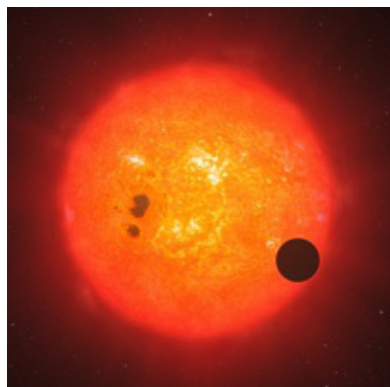




PLANET HUNTER MEETS POLITICIANS

Science Meets Parliament, 9-10 March 2010



CSIRO Staff Association member Simon O'Toole is part of an international research team that has discovered more than 35 planets orbiting Sun-like stars.

With a job title like "planet hunter" Simon O'Toole, a CSIRO Staff Association member from the Anglo-Australian Observatory, talks frequently to media – usually to science journalists from 'Nature' and others who specialise in science.

But dealing with the popular media, where it is essential to get your message across in the 45 seconds it takes for a sparkler to burn, is a different matter.

Simon was one of the CSIRO Staff Association-sponsored attendees at Science Meets Parliament on 9-10 March 2010. Organised by FASTS this two-day program brings some 160 scientists to Canberra for face-to-face meetings with Ministers, Members and Senators.

Learning about the art of the sound bite directly from Tim Dixon, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's speechwriter, was a highlight for Simon, along with discussion from a range of speakers about the climate change debate and what has been described as the "war on science".

Amy Huva, a scientist with the Water Efficiency Division of the Australian Government, was similarly impressed. Amy noted "scientists need to speak up and speak out about their work because if they don't, the 'articulate, dumb, loud' people will win the war with misinformation".

- Read Science Meets Parliament reports p. 6-7



The Anstee children attended CSIRO's Black Mountain childcare facility

OUR CHILDREN, YOUR FUTURE

Janet Anstee has entrusted the care of her three children to the childcare facilities at CSIRO's Black Mountain site since 1999, and hopes future CSIRO parents will continue to have the same opportunity.

"What staff might not be aware of is that under Clause 71 our current EA, CSIRO has an obligation to provide onsite childcare to staff," Janet says.

"I was able to have close contact with my children at Black Mountain which was hugely valuable to me as a parent. It wasn't a case of dropping them off at 8am and picking them up at 6pm. Another benefit was the lack of turnover in the staff at CSIROcare, which meant the carers knew the families as well as the child they were caring for."

Janet believes it is critical for CSIRO to continue support working parents, as part of a wide-ranging strategy to attract and retain the best staff.

Lack of access to childcare facilities often results in a delayed return to return to work or reduced hours after maternity leave.

The high quality of the childcare facilities at CSIROcare also provides the reassurance needed to parents with their return to work.

CSIRO Staff Association Secretary Sam Popovski says CSIRO is letting its obligations towards the provision of childcare slip in the face of increasing corporatisation of the CSIRO science model.

"What we are finding is that with new CSIRO sites, like Boggo Road in Brisbane, CSIRO is not even surveying their staff about childcare and consequently no facilities are available on the site," Mr Popovski said.

"This may be difficult for parents organising the drop-off and pick-up of their kids to and from work."

Did you know?

According to the CSIRO 2008-09 Annual Report, the number of CSIRO staff earning above \$355,000 in 2009 nearly doubled – from seven to 13.

By way of comparison, the Prime Minister is said to earn \$340,000 a year and the Opposition Leader \$242,000.



LIVING IN THE MATRIX



Laurence Fishburne in a scene from the film 'Matrix'

CSIRO has undergone major change over the past decade, yet the impact of this change on the working lives of CSIRO staff is not well understood.

A consortium of universities is undertaking a survey of CSIRO staff to independently examine the drivers of research capability in the Organisation.

The survey will include sections on staff attitudes to the matrix, SAP, pay and working conditions.

The CSIRO Staff Association is supporting the survey by the Universities of South Australia, New South Wales and Melbourne, through consultation on key issues affecting the working lives of CSIRO staff, and through distribution of the survey across Australia in April.

"The objective of the survey is to gain a detailed snapshot of the current work environment at CSIRO – from the perspective of staff," says CSIRO Staff Association Secretary Sam Popovski.

The survey is funded by university grant monies and is completely anonymous and independent of CSIRO.

Both members and non-members are encouraged to complete the survey. Your support will play a key role in ensuring that the real impact of structural change is identified.

"We are very interested to get a picture of staff attitudes and will make the results fully available on our website in June," Mr Popovski says.

For more information contact:

csiro-survey@unimelb.edu.au

Comment

GOVERNMENT SCIENCE UNDER THREAT

Government science is at a crossroads, says Dr Michael Borgas, President of the CSIRO Staff Association.

"Government science agencies like CSIRO are at the forefront of providing independent and rigorous advice to government but scientific independence and integrity is under threat in a new trend towards scepticism motivated by ideology and political gain," Dr Borgas says.

The CSIRO Staff Association, which represents 6,500 staff at CSIRO and staff at other Commonwealth Government agencies, is active in defending the role of science and scientists in what has been termed "the war on science" (see 'Science Meets Parliament reports in this edition for more information).

