

Mind Space

The Newsletter of the Centre for the Mind



Welcome to *Mind Space*.

As a new staff member at the Centre I feel I am in a unique position to introduce the readers of Mind Space to the Centre for the Mind, its aims and initiatives.

The Director of the Centre, Professor Allan Snyder, has been described by the media as a cross between Mr Squiggle, Young Einstein and Woody Allen. To this equation I would add, upon a recent viewing of the film based on Roald Dahl's classic children's tale, Willy Wonka and his amazing chocolate factory, where dreams and imaginings become reality.

In many ways the Centre is truly virtual. It has been realised and sustained through the imagination, determination and inspiration of its creator; a man dedicated to positive thought, the achieving of one's potential and the broadening of one's talents and fields of interest. His enthusiasm is infectious and inspiring.

The Centre also has a physical reality. At the Australian National University, Australia's pre-eminent research institute, the Centre's offices evoke a country retreat, sheltered by wisteria and overlooking the tranquil Lake Burley Griffin. At the University of Sydney, the Centre's offices reveal a high-tech and modern interior despite its prominent position in the history-soaked and venerable quadrangle of Australia's first university.

The Centre also receives enviable funding to continue its vital and ground-breaking research, from our foundation sponsors, News Limited, and support from a variety of corporate and government agencies.

The Centre for the Mind has an ongoing commitment to issues that are essential to Australia's future: youth literacy, the

exploration of creativity, the will to achieve and succeed. The Centre for the Mind stimulates intense debate world-wide.

For those who wished to visit Willy Wonka's factory of dreams only five golden tickets were available. The Centre for the Mind however is designed to be accessible to all Australians, and beyond into the International realm.

Regards, *Melanie Calvert*

EDITOR

Write to the Editor at
melanie@centreforthemind.com

On the Director's Mind

The Centre has recently made breathtaking advances, particularly in our research on the mind's secret arithmetic. We also have some stunning new projects, soon to capture the world's attention yet again.

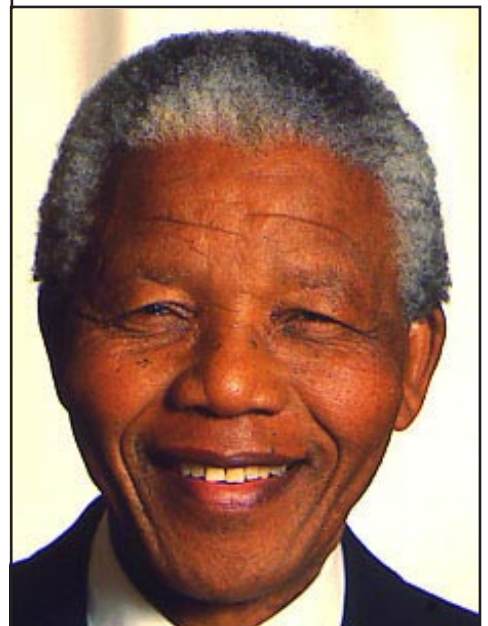
The Centre's bold new initiative to expand the Olympic movement has swung into action with preparation for our spectacular initiative *What Makes a Champion?*TM

We believe that the Olympic Games with their global allure are the quintessential venue for the exploration of human achievement across the spectrum. They offer the ideal platform for encouraging the cross-fertilisation of ideas about performance in every discipline - spanning arts, sports, business and science.

Australia is the ideal country to initiate this bold new venture.

What Makes a Champion?TM

see page 2 of Mind Space...



Nelson Mandela will speak at the Centre for the Mind's *What Makes a Champion?*TM event in September.

In This Issue

	Page
<i>What Makes a Champion?</i> TM	2
Research Update	2
<i>Geniuses, Prodigies and Savants</i>	3
Tomorrow's Champions	3
The Centre for the Mind is the News	4
Oliver Sacks & A Meeting of Creative Minds	5
Edward de Bono	5
Upcoming Events	6
Our Logo	6
Youth Initiative	6

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Nelson Mandela to Lead a Stunning Cast of Champions

Nelson Mandela - the supreme champion of the human spirit - will open the Centre for the Mind's *What Makes a Champion?*TM event in September.

An extraordinary international event, *What Makes a Champion?*TM will be held in Sydney just ten days before the 2000 Olympic Games, taking place over two days in the Great Hall at the University of Sydney.

Celebrity champions from all walks of life - Nobel Prize winners, National heroes, Olympic gold medallists, corporate giants, Academy Award winners, acclaimed artists - will all come together to unravel the ingredients of championship.

