

**MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release  
Wednesday May 15, 2019



**UNSW**  
SYDNEY

**CENTRE  
FOR IDEAS**

**The Gerald Westheimer Lecture**  
**Elizabeth Blackburn, The Telomere Effect**

**Presented as part of Sydney Science Festival**  
**City Recital Hall**  
**Friday August 16**



**Nobel Laureate Elizabeth Blackburn reveals the science behind living longer and healthier lives, as part of Sydney Science Festival 2019.**

UNSW Centre for Ideas is thrilled to announce a talk by Nobel Laureate and *New York Times* bestselling co-author of *The Telomere Effect*, Elizabeth Blackburn; the first in a powerful lineup of global leaders and innovators, who will take part in UNSW's program of events for Sydney Science Festival 2019.

Elizabeth Blackburn's discoveries about telomeres, the protective caps at the end of our chromosomes, and the enzyme telomerase, earned her a Nobel Prize in 2009 and demonstrated the key role DNA plays in health and ageing.

Born in Tasmania and long-based in the US, this is a rare opportunity to hear firsthand from one of the world's leading scientists, recognised in 2007 as one of *TIME* Magazine's 100 Most Influential People, on the role of DNA in slowing disease and improving health later in life.

A key contributor to Sydney Science Festival since its inception, UNSW presents a series of talks, tours and events highlighting the science that *blows your mind*, including an unexpected method to measure dark matter and answers to the origin of life itself.

A powerhouse of innovation and research, the Science Faculty at UNSW comprises nine schools, more than 400 staff and 700 researchers. It is only fitting then, says Professor Emma Johnston AO, Dean of Science, UNSW Sydney, that UNSW plays a key role in the city's annual science celebration:

*"UNSW Sydney's partnership with the Sydney Science Festival is an incredible opportunity for us as researchers, educators and communicators to engage with the wider community. Our world-class scientists are making discoveries that will shape our future, and they are passionate about sharing their work. The University is proud to support the many events that offer an in-depth look at what is happening amongst our broad areas of research. I invite you to explore what we have to offer during the Festival."*

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### **Elizabeth Blackburn: The Telomere Effect**

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August, 6:30 – 7:30pm**

**City Recital Hall**

**\$15 - \$35 + booking fee**

**Bookings, [centreforideas.com/event/elizabeth-blackburn-the-telomere-effect](http://centreforideas.com/event/elizabeth-blackburn-the-telomere-effect)**

This event is supported by the Crawford Fund and Science & Technology Australia.

The full program of UNSW x Sydney Science Festival will be announced Monday 17 June.

Ends/

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## **MEDIA CONTACT**

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High-resolution images are available to download from:

[dropbox.com/sh/jp5t2pf2gejm9oo/AAB-L7mUk2tll1mZuo3RVgCfa?dl=0](https://dropbox.com/sh/jp5t2pf2gejm9oo/AAB-L7mUk2tll1mZuo3RVgCfa?dl=0)

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## **ABOUT**

### **Dr Elizabeth Blackburn**

Dr Elizabeth Blackburn has been a leader in the area of telomere and telomerase research, having discovered the molecular nature of telomeres – the ends of eukaryotic chromosomes that serve as protective caps essential for preserving the genetic information – and co-discovered the ribonucleoprotein enzyme, telomerase. She is also known for her championing of diversity and inclusion in the sciences. Blackburn and her research team also collaborate in a range of investigations of the roles of telomere biology in human health and diseases, through clinical and other human studies. Born in Australia, Dr Blackburn earned degrees from the University of Melbourne, University of Cambridge and Yale University. She has been awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, the Albert Lasker Medical Research Award for Basic Medical Research, and in 2007 was named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 Most Influential People.

### **Gerald Westheimer Lecture**

A generous gift from Professor Gerald Westheimer AM FRS has established a new biennial lecture series for UNSW Science. Known as the Gerald Westheimer Lecture, this flagship initiative will invite eminent international researchers to spend time in residence at UNSW. While in residence, the Westheimer Lecturer will conduct workshops for students and early career researchers from UNSW Science, and deliver at least one talk to the UNSW community and the general public. The donor who enabled this Lectureship, Professor Westheimer, is an Australian Scientist living in California. At 95, he is still active at the Berkeley School of Optometry where he conducts research on the eye, its optics and how we see details in space and in three dimensions. Professor Westheimer has seen firsthand the benefits of exposure to a diversity of knowledge and culture around the world, and hoped to share this influence with his alma mater. Professor Westheimer 'still calls Australia home' and has remained a proud long-time supporter of UNSW.

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### **UNSW Centre for Ideas**

The UNSW Centre for Ideas is an exciting new initiative from UNSW Sydney, presenting an accessible year-round public program of talks and conversations with big thinkers and thought leaders from around the globe. Live talks offer knowledge and insight that you can't find in the pages of a book or hear over the din of the 24-hour news media. You don't have to go to the farthest reaches of the internet or sort the fact from the fake in your social feeds. A live talk experience is unique. For the latest event announcements, sign up at

[centreforideas.com/subscribe](http://centreforideas.com/subscribe). More information and a range of podcasts and videos from past events, including the Festival of Dangerous Ideas 2018, can be found at [centreforideas.com](http://centreforideas.com).

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### **Sydney Science Festival**

Sydney Science Festival is back for a fifth year with 13 days of events across the city from Tuesday 6 - Sunday 18 August. Coinciding with National Science Week, the annual city-wide festival celebrates Sydney's diverse and multidisciplinary science community and spans cultural spaces, galleries, universities, businesses, research institutions and community groups across the city. Produced by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, the Festival's innovative program of talks by world-leading researchers, workshops, exhibitions and events will investigate how science informs and intersects with the contemporary issues that we face every day.

[sydneyscience.com.au/2019/](http://sydneyscience.com.au/2019/)