In 1998, two international teams raced to determine the fate of the Universe. Was it expanding or contracting? They found that it wasn’t just expanding but that the expansion was accelerating. It was a startling discovery suggesting that an unknown force is countering the effect of gravity and pushing the Universe apart. Today cosmologists believe that this mysterious dark energy comprises 70 per cent of the Universe. The 2011 Nobel Laureate for Physics, Brian Schmidt, leader of one of the two teams, will describe their discovery and its implications. He will explain how astronomers have traced our Universe’s history back more than 13 billion years, leading them to ponder the ultimate fate of the cosmos. Brian Schmidt is a Laureate Fellow at The ANU Mount Stromlo Observatory.

For more information about the student competition visit www.vssec.vic.edu.au