250 delegates, themselves champions, will join a stunning cast of more than fifty celebrity champions including:

- **Nelson Mandela** (the supreme champion of the human spirit - who triumphed over extreme adversity);
 - **Professor Peter Doherty** (Australian Nobel Prize winner);
 - **Sir Edmund Hillary** (humanitarian, and the first man to climb Mount Everest);
 - **Sir Gustav Nossal** (Australian of the Year);
 - **Paul Batchelor** (dynamic CEO of AMP Limited);
 - **Herb Elliott** (Olympic gold medallist and corporate giant);
 - **Brian Schwartz** (visionary CEO, Ernst and Young);
 - **Mr Malcolm Fraser** (champion humanitarian); and
 - **Professor Bengt Samuelson** (Chairman, Nobel Prize Foundation, himself a Nobel Prize winner).
- The distinguished Board organising this event includes:
- **Herb Elliott** (Australian Olympic Committee Director, former President of Puma International, and Olympic gold medallist);
 - **Jim Ferguson** (Executive Director,

Australian Sports Commission);

- **Alex Hamill** (Chairman of The Communications Group, George Patterson Bates);

- **Gavin Brown** (Vice Chancellor, University of Sydney); and

- **Professor Allan Snyder** (Director, Centre for the Mind).

The Prime Minister of Australia is the Patron of our event. Mr Howard commented, "Just as the Sydney Olympics will showcase Australia's great tradition as a sporting nation, the conference on *What Makes a Champion?*TM will reinforce Australia's reputation for innovation, intellectual achievement, creativity and understanding.

"There are champions in every field of human endeavour - there are champions in sport, champions over adversity, champions of the mind, champions of the human spirit. All of them combine attributes of excellence, endurance, character, and courage to redefine the boundaries of what is possible and to enrich the lives of the wider community."

*What Makes a Champion?*TM also marks a new, exciting intellectual partnership for the Centre for the Mind, with AMP and Ernst & Young - two of Australia's leading corporate entities.

Keep reading for further information on the Centre's Creative Mind Prizes, an initiative to uncover Australia's future Champions.

Research Update

This year we are confronting three broad interconnected areas of research:

- *Unconscious Problem Solving*
- *Geniuses, Prodigies & Savants* and
- *What Makes a Champion?*TM

We are currently significantly expanding the number of researchers at the Centre to study unconscious problem solving. This is in response to the world-wide interest in our recent discovery of the mind's secret arithmetic (published in *The Royal Society Proceedings*, London). These researchers will use various methods of experimentation including psychophysics, biological feedback and transcranial magnetic

stimulation.

We have also begun collaborative programs on unconscious processing with Professor Bruce Miller at the University of California Medical School in San Francisco.

New researchers will also be assigned to the *What Makes a Champion?*TM project.

Geniuses, Prodigies & Savants

The two days of discussion and insight at the *Geniuses, Prodigies & Savants* event exceeded our every expectation. The Centre for the Mind's showcase event, sponsored by *New Scientist* magazine and held in Sydney on 6-7 December, explored the exceptional achievements of geniuses, prodigies and savants, and the latest research in this area through a range of disciplines - medicine, health, psychology, education, the arts and creative endeavour. It was an amazing event that captivated the audience of speakers, special guests and the general public.

Research highlights came from Professor Bruce Miller of the University of California, who discovered that dementia can bring on artistic genius; Professor Jack Pettigrew, FRS, of the University of Queensland, whose new theory on bipolar disorder reveals rich insights on creativity; and Professors Snyder and Mitchell, who presented their work on exceptional savant skills.

Every session was a full house, and the presentations and interactive forums

sparked new ideas, making breaks busy sessions of intellectual debate and postulation.

The event was a rare and spectacular opportunity to explore the researchers and families of the world's most extraordinary minds, and to meet the real people – geniuses, prodigies and savants – who are the focus of global attention.

Phillip Adams gave an entertaining event launch with his account of Director Allan Snyder's journey from planet Krypton with Barry Jones and Superman and his delight in participating in such a 'cerebral' event.

The days were a hectic mosaic of insight and entertainment. Highlights are hard to find amongst the diverse collection of speakers, although David Helfgott's evening performance can only be described as exhilarating.

*Creative Minds Essay
Competition
for Schools:*

Tomorrow's Champions

The Centre for the Mind is not simply content to ask world leaders and Nobel prize winners to answer the question "What Makes a Champion?" The provocative question was also put to high school students nationwide in this year's Centre for the Mind's 'Creative Minds' essay competition. Students were asked to address the question: "What Makes a Champion? Nature or Nurture?" The competition encourages participants to think creatively and reach beyond the

boundaries of conventional disciplines. Entries have been received from all around the country, and, as with last year's entries, we were not disappointed.

We are now able to release the results from the 2000 competition.