"At the February Estimates hearing, Opposition senators openly attacked the integrity of CSIRO, even suggesting that we may be witnessing the death of CSIRO as an icon in Australia," Dr Borgas says.

Climate scepticism is at the heart of the more recent attacks, but the problem goes even deeper than that.

"There is immense confusion amongst our politicians, and within the community at large, on the role of government science," Dr Borgas says.

"Government science is not, and never should be, the final arbiter on public policy," he says.

"It is there to provide advice based on rigorous and contestable scientific methods."

Dr Borgas says open debate and diversity of research should be encouraged.

"We need to support scientific charters of independence and not use government science for political advantage," he says.

"The Australian public has immense trust and respect for government science agencies like CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology. It's time that our politicians actually reflect their constituency and support these agencies and the critical work that they do."

Read more in Dr Borgas's article in 'The National Times', The Age newspaper online, published 22 March 2010



Dr Michael Borgas, President CSIRO Staff Association

Wavelength

Wavelength is a monthly newsletter for members of the CSIRO Staff Association focusing on industrial and professional issues relevant to Australian scientists and science support staff.

We welcome contributions from members.

Articles should be between 150-700 words in length. Please attach photos separately. The deadline is the 20th of each month. Please send submissions to Margaret Puls, Editor – Margaret.Puls@cpsu.org.au

Wavelength is authorised by Sam Popovski, Secretary, CSIRO Staff Association.

Sam.Popovski@cpsu.org.au

www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

Welcome new staff



Jeff Carig, NSW Organiser, CSIRO Staff Association

Tel: 02 8204 6942
Email jeff.carig@cpsu.org.au

Jeff Carig is the new NSW Organiser for CSIRO Staff Association. Jeff has worked with members since 2009 and visited every CSIRO site in the State. Immediately prior to joining the CSIRO Staff Association, Jeff worked with the CPSU assisting with various workplace campaigns in Telstra, Tax, Centrelink and Medicare. Jeff has tertiary qualifications in Business and Management and spent time working in Community Development doing Community Organising in Local Government. He then spent time travelling. His travels took him to Asia, South East Asia, North America, South America, Europe and various places in Polynesia. When not working with members and getting organised for Enterprise Bargaining in 2010, Jeff enjoys sunny days, walks in the park and planning his future travels – to Japan and South Africa.



Tom Dixon, Queensland and Northern Australia Organiser, CSIRO Staff Association

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Email tom.dixon@cpsu.org.au

Tom has a long association with the CSIRO Staff Association, and now joins the team as the Queensland and Northern Australia Organiser. Tom spent six years as a postdoctoral researcher in CSIRO, working with colleagues in CLI and CMAR. Since leaving CSIRO last year, Tom has been working as a writer with Econnect Communication. There he was involved in the Northern Australia Taskforce report on the future of Northern Australia, produced by CSE. Tom has long been an advocate of unions and the effective industrial and professional representation of scientists. While at CSIRO, he was a Staff Association delegate for four years, and took an active role in postdoctoral policy negotiations and onsite campaigns around enterprise bargaining. In his spare time, Tom coordinates a local Oxfam group, and heads for the hills on his motorbike as often as possible.



Margaret Puls, Communication Officer, CSIRO Staff Association

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Margaret Puls joined the CSIRO Staff Association as a communication officer two days a week. Margaret worked five years in communications with CSIRO in Livestock Industries (2001-2006) and now works as a communication consultant specialising in science and technology communication across Australia. Margaret originally studied journalism and has undertaken postgraduate studies in science and technology policy and energy studies. She ran the WA Government's first online community cabinet back in 2000 and developed CSIRO's former 'Livestock Horizons' magazine. She has been published in media in Australia and overseas, and has experience across a wide range of communication activities. When not in the Brisbane office of the CPSU working for the CSIRO Staff Association for two days a week (Wednesdays and Thursdays), Margaret undertakes freelance work in the genomics, ICT and energy industries.



Carrie Wilson, Organising Support, CSIRO Staff Association

Tel 03 8620 6348
Email carrie.wilson@cpsu.org.au

Carrie began work with the CSIRO Staff Association in the position of Organising Support in November 2009. Prior to this she dabbled in various industries, including hospitality and most recently in real estate, where her experiences served to highlight the importance of being a member of a union. Carrie has been involved with the CPSU since entering the workforce, and has enjoyed assisting the CPSU with a number of their campaigns, most notably the 'Your Rights at Work' campaign, and in the lead up to the 2007 federal election. Union blood runs strong in her family – Carrie's mother also works for the CPSU. Carrie is looking forward to a successful and productive year for the CSIRO Staff Association, and to meeting more members along the way.



Clara Zetkin



A CENTURY FOR WOMEN

Next year represents the centenary of International Women's Day (IWD).

The event was proposed by a prominent German Jewish politician, Clara Zetkin, in 1910. The day represents a global celebration of the economic and social achievements of women – past, present and future.

Each year, the CSIRO Staff Association sponsors IWD events for members across Australia.

WINNING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCING ACT

Professor Barbara Pocock addressed the Urrbrae Women in Science group at their International Women's Day function in South Australia on Tