

Cathedral parishioner wins nationâ??s top science prize

St Peterâ??s Cathedral parishioner Professor Anthony Thomas AC FAA has been jointly awarded the 2026 Prime Ministerâ??s Prize for Science, Australiaâ??s most prestigious award for scientific achievement.



Professor Anthony Thomas.

Professor Thomas, the Elder Professor of Physics at Adelaide University, received the honour at a ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra on Tuesday 24 November. He shares the $250,000 prize with Professor Georgina Long AO, the Sydney oncologist whose work has transformed the treatment of melanoma.

It is the first time winners from two different research areas have shared the top award.

The Prize recognises a career of discoveries that have reshaped our understanding of matter, antimatter, dark matter and neutron stars.

Much of that work begins with the proton, one of the basic building blocks of every atom. Professor Thomasâ??s Cloudy Bag Model pictures the proton as a small â??bagâ?• holding even tinier particles called quarks, wrapped in a shimmering cloud of other particles.

The model has transformed how physicists around the world understand what a proton is made of and how it behaves.

He has also devised new ways of testing for forces of nature that lie beyond the Standard Model, the framework physicists use to describe the known particles and forces. That work has uncovered evidence pointing to a possible â??dark photonâ?•, a particle that could help explain the mysterious dark matter thought to make up most of the matter in the universe.

His theoretical calculations have improved major dark matter experiments worldwide. And he correctly predicted the existence of unusually massive neutron stars, the ultra-dense remnants of collapsed stars, before astronomers had observed them.

Alongside his research, Professor Thomas has mentored more than 50 postgraduate students. He served as President of the Australian Institute of Physics from 1991 to 1993, received its Walter Boas Medal in 1987, and in 2025 was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Institute, its highest honour.

Congratulations to Professor Thomas from all at St Peterâ??s Cathedral and across the Diocese, and to all the 2026 recipients, including science teachers Dr Gabrielle Oslington and Mrs Nicolette Wheaton, whose awards honour the educators inspiring the next generation of scientists.

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