In the years 7 to 9 category the judges were simply unable to decide between three fantastic entries, and took great pleasure in awarding a three-way-tie for First Prize. One of these students, Ling San Lau, was also the winner of last year's competition in this category, while Richard Davey is in reality only in year 6, despite being a winner in the years 7 to 9 category. It should also be noted that those entries which received High Commendations were also nothing short of brilliant.

CATEGORY : Years 7 to 9

- Equal First Prize, **Ling San Lau** of Rose Bay High School, Tasmania
- Equal First Prize, **Richard Davey** of Artarmon Public School, NSW
- Equal First Prize, **Jazmin Eckhaus** of Methodist Ladies' College, VIC
- Highly Commended, **Georgina Dickinson** of Catherine McAuley High School, NSW
- Highly Commended, **Tiffany Klippel-Cooper** of Glenunga International High School, S.A.

The years 10 to 12 category entrants were also most impressive. Special mention must be made of Telopea Park School in the A.C.T. for producing two finalists in this category.

CATEGORY: Years 10 to 12

- First Prize, **Nicole Smith** of Ferny Grove State High School, QLD
- Second Prize, **Heidi Schwarz** of Loxton High School, S.A.
- Third Prize, **Anna Ougrinovskaia** of Telopea Park School, A.C.T.
- Highly Commended, **Ruwangi Udayasiri** of The MacRobertson Girls' High School, VIC
- Highly Commended, **Phoebe Bruce** of Marryatville High School, S.A.
- Highly Commended, **Renee Miller-Cooper** of Telopea Park School, A.C.T.

The next edition of *Mind Space* will include photos and followups of the presentation ceremony for these prize winners, or go to...

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com



The Centre for the Mind is the News

The Adelaide Festival of Ideas

How do we discover new ideas? Professor Snyder was invited to speak on this intriguing topic at last year's inaugural Adelaide Festival of Ideas. "Don't be afraid to work in completely different fields", he told the crowds. "Breakthroughs often come from way out in left field." And he should know – Professor Snyder came up with the idea for optical fibres (which earned him the prestigious International Australia Prize in 1997) after studying insect eyes.

Mind on the Radio



"We can all do lightning fast, accurate arithmetic – we just don't know it". Since November 1999 the work of the Centre for the Mind has been broadcast around the world. From Margaret Throsby to Phillip Adams, on the Science Show with Robyn Williams; to a radio documentary broadcast globally via Radio 4 BBC.

Mind in print

The Director of the Centre for the Mind is "a cross between Young Einstein, Mr Squiggle and Woody Allen", according to Luke Slattery, who interviewed Professor Snyder for *The Australian*. The Centre has copies of many of the articles appearing in the print media – please contact us if you'd like copies of any of these, or they can be accessed on the web at www.centreforthemind.com



Phillip Adams recently interviewed Professor Snyder on the program *2-Shot* on ABC-TV. On the agenda for discussion was Allan's latest discoveries and the secret of creativity. The program was

screened on Monday 27th September, 10:30pm. Vicki Englund commented in the Brisbane courier: "Two eggheads sitting and chatting about science isn't everyone's idea of a good time but the incredibly-wizened looking Phillip Adams speaking to scientist extraordinaire Allan Snyder makes for a fascinating half-hour."

BBC Television Documentary

Allan Snyder's artistic skills were tested in a recent BBC 4 London documentary. With the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge as subjects, Allan was required to create his own painting to be compared with the artistic creations of savant children. His resulting artwork was, he admits, "abominable", but aptly served to demonstrate the fantastic abilities of the savant children from across the world who were featured in the documentary.

Allan presented his own findings on savants along with the findings of several of his international colleagues, such as Professor Bruce Miller of Southern California.



The Mind's Secret Arithmetic

Provocative new research from the Centre published in March in *The Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 266 (1999) 287-292, suggests that all of us have the ability to perform astonishing feats of arithmetic but this facility is not normally easy to access.

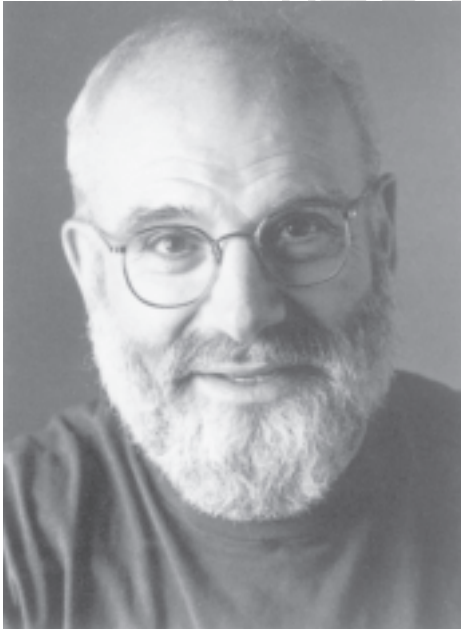
Unlike the ability to acquire our native language, we struggle to learn multiplication and division. It may then come as a surprise that the mental machinery for performing lightning-fast integer arithmetic calculations could be within us all even though it cannot be readily accessed, nor do we have any idea of its primary function. We are led to this provocative hypothesis by analysing the extraordinary skills of autistic savants. In our view such individuals have privileged access to lower levels of information not normally available through introspection.

