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ISCAST is a network of people, from students to distinguished academics, exploring the interface of science, technology, and Christian faith.

News Release from ISCAST

The following news release was distributed to media outlets, theological colleges and churches late last month.

Australia's first "Science, Faith and Apologetics" conference will see 40 national and international presenters grappling with difficult questions Christians face.

The public event in Brisbane from March 23 to 25 will help Christians wrestle with challenges to their faith and enable them to engage in conversation with sceptics.

One of the keynote speakers is NASA astrophysicist **Jennifer Wiseman** (photo on the right), ex-president of the US network of Christians in Science. Dr Wiseman, who has a comet named after her, is also speaking at the World Science Festival Brisbane about her work as senior scientist on the Hubble Space Telescope.



Astronomer Jennifer Wiseman

The speaker line-up also includes cosmologist **Ken Freeman** who is partly responsible for discovering dark matter in the universe. **Ravi Zacharias Ministries** will be represented by three speakers; **Natasha Moore** from the Centre for Public Christianity will speak, and well-known economist and member of the Reserve Bank board **Ian Harper** will speak on "Economics in the service of God".

The conference is being run by ISCAST: Christians in Science and Technology which has a long history of tackling such questions. Past internationally-known speakers include theologian/apologist and scientist Alister McGrath, physicist-priest John Polkinghorne, and philosopher Nancey Murphy.

ISCAST Director, Rev. Dr Chris Mulherin says that "in an increasingly secular society, it is vital that people defend the Christian faith. There is no conflict between Christianity and the best of human knowledge. Yet we so often hear people say: 'I believe in reason and science, so I couldn't be a Christian.' That is plain wrong, and we have to overcome it."

Chris says, "There are so many issues that believers and non-believers wrestle with: for example, 'If God is good, why are bad things happening to me?' or 'How do I respond to Australia's assisted dying debate' or 'How do miracles and science fit together'. So we organised this public conference with a host of incredible speakers and topics to help people think through these sorts of questions."

The conference offers scholarships to students and has a "meet a mentor" program for younger people to hear advice from experienced people in their fields.

Chris says the conference is aimed at Christians in general from students to pastors, teachers to university professors. "In fact," he says, "it is for any Christian who wants to think hard about the way Christian faith relates to the culture and issues of our day. And we are particularly keen to get students along, because they often face hard questions from teachers and lecturers who are dismissive of the Christian faith."

Details of the conference, including speakers and talks, as well as student scholarships are available at www.ISCASTCOSAC.org. Childcare is available and **Earlybird** pricing ends **February 14th**.

In this Issue:

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www.iscast.org

COSAC 2018: "The Heavens Declare ..."

23 - 25 March 2018, Brisbane

Conference on Science and Christianity
Cosmology – Theology – History – Apologetics – Ethics – Philosophy

ISCAST
CHRISTIANS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

News Items

News about the interface between science and Christianity, and of significance to the ISCAST community. Your submissions are most welcome.



String Theory, God and the Limits of Science

Michael Strauss, particle physicist and Christian, explains string theory (the most popular attempt at the physicists' 'theory of everything') for the layperson. Amongst other things, string theory has been criticised for not even being science. [Read more...](#)



Scientists Don't Hate Religious People

In the span of less than a decade, social scientist Elaine Howard Ecklund's research has ostensibly supported complete opposite observations in the ongoing "wars" (real or imagined) between science and religion. [Read more...](#)



Why is M-theory the Leading Candidate for Theory of Everything?

