

Dear editors of Chemistry in Australia,

To my bemusement, a colleague has brought to my attention the piece by John Ashton in your April 2007 magazine "A creationist's view of the intelligent design debate". I understand that this is not a peer-reviewed article and that the intention of pieces like these is to give members a chance to air an opinion. It is my concern that Professor Ashton and the editors who made the decision to publish this piece have done your magazine considerable harm.

The content of Ashton's article as well as the strategy of publishing unrefereed articles of this nature under titles that give the imprimatur of scientific respectability both reflect standard strategies used by creationists to give their unscientific views an appearance of scientific gravitas. You can be certain that references to your article will now appear on creationist websites and in their texts, with the name of the society used to give the appearance that these views have scientific rigour. The article itself is riddled with red-herrings and just about every logical fallacy that one could care to mention. Every one of these arguments has been patiently debunked by evolutionary biologists, and in some cases by the courts. The defining feature of creationist argument is that the central opinion is adhered to in the face of all evidence and refutation. This alone dispels any pretension that there is any scientific basis for creationism.

I am sure your intentions in publishing Ashton's piece were honourable. Creationists cynically and repeatedly appeal to our liberal intuition that it is best to air all sides of an argument. However, when one side conscientiously adheres to the scientific method and another tries to make contradictory claims in the name of science without adhering to the central evidence and refutation based principles of the scientific methods, it is no longer a debate in any sense. I believe you have been ill-served by Professor Ashton's cynical exploitation of your desire for openness.

I believe that as creationists in their various disguises are repeatedly debunked, magazines like yours will be increasingly targeted by them. I believe you have every right to be angry that this has happened to you and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely

Associate Professor Rob Brooks  
President  
Australasian Evolution Society