The full text of the article and various reviews are available on the Centre's web page.

Oliver Sacks:

The Creative Brain

An excerpt from his recent lecture



“It is impossible to predict what is going to happen with the Centre except that it will be a marvel.”

“A great fuss is made about consciousness, as if consciousness is the top. I think that the top is creativity, and I will be saying that I think creativity involves the depth of a mind, and many, many depths of consciousness.

“And I will try and bring this out a little bit. Although we have this single word - creativity - and I think we recognise creativity at once, its forms are endless.

“...With imagination there’s always emergence, and there’s always something new, and also, there’s always a person at the centre. Coleridge was fascinated by a phrase in the mass. The phrase is ‘genitum non factum’, born not made. And in a sense he is contrasting the nature of birth, of organic birth, of the birth of thoughts and ideas, with a mechanical putting together. And he is saying, 200 years ago, that no mechanical picture of the mind will do, we need, the word he uses is ‘a constructivist picture’. We must see the mind as constructing perceptions, images, memories, everything.”

Edward de Bono:

An Adventurer in Thinking

Edward de Bono is “an adventurer in the process of thinking itself”, as Professor Snyder introduced him at a recent literary launch. “Dr de Bono has devoted his life to unravelling the process of creativity – not from the didactic confines of academia but, courageously, through a highly personal, panoramic exploration.”

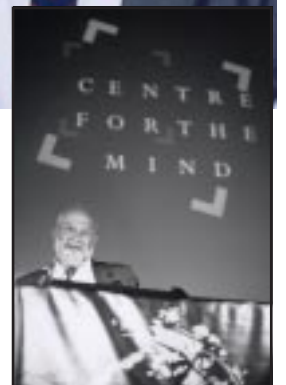
Dr de Bono spoke about his new book, *Why I Want to be King of Australia: Lateral Suggestions for a New Millennium*. The Centre for the Mind looks forward to sharing future adventures with Dr de Bono. Stay tuned...

Dr Oliver Sacks on Professor Allan Snyder
“Agile, playful, audacious, inventive, [he] leaps across boundaries, making unexpected connections, juggling a dozen trains of thought at once - epitomising, for me, the creative mind.”

Champions of the Future In September 1999 the Centre initiated its ambitious endeavour - *Setting Role Models for the Champions of the Future*. A mosaic of events have been formulated which will catapult the intellectual creativity of youth to the frontier of knowledge. The project will include a unique magazine/web site, a think tank, plus a development program to nurture creativity and innovation.



In April 1999 the Centre hosted our Creative Minds Dinner. Dr Oliver Sacks, our Foundation Fellow and great friend of the Centre, attended together with our Advisory Council members and other distinguished guests, including Editor-in-Chief of *The Australian* newspaper, David Armstrong; Dame Leonie Kramer, Chancellor of the University; and Robyn Williams from the ABC.



Upcoming Events

What Makes a Champion?™

3 & 4 September 2000, University of Sydney

Nelson Mandela will open this two day International forum which will bring together champions, world leaders and cultural celebrities to explore ideas about what makes a champion. Celebrity champions from all walks of life - including Nobel Prize winners, Olympic gold medalists, corporate giants, Academy Award winners, acclaimed artists - all will come together to unravel the ingredients of championship in the Great Hall at the University of Sydney. More details are in our feature on p. 2.

Creative Mind Prizes - School Essay Competition

Each year the Centre poses a challenging question to those High School students who are creative at heart. This is a competition in which we welcome unconventional approaches. The judging of this year's competition has just been finalised. Creative Mind Medals were presented at an award ceremony to the top essays from our nation-wide competition. Check our website for our next Creative Minds competition, and be prepared to be daring and controversial!

Who designed our logo?

We are often asked who designed our **Centre For the Mind** logo.

The credit goes to Australia's premier designer, Ken Cato, who previously imprinted **Coca Cola™** and many others.

One interpretation of the logo has been: to think outside global or worldly views.

Let us know if you have a differing interpretation.

Foundation Sponsor

We are grateful to News Limited for their support as the Centre of the Mind's first Foundation Sponsor.

We'd like to hear from you.

What do you think makes a champion?

The Centre for the Mind will be publishing a collection of event findings. If you would like to contribute please contact

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Print Post Approved
PP255003/05146

ISSN 1441-8622

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Mind Space, April 2000 - June 2000

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page 6