



## **Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO**

Senator for New South Wales

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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#### **“Life on Mars” at the Sydney Opera House boosts involvement in 2017 National Science Week**

The University of New South (UNSW) will bring the fun and discovery of National Science Week to Kingsford Smith after receiving \$20,000 from the Australian Government to deliver “Life on Mars” at the Sydney Opera House.

UNSW's Big Questions Institute will present a series of talks at the Opera House to showcase the latest scientific thinking on the origin of life on earth. The project will have a special focus on how this research applies to NASA's Mars 2020 Rover project. The talks will involve scientists and researchers from UNSW, NASA and other pre-eminent institutions across the globe.

Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos AO has congratulated UNSW for its efforts to inspire people about science, technology and innovation during 2017's national celebration of science, running from 12-20 August.

“I'm thrilled that UNSW will be giving people an opportunity to participate in National Science Week this August with their project, which will allow this exciting research to reach a wider audience,” Senator Sinodinos said. “The talks will be delivered in an accessible manner so that adults and children alike will be able to engage.”

“It's also notable that 2017 sees National Science Week celebrate two decades of successfully involving people from all walks of life in the wonder of science.

“This longevity not only shows that people are fascinated by the science in our everyday lives, but also proves that anyone can participate in science activities, regardless of their background, age or location.”

“Life on Mars” is among 39 projects chosen nationally to receive funding in a \$500,000 grant round announced this week by Senator Sinodinos in his capacity as Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science.

“These initiatives will give people in metropolitan, regional and remote areas opportunities to meet scientists, do science, discuss hot topics and celebrate the contribution of Australian science to society, culture and economy,” Senator Sinodinos said.

“Science is critical to our wellbeing, prosperity and international competitiveness, so engaging the community and equipping young people with future-focused knowledge and skills is vital.”

Science Week activities are run right across the country to help to inspire Australia's next generation of scientists and innovators and increase community awareness of science in everyday life.

Other projects supported by this year's grants include pop-up science festivals, an astronomical observatory on wheels, an exploration of innovations for a Future Earth, and virtual reality journeys to the microscopic world inside a plant cell or to the outer reaches of the galaxy.

Several of the activities funded emphasise inclusivity, like science workshops designed for people with intellectual disabilities, sessions for people with different cultural and language backgrounds, coding skills workshops for youth on the autism spectrum, and DIY science film nights for even the remotest locations.

National Science Week 2017 will also feature a suite of Indigenous science initiatives and others highlighting female role models and encouraging girls to participate in science.

First held in 1997, National Science Week has become one of Australia's largest festivals. Last year a staggering 1.3 million people participated in over 1800 events and activities, including local science festivals, music and comedy shows, expert panel discussions, interactive hands-on displays, open days and online activities.

More details about National Science Week which will run from 12-20 August are available at [www.scienceweek.net.au](http://www.scienceweek.net.au)

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