



The end of the world as we know it? - the example of trace evidence (EAFS-0882)

Claude Roux, *University of Technology Sydney, Australia*

The dominant conception of forensic science as a patchwork of disciplines primarily assisting the criminal justice system (i.e. forensics) is in crisis or at least shows a series of anomalies and serious limitations. In recent years, symptoms of the crisis have been discussed extensively. The almost generalized adoption of stricter business models in forensic science casework compounded with ever-increasing normative and compliance processes not only place additional pressures on a discipline that already appears in difficulty, but also induce more fragmentation of the different forensic science tasks, a tenet many times denounced by many reviews. One may ask whether these issues are not simply the result of an unfit paradigm. To facilitate broader discussion this presentation focuses on trace evidence, an area that is seminal to forensic science both for epistemological and historical reasons. There is, however, little doubt that this area is currently under siege worldwide. Current and future challenges faced by trace evidence are discussed along with some possible answers. The current situation ultimately presents some significant opportunities to re-invent not only trace evidence but also forensic science. Ultimately, a distinctive, more robust and more reliable science may emerge through rethinking the forensics paradigm built on specialisms, revisiting fundamental forensic science principles and adapting them to the twenty-first century.