The mother of all string theories passes a litmus test that, so far, no other candidate theory of quantum gravity has been able to match. [Read more...](#)



The Problem of Understanding Consciousness

In this 12 min video David Bentley Hart discusses the problem of understanding consciousness; materialism (or physicalism) just doesn't have the resources to explain the most overwhelming reality that we all experience. Those ISCASTians who have heard or read ISCAST President Alan Gijsbers' reflections on the self will be interested in this short video. [Read more...](#)



The Illusionist

Daniel Dennett's latest book marks five decades of majestic failure to explain consciousness. [Read more...](#)



Pick Up a Book and Share it With a Child: It's the Key to Success in an Uncertain Future

Parents often ask me what they ought to do to prepare their children for a future they can scarcely imagine, in a world that's changing before their eyes. [Read more...](#)



Black Holes are Simpler than Forests and Science has its Limits

Albert Einstein said that the 'most incomprehensible thing about the Universe is that it is comprehensible'. He was right to be astonished. [Read more...](#)



Why Philosophy is so Important in Science Education

Each semester, I teach courses on the philosophy of science to undergraduates at the University of New Hampshire. Most of the students take my courses to satisfy general education requirements, and most of them have never taken a philosophy class before. [Read more...](#)



Crispr Therapeutics Plans its First Clinical Trial for Genetic Disease

In late 2012, French microbiologist Emmanuelle Charpentier approached a handful of American scientists about starting a company, a Crispr company. [Read more...](#)



Why Your Brain Hates Other People

As a kid, I saw the 1968 version of *Planet of the Apes*. As a future primatologist, I was mesmerized. Years later I discovered an anecdote about its filming: At lunchtime, the people playing chimps and those playing gorillas ate in separate groups.

It's been said, "There are two kinds of people in the world: those who divide the world into two kinds of people and those who don't." In reality, there's lots more of the former. [Read more...](#)



Southern Cross Star Given New Name to Recognise Aboriginal Astronomy

Until last month, the smallest star in the Southern Cross had the no-nonsense title of Epsilon Crucis – literally the fifth-brightest star of the Cross.

No longer. The International Astronomical Union has announced it will be given a new, additional common name: Ginan, the name it has been called for thousands of years by the Wardaman people of the Northern Territory. [Read more...](#)

No access to the internet and want more information? Contact the ISCAST office (see back page) and we will forward the full item to you. Postage and handling fees apply.

Books and Resources

Books and articles relevant to the interface between science and Christianity.



Monotheism as an Explanatory Key for the Rise of Science

Author
Rev. Dr Mark Worthing

In this draft paper, ISCAST fellow, Rev. Dr Mark Worthing argues that while there are various views about what cultural and theological context was responsible for the rise of science it is monotheism more generally that is the key explanatory factor.

Extract

In the contemporary intellectual climate, it is often presumed that those with a belief in God must overcome this hindrance in order to work in the sciences, and must be especially careful not to let their presuppositions sway their research. And it is further assumed that science and research are the antithesis of faith and that religion, especially Christianity, has been a hindrance to the development of modern science that has had to be overcome. [Read more...](#)



Of Those to Whom Much is Given, Much Will be Required

Author
John Pilbrow

John Pilbrow, ISCAST Fellow and former President, has been cataloguing and compiling the ISCAST archives. To many within ISCAST, his paper given at COSAC 2007 is pivotal, changing the way ISCAST saw itself and ushering a new future for ISCAST. This paper has recently been loaded to the ISCAST website.

Abstract

This lecture will firstly provide a brief historical overview of the science-faith landscape covering the last 50 years or so and, secondly, an assessment of the particular contribution of the scientist-theologians whose writings have presented a challenge to Christian thought and theology during that time. [Read more...](#)



Some Reflections on Teaching Science, Religion and Thinking About the Big Questions with Year 5 Students

It is usually towards the end of Year 4 that students begin to ask me various questions concerning the creation of this world. How did God create the world? Did it begin with a big bang? What did God make humans out of? How does God heal people? How old is God because I think he must be 14 million years? Of course this last student has had some conversation or read about the age of the earth somewhere and put together the age of the earth with the age of God. [Read more...](#)



Teaching Science in Christian Schools

ISCAST-CASE* (Sydney)
Lecture at New College,

UNSW - Monday 23rd October 2017 at 7.30 pm

Speakers

Dr John Collier and Dr David Ruys

Abstract

The jobs that your students will have in a decade don't exist yet. This statement, or something like it, is commonly heard by teachers in professional development sessions. The world is rapidly changing, and nowhere more so than in science and technology. Robotics and artificial intelligence may render many current jobs obsolete. [Read more...](#)



New ISCAST Book to be Launched at COSAC 2018

The Faith-Science Interface in Australia:

A History of ISCAST 1987-2017 by John Pilbrow

To celebrate ISCAST's 30th birthday, Prof. John Pilbrow, ISCAST Fellow and former President, has prepared a history of ISCAST. He has gone through the minutes of all the board meetings, interviewed many of the key players over the years and thoroughly documented how we got to where we are today.

