

# PRESS RELEASE

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**BBC** future  
WORLD-CHANGING  
IDEAS SUMMIT

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



## **ASTRONAUTS COMING TO SYDNEY FOR BBC'S WORLD-CHANGING IDEAS SUMMIT**

**Chief Scientist Alan Finkel also joins some of the world's  
most fascinating thinkers and BBC voices**

Australian-born NASA astronaut **Dr. Andrew Thomas** and Chief Pilot for World View Enterprises **Ron Garan** will be joining an impressive line up from the fields of science, technology and the environment at the **World-Changing Ideas Summit Sydney**, in association with NAB and IBM.

Taking place on Tuesday 15 November at the Dockside Pavilion, Darling Harbour, Sydney, this world-class event dedicated to exploring cutting-edge innovations across science, technology and health has announced its first round of speakers and topics for the summit, *'Your Life Your Tomorrow'*.

In line with the editorial coverage on BBC Future - BBC.com's features section devoted to providing expert analysis about the big ideas shaping the world - the summit will cover three main topic areas: *The Grand Challenges*, looking at cities and how we live, energy, resources, food and water; *Understanding Humanity*, covering psychology, health, longevity, augmentation and robotics and artificial intelligence; and *Out-of-this-World*, exploring space travel, physics and aerospace.

Two distinguished space authorities have been secured to talk about their 'Out-of-this-World' experiences.

**Dr. Andrew Thomas**, a retired NASA Astronaut, has completed four successful space shuttle flights logging more than 177 days in space. He also completed training in Russia to qualify as a cosmonaut, before serving as Flight Engineer aboard the Russian Space Station Mir during a twenty week flight in 1998. Dr. Thomas is the first Australian citizen to fly in space and will be interviewed about his incredible career spent in orbit.

**Ron Garan**, the Chief Pilot for World View Enterprises, will be looking ahead to our future in space. World View is a company that provides a new perspective of our planet and Ron will be captivating audiences with his thoughts on how space travel has the power to change humanity for the better. Ron is a former NASA astronaut who has flown on the US Space Shuttle and Russian Soyuz spacecraft, as well as a highly decorated pilot, explorer, entrepreneur and humanitarian.

Continuing the space theme, **Professor Michael Smart**, a leading Australian researcher on hypersonic travel will be talking about hypersonic jets and their impact on the space industry. Professor Smart from the University of Queensland was involved in experimental rocket tests this year with NASA in the remote town of

Woomera, S.A. This work could lead to futuristic aircraft that can get passengers from London to Sydney in just a few hours.

The summit is also pleased to announce that Australia's Chief Scientist **Alan Finkel** will be taking a leading role, introducing a session on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's *Grand Challenges*. Alan Finkel has an extensive science background as an entrepreneur, engineer, neuroscientist and educator. His distinguished career includes Chancellor of Monash University, President of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering, founder of Axon Instruments and co-founder of Cosmos magazine.

Three female pioneers will be joining the impressive line-up to talk on the theme of *Grand Challenges*. They include **Rachel Armstrong**, a UK-based sustainability innovator and architectural researcher who was added to the 2014 Citizen of the Next Century List by Future-ish. A Professor of Experimental Architecture at Newcastle University in the UK, Rachel's pioneering research explores an alternative approach to sustainability which she calls 'living architecture'. She will be explaining what tomorrow's cities and space ships will have in common.

**Emma Johnston**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) UNSW, marine ecologist and co-presenter on *Coast Australia*, who was awarded the Australian Academy of Sciences' inaugural Nancy Millis Medal for Women in Science in 2014 and the Eureka Prize for the public communication of science in 2015. She will talk about marine urban sprawl and how 'blue engineering' can help.

**Veena Sahajwalla**, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology at UNSW, and one of the Top 10 Women of Influence Australia in 2015 will also speak. She is currently doing some world-leading work, delivering scientific and engineering advances in sustainability of waste materials and associated processes. Veena will talk about the next stage of her research: how 'microfactories' could transform how we recycle.

For the third topic area, *Understanding Humanity*, biomedical engineer **Dr. Nicholas Opio**, from the Vascular Bionics Laboratory at The University of Melbourne, will be speaking about the potential for "stentrode" technology and the future of brain-controlled devices. Dr. Opie is leading the research team conducting trials on a device called a "stentrode" capable of recording neural information from within a blood vessel, which may enable direct brain control of wheelchairs, exoskeletons and computers to people with paralysis as early as 2018.

The summit is also pleased to announce two further speakers from the U.S.: behavioural scientist **Kevin Corti**, who will be talking about how A.I. will change us; and **Grace Leslie**, an electronic musician from MIT Media Lab, which develops music neurofeedback systems for creative and therapeutic applications, who will be reflecting on the music of the mind.

The **World-Changing Ideas Summit Sydney** will draw on the BBC's world-class talent, bringing together BBC journalists and presenters from across its broadcast and online networks to question, challenge and explain alongside the innovators, technologists, designers and scientists on stage.

Award-winning broadcaster, writer and psychology lecturer **Claudia Hammond**, who presents the BBC's *All In The Mind* and *Mind Changers* on BBC Radio 4, as well as *Health Check* on BBC World News and BBC World Service, is the first moderator to be announced.

**Richard Fisher**, Editor of BBC Future and curator of the **World-Changing Ideas Summit Sydney** said: "I'm thrilled with the calibre of speakers for the **World-Changing Ideas Summit Sydney**. These speakers are leaders in their fields with pioneering ideas that have the potential to change how we live tomorrow. I look forward to a day of engaging discussion with speakers and delegates alike."

Further speakers and the keynote speaker for the day are still to be announced. For more detail on the event and to register your interest in attending, please visit: <https://www.worldchangingideas.com.au>

The **World-Changing Ideas Summit Sydney** is sponsored by National Australia Bank (NAB) and IBM.

Leading 'Word of mouth' agency 1000heads, which helps brands to talk to people and be talked about by people, is the event partner for **World-Changing Ideas Summit Sydney**.

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