



# AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PRETORIA

## MEDIA RELEASE



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CENTRE FOR  
THE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF SCIENCE

27 February 2014

### **Australian science show encourages African kids to reach for the stars**

Can you really launch marshmallows out of a vacuum cleaner, make rockets from common household items, or understand the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) telescope using a leafblower and ping pong balls? Audiences will need to prepare themselves for some seriously mind-bending science as *The Big Aussie Science ShowOff* explodes and experiments its way across southern Africa.

With the support of the Australian High Commission in Pretoria, the Australian National University's Dr Graham Walker will be presenting *The Big Aussie Science ShowOff* across South Africa and Botswana between 10 March and 2 April, as part of a broader program including additional activities in Malawi and Zambia. With lots of audience involvement, laughs, learning and exciting experiments, Dr Walker's action-packed show is a celebration of the fun in science. While in southern Africa, he will also run a series of capacity building and training workshops for science centre and university staff members, along with public workshops on the Square Kilometre Array (SKA).

The Australian High Commissioner to South Africa, HE Mr Graeme Wilson, said Australia was proud to be encouraging young African minds to get excited about science, and to see how science-based education could shape their future careers.

"Science shows and hands-on workshops are a fun, interactive way for people to learn about some of the science behind the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope project, which is one of the largest scientific endeavours in history. The SKA will be co-located in South Africa and Australia and will include hundreds of thousands of radio telescopes in three unique configurations. It will enable astronomers to monitor the sky in unprecedented detail and thousands of times faster than any system currently in existence. This will hopefully lead to exciting new discoveries, including about the origin of the universe", said Mr Wilson.

Dr Graham Walker has been performing science shows for the past 13 years and is one of two people in the world with a PhD in science show performance. His unique brand of high-energy delivery and amazing science regularly thrills audiences around the world. *The Big Aussie Science ShowOff* project is a joint initiative of The Australian National University, Questacon (Australia's National Science and Technology Centre) and a number of science centres and universities across South Africa and Botswana.

"South Africa is one of my favourite countries in the world to perform my science shows. The audiences really show their appreciation, especially the children. Another aim of this visit is to share some innovative ways to do science education that work well in Australia and to see how we can adapt these methods to work in Africa. I'm looking forward to working together and learning from each other," said Dr Walker.

See Dr Walker at the following public shows and workshops:

### **Scifest Africa – Grahamstown**

Visit <http://www.scifest.org.za> for details and bookings

#### *The Big Aussie Science ShowOff (show)*

12 March, 15.00-16.00

15 March, 15.00-16.00

17 March, 11.00-12.00

18 March, 13.00-14.00

#### *Tell me about Telescopes – SKA Workshops*

12-18 March, 12.00-13.00

Bookings essential

### **Cape Town Science Centre**

Full program and bookings: <http://ctsc.org.za/visiting-science-showoffs-dr-graham-walker/>

#### *The Big Aussie Science ShowOff (show)*

20 March, 18.00

21 March, 13.00 – additional shows on demand

### **Scibono Science Centre, Johannesburg**

Bookings: [http://www.sci-bono.co.za/Events/Graham\\_Walker.php](http://www.sci-bono.co.za/Events/Graham_Walker.php)

#### *The Big Aussie Science ShowOff (show)*

24 March, 15:30

### **Botswana**

27 March – 2 April

Shows and venues will be announced soon

Unizul Science Centre, Richards Bay

April 9-11, show times to be confirmed.

Contact the centre for details: <http://www.unizulsc.com/>

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For media enquiries, please contact the Australian High Commission's Public Affairs Officer, Ms Natalie Mendelsohn, on +27 83 409 3619.