This history has been compiled into a book which will be launched at COSAC.

To pre-order your copy, please complete the form [here](#) or contact the office. The book costs \$15 plus postage and handling. [Read more...](#)



Allan Day's Notes on Science and Christian Belief

Author
Prof. Allan J Day

In conjunction with Bruce Craven and John Pilbrow, Allan Day compiled extensive notes on science and Christian belief.

Extract

Over the last decade or so an increasing interest in the relationship between science and religion has developed. This has resulted in the proliferation of courses in science and religion at many tertiary institutions and the appointment of senior academics to positions in this area. For example, Oxford University appointed its first Professor of Science and Religion within the Faculty of Theology in 1999.

The interest in this area has also been stimulated by the active financial support of the John Templeton Foundation. The Foundation awarded 100 Course Awards annually internationally for courses in Science and Religion over a five year period from about 1998 to 2002. [Read more...](#)

*Do you have an article to submit to Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology?
Contact the editorial team via www.iscast.org/journalpage*

Event News

Victoria



ISCAST Vic: Fire in the Belly

When: Saturday, February 17, 2018 - 18:30

Where: Camberwell - Contact the office for details.

Save the Date

ISCAST Vic is organising a Fire in the Belly event to take place on Saturday 17 February.

The evening will start at 6:30pm with a "Bring Your Own meal to share" and this will be followed at 8:00pm with the presentations and discussions.

Please contact ISCAST Vic by email or phone 03 9254 1045 for further detail.

[Read more...](#)

ISCAST conference speaker line up announced!

The impressive line up of speakers and topics for ISCAST's March conference (COSAC 2018) is on the [presenters page](#) of the COSAC website.

The speakers range from eminent Australians to New Zealanders and our special guest from the USA. They range from apologists to philosophers, from scientists and historians to theologians. But they all have one thing in common: they all long to make the good news of Jesus Christ relevant to a world that is increasingly alienated from its Christian heritage. Come to COSAC to be stimulated, to be encouraged, and to think hard about connecting faith and Aussie culture.

[Book now](#) before the 200 seats are taken!



Earlybird bookings close on February 14th.

And whether you can be at COSAC or not, please do [download the flyer](#) to pass on to church leaders and to people you know who might benefit from COSAC.

Visit <http://iscastcosac.org/> to learn more about COSAC 2018!

Other News

Look us up on:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ISCAST

Twitter: [@ISCAST_Oz](https://twitter.com/ISCAST_Oz)

Tune in to our [Podcast](#)

Keep an eye on the website for events
www.iscast.org

Digital Subscription and Renewals

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I would like to know more about being associated with ISCAST

Annual Subscription by post: \$22 (Credit Cards add \$2 processing fee) **Total Due: \$** _____

Contact the ISCAST office for payment details.

This is an official organ of ISCAST (The Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology, a not-for-profit organisation registered in New South Wales, Australia).

It is published quarterly in both hard copy and digital formats. It includes news items of relevance to both the ISCAST community and to the engagement of science and Christianity in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

It also includes abstracts of articles submitted to *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*, ISCAST's online journal, and the latest information of events hosted by ISCAST chapters around Australia and New Zealand.

Items published on the ISCAST website and in this Digest explore the interaction between science and the Christian faith and will be published to foster the discussions and debate. ISCAST cannot endorse any of the opinions expressed here.

Details of events published will be correct as at the date of publication but you are encouraged to check the website or with the relevant contact before the event.

Hard copy versions of the Digest are available at the cost of \$22 pa and subscriptions can be arranged by contacting the ISCAST office.

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