

News & Events

Is Derek Abbott our Science "Idol"?

Friday, 15 July 2005

Leading South Australian scientist, the University of Adelaide's [Associate Professor Derek Abbott](#), needs your help!

Dr Abbott is the only South Australian to make the final of the [Eureka Prizes' People's Choice Awards](#).

The awards, launched last night by [Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson](#), give the Australian public the opportunity to be involved in the Australian Museum's [Eureka Prizes](#) competition for the first time by voting for one of six scientists from around the country.

The six finalists have been nominated for the People's Choice award for their innovative and exciting scientific work, with Australians encouraged to vote for their favourite scientist [online](#), with the winner announced on Tuesday, August 9.

Dr Abbott is Director of the University of Adelaide's [Centre for Biomedical Engineering](#), and was nominated for his research into Parrondo's Paradox, a theory devised by Spanish physicist Juan M.R. Parrondo which suggests that two losing strategies can be combined to form one successful one - or in other words, that two wrongs can indeed make a right!

Using two relatively simple coin-tossing games and computer simulation, Dr Abbott showed that even if the individual games were "loaded" to lose, if they were combined alternately or even randomly they instead gave success.

"It works on the same sort of principle that if you have a bag of mixed nuts, if you shake it you would expect the big nuts to settle to the bottom but the opposite actually occurs; they rise to the top," Dr Abbott says.

"I think the implications of Parrondo's Paradox are the most exciting thing: it could be apply to anything from population genetics and gene dynamics in DNA to economics and the stock market."

To vote for Dr Derek Abbott in the Eureka Prizes People's Choice Award, visit:

www.amonline.net.au/eureka/peoples_choice/

MEDIA NOTE: For more information about Dr Abbott and his research into Parrondo's Paradox, visit his [paradox website](#).

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