

## Attending Science meet Parliament 2009

By Dr Krasimir Vasilev

It was a great honour for me to be nominated by the Australian Society for Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering to attend the “Science meet Parliament” event held on 17-18 of March 2009. This exciting event was a stimulating development experience which gave me insights into political policy and Parliamentary processes and rationalities. I had the opportunity to learn about the way politicians think and what are the rationales behind policy making. In the second day of the even we had the opportunity to meet Parliamentarians and discuss with them how science contributes to and informs public policy, and express our views on certain aspect of science and science education. The even was also a great occasion to meet other young Australian scientist as well as members of the innovative Austrian industry. A stimulating dinner in the Great Hall of the Parliament provided opportunity for close interactions with politicians.

The first day of the event was an excellent learning exercise. It was intended to give the participants understanding of how policy making is done and what are the major motivations for the politicians to make decisions. Speakers included politicians (Senator Eric Abetz – shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research), current and former advisors to politicians, journalists (Sophie Morris from Australian Financial Review), leaders of research institutions and others. I found particularly interesting the talk by Professor John Foster and the followed discussion about the global financial crisis and how this will reflect on science and innovation. The day included discussions and brainstorming sessions on various topics. This intense but very beneficial day was followed with a formal dinner at the Great Hall in the New Parliament House.

The second day was the main activity which included about 150 meetings with Parliamentarians and scientists. I personally met Senator Mark Furner in his office and discussed for thirty minutes. Our discussion included topics such as climate change, funding for science and education, the necessity to invest in innovating Australian industry and creating new high added value niche manufacturing to address current global challenges and place Australia in a leading role for the future. My second appointment was with Senator Steven Ciobo who is the Shadow Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors, Tourism and the Arts. Regrettably, as apparently often happens, Senator Ciobo had to be present at a division in the Chamber of Representatives at the time of the meeting. However I met and discussed various topics concerning science, innovation and education in Australia with one of Senator Ciobo’s advisors.

Overall, this event was an excellent career development exercise which allowed me to learn how policies are made in the Parliament, what is important for politicians and how I could contribute to policy making. The event provided a rare opportunity to meet personally members of the Parliament and express my view regarding important topics relevant to science, research, innovation and education in Australia.



Dr Vasilev meets Senator Furner during Science meet Parliament