



Australian Academy of Forensic Sciences Inc.

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Academy's Journal; The Australian Journal of Forensic Sciences (AJFS)

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INVITATION TO MEMBERS

THE NEXT PLENARY SESSION IS ON

WEDNESDAY 22 February 2012 at 6.00pm

at The Union University & Schools Club, 25 Bent Street (Cnr Phillip), Sydney

You are cordially invited, indeed encouraged, to attend with guests. The Plenary will be followed by dinner at the club. For catering purposes, bookings and payment are required in advance. Kindly return the attached form with payment by the closing date.

PLENARY TOPIC

CROOKS, CRANKS and CHARLATANS: SCIENCE IN COURT?



Professor Brynn Hibbert has occupied the only (named) chair of analytical chemistry in Australia for twenty-five years, and specialising (*inter alia*) in the quality of analytical results he has found himself opining on a range of chemical stuff, from sports drugs to medical devices to perpetual motion machines to exploding batteries. In this time he has encountered a worrying amount of wrong science, whether by deliberate fraud (**crooks**), delusion (**cranks**), or simple error that is offered so persuasively that the correct version is hard to establish (**charlatans**). Examples of each of these phenomena will be given, including **get-rich-quick schemes**, **made up evidence**, and **hopeless statistics**. With increasing sophistication and complexity of science, and decreasing scientific literacy of the public (including inhabitants of the court system), there is something of a perceived crisis in expert opinion. Whom should we trust? In a post-modern age can we make any statements that are true, and is Professor Hibbert's opinion worth any more than that of a random individual? Is Thomas Bayes turning in his grave over R v T?

Professor Hibbert is a supporter of 'reliability' tests of scientific evidence, together with independent scientific help for judges, and a more careful scrutiny of claimed expertise. Avoiding over reliance on expert opinion and misunderstanding of statistics might be two areas to tackle in a re-education process that needs to happen in our courts. The '?' in the title implies Science itself might be in the dock, but Professor Hibbert will argue that the courts need to understand better what they are being offered by Science. As Albert Einstein is quoted as saying: "All our science, measured against reality, is primitive and childlike – and yet it is the most precious thing we have."

DINNER ACCEPTANCE

UNION / UNIVERSITY & SCHOOLS CLUB—DRESS CODE

Members are reminded respectfully, that attendance at the Academy's meetings and dinners held at the Club, requires for men a jacket and tie and for women, an equivalent standard of dress. Denim and sports apparel are not acceptable.

RSVP:

Thank you for the invitation to the Plenary Dinner on Wednesday 22 February 2012, which I accept with pleasure. I understand the cost of the evening is \$85.00 (incl. GST) per person payable in advance.

(It is the Member's responsibility to ensure prior payment for their guest/s. Please note refunds are not available after COB Friday 17 February 2012).

Please use block letters:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email address for confirmation of booking: _____

I will be bringing the following guest/s:

Name: _____

Name: _____

Number of people attending _____ at \$85/person TOTAL = \$_____

RSVP by Wednesday 15 February 2012

to:

The AAFS Treasurer
c/o Ms Susan Lohan
Australian Academy of Forensic Sciences Inc
Durham Hall
207 Albion Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Please note; Confirmation emails will be sent to all acceptances and will include a tax invoice receipt. Emails must be included on RSVP to receive confirmation and receipt (please see above).