



MEDIA RELEASE

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Men are from Mars? – debating the origin of life on Earth

Could Martian ‘nanobes’ have made their way here inside meteorites at some time in Earth’s history?

“If so, the theory that life on Earth was seeded from outer space becomes a very real possibility,” says Australian scientist Dr Philippa Uwins, who will be speaking at the UNDERSTANDING PLANET EARTH public symposium on Wednesday (July 5).

Dr Uwins recently discovered miniature life forms, called ‘nanobes’, in a sample of rock from deep beneath the sea off Western Australia.

According to Dr Uwins, nanobes are extremely robust, so it is possible they could survive the harsh environment of outer space.

This has important implications in the controversy surrounding the historic NASA announcement (August 1996) of the possible presence of microbes in a Martian Meteorite found in the Allan Hills region of Antarctica in 1984.

Nanobes have a similar size profile to the fossil ‘nanno-bacteria’ found in the Martian Meteorite.

“Nanobes are not only smaller than any other life forms previously observed, but they are also smaller than thought possible for a living cell,” she says.

Dr Uwins says the discovery of a new life form that does not conform with conventional views tells us there is still a lot to learn about the nature of life.

“It forces us to reconsider the age-old questions - What is life? How did it evolve? and is there life outside the Earth?”

Dr Uwins will be pondering these and other fascinating questions at UNDERSTANDING PLANET EARTH - a one-day Public Symposium presented by the Geological Society of Australia on Wednesday 5 July 2000, in Sydney.

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15th AUSTRALIAN GEOLOGICAL CONVENTION: SYDNEY, 3rd – 7th JULY 2000

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UNDERSTANDING PLANET EARTH is the inaugural Public Symposium of the Geological Society of Australia. Twelve Australian and international scientists will bring topical earth science to the media and the public.

The symposium will run from 9:15 am to 4:45 pm on Wednesday 5 July at City Recital Hall, Angel Place, Sydney.

THE MEDIA IS INVITED TO ATTEND THE SYMPOSIUM

Free Media passes are available by contacting Sonia Cousins on (02) 9290 2198 or 0417 443 701. Participating scientists will be available for interview throughout the day and prior to the event.



For information contact:

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Full program details and symposium information are available on our website
www.gsa.org.au/agcpublic.htm

For further information or interview contact:

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