC had come under fire for axing the *The Glasshouse*, a panel-based satire that had won a large audience but was criticised by the government for perceived bias against it.

The ABC's policy on balance is a slippery slope. For every science program does there need to be a balancing pseudoscience program? For every report on conventional medicine does there need to be one on alternatives like homeopathy? And for every government statement on terrorism will there need to be one from Al-Qaeda's point of view?

Where does the ABC's balancing act draw the line?

## COVER STORY

This edition of *Australasian Science* focuses on the mind, from "alien hands" that move independently of conscious control to parasites that affect people's promiscuity, IQ and likelihood of being in a car accident. This edition also examines the safety of antidepressant use by children, a potential treatment for stroke, and the effectiveness of fish oils to treat hyperactive children.



Jeff Metzger / iStockphoto