

Science Meets Parliament 2024  
Report from Cat Kutay, Charles Darwin University

Report on SMP24 or as stated in Aunty Serena's welcome in Ngunnalwal, Parliament Meets Science. Except they did not. We met ourselves and many eminent scientists. Apparently not many members, and certainly few ministers, opt in to the invitations. Also we outnumbered the full Parliamentary contingent anyway. STA Australia provided a great series of pre-workshops, talks and events, but this did not hide the fact that our parliamentarians are not enthused by the chance to work with those in the evidence-collection field

The Press Club lunch was I think the most delicious meal I have had in a long time. It was a great opportunity to hear STA President Professor Sriram speak for about 30 minutes without notes or prompter it seemed. He is certainly eloquent and inspiring with a great history of implementation of his research into industry. He was very clear on the economic benefits of research funding and the lack of this in this country. We hope the parliamentarians meet with him.

It was good to hear CSIRO speak to the way their recent report on energy system was treated by some in parliament. Also Tony Smith was an interesting perspective as past Speaker of the rabble. STA continued to assist with advice from the Advisors who are our main go to for sharing information. This was part of many helpful hints for the Aspergers amongst us to go out and sell our knowledge

I feel I made the most of the opportunity that the Australian Council of Deans ICT so generously gave me, and the work that STA put into the event, however I feel the parliamentarians did not use the arrival of about 350 science trained minds on their doorstep. We came from all political persuasion and had experience in genetics, big data, cybernetics, AI and many more. These are topics that the government must regulate and legislate on. The point is that science may be biased, but it can rarely lie, especially when a range of views is sought.

I met with 3 others with Andrew Leigh and his Program Manager which was a lovely but brief experience as Andrew had a motion to put to the house that was coming up as we spoke. He has published in the area of policy testing and understands the importance of the scientific methods for verifying even the complex human factors. I also met Sharon Claydon at dinner however she was in demand by other colleagues.

Science Meets Parliament is an opportunity for Parliament to meet with Scientists. Can we move the tables and chairs into the open more to invite those parliamentarians who most fit our programs in terms of their interests or portfolios to meet with us and consider how our research can provide data for their political work. We are not there to ask for funds, we are there to show how valuable our research can be to their ruminations. Then they are better informed as to what to fund.

When we voted on the Voice, First Nations offered Australia the opportunity to work in a participatory democracy, this was ignored. The experience still can be had by having regular meeting between parliamentarians and those of us in education, health, Indigenous knowledge, transport, cybersecurity, etc. Professor Sriram made the point that we need to invest in pure research for future competitive development of our industry. We also need to invest in the knowledge and skills of our people to develop an evidence-driven society, one that is planned well in advance of policy decisions, the risks understood and the areas in which we can have the best impact on well being.

When our First Nations sat down and developed the Kinship system, as the Quandamooka Mathematician Chris Mathews highlights, a closed Abelian group, it was a highly successful and considered system of relationships that carried the people through maybe 100,000 years in this land without major conflict or fights over resources. When will we again plan and strategize Australian society based on evidence for the long term.

Yours sincerely,

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