

WRITER'S GUIDELINES

Cosmos is an Australian science magazine with a global outlook. The country's #1 science title, it is a glossy, high quality magazine appearing six times a year. Its sister, *Cosmos Online*, publishes daily news and has an audience of 370,000 visitors and one million page views per month. *Cosmos* has won Magazine of the Year and Editor of the Year at Australia's Bell Awards for Publishing Excellence, among the 27 trophies it has picked up for journalism, publishing and sustainability.

The magazine is largely interested in ideas, particularly those that involve, or are driven by, science and technology. This is especially so where articles discuss the impact and/or implications for individuals, society and the natural world. In many ways, it is a unique magazine: its discussion of science, society, and the future might range over topics as diverse as art, design, travel, exploration history, philosophy and politics. It is a magazine about who we are as a species and what we might become, our place in the world ... and our future in the cosmos.

Cosmos stories take the reader on a journey. It imagines potential futures, based on technological, social and artistic trends of today. It seeks to demystify scientific developments, explore the latest ideas and share with its readers the excitement of discovery and the wonder of nature. It strives for excellence in writing, photography and illustration, seeking to entertain (as well as nourish) the mind. It tries to intrigue and fascinate, challenge and entertain. It reconsiders the past, dissects the present and imagines the future. It does not necessarily seek controversy, but does not shy away from it either.

Will we have robot lovers? Can we live forever? What's it like to walk on the Moon? Why do we sleep? Why does time travel only forward? When can we have holidays in space - and what will they be like?

To be a *Cosmos* reader is to be fascinated by the world, excited about new ideas and intrigued by new possibilities. Feature articles will often cast to the future or ask the big questions: What are the implications of this new development in science, technology or this new social trend? What impact might it have on society, on people, and on the natural world?

Cosmos does not lecture its readers: it seeks to be a trusted, intelligent, passionate and plain-speaking travelling companion on the road of discovery. Its goal is to give readers (whether knowledgeable about science or with a passing interest) a diet of ideas and insights they are unlikely to encounter elsewhere. While it is a magazine with a fascination for the future (of society, technology, our Earth and the universe), it is also intrigued by past vents - especially when new revelations lead readers to reappraise it: reconsidering a historical figure, a defining incident, a past civilisation or an extinct species.

Cosmos is unabashedly fascinated by the human dimension of science: by the personalities behind science, by how discoveries are made, by the ideas behind issues and events, by the excitement of the search, by scientists and their lives, and by intriguing and controversial ideas.

But *Cosmos* is not a "cheerleader for science". A writer's loyalty is always first and foremost to the reader. And *Cosmos* doesn't seek to overtly educate; however, in conveying the excitement of discovery in a fascinating and entertaining fashion, education often ensues.

And while we highly prize scientific accuracy, we will not sacrifice clarity for the sake of it. Stories must be engaging and stimulating literary works which just happen to be about science and technology. We would rather forego a story altogether than publish one that is accurate but unreadable, or scientifically worthy but a dull read.



Writing should be clear, accurate, and engaging. It should be free of technical or insider jargon, and generous with explanation and background. Where jargon is required, it must be explained.

While it does not seek to hide the fact it is Australian, *Cosmos* is internationalist in outlook and not overly focussed on its home country. *Cosmos* should tackle a story first and foremost because it is a good story, not because it is Australian.

Contributors interested in writing for *Cosmos* should submit a maximum one-page proposal describing the idea, the approach they would take, likely sources, and the possibilities for illustration and photography. We will need to evaluate your credentials as a writer. Editors often read proposals to evaluate writing skill and imaginativeness of approach. Clippings accompanying any proposal are essential for writers with whom we have not dealt before.

For first-time contributors, writing for smaller sections of the magazine around a certain topic, event, discovery or person – offers the best chance for acceptance. Most of the smaller sections are in *Express* and are between 300 and 1,200 words in length. Payment for departments is between A\$180 and A\$720 (between US\$135 and US\$520).

There is also a Profile section for interviews (between 2,000 and 3,000 words in length) an opinion column of about 700 words. *Cosmos* welcomes travel pieces of up to 2,000 words involving some aspect of science, research, discovery or exploration (“Travelogue”). And we welcome humour in all sections. Science doesn’t have to be dry!

Feature articles are the core of the magazine. These require substantial research, multiple interviews and a fresh angle. The quality of the writing is as important as the idea or the topic itself. There are usually five features per issue, from 1,500 words to 3,500 words in length; we will also consider a substantive article of up 7,000 words (or even more), if the subject can sustain this. Payment for features ranges from A\$900 to a maximum of A\$3,000 (US\$650 to US\$2,130) – again, depending on word length. The substantive feature may involve more research and some travel, and may therefore be negotiable.

In the event an article is commissioned but not accepted for publication because a writer has failed to meet the brief, a kill fee of up to 50% may be paid; this is dependent on the amount of work undertaken, and whether revised drafts were attempted. Articles are paid two weeks before publication via wire transfer into a contributor’s bank account and usually, all rights are purchased.

We will consider publication of previously published articles where they are excellent and have not been widely circulated; this is especially the case where a writer can update the work. In such instances, payment is negotiated on a case-by-case basis, but is usually half the rate for original material (ie. A30¢/word). When an article has been previously published, writers must indicate this and give details of where and when.

Lastly, *Cosmos* is a magazine with high ideals and great ambition. But it is produced by a small publishing house in Australia, a market 1/14th the size of the United States. Our staff are excited and enthusiastic, we treat our writers well, and we love what we do. We hope a growing band of readers will, too. But we don’t have the financial muscle of the big publishers, so cannot afford the best rates around. However, we’ll treat your article with care and make it look like a million dollars.



Wilson da Silva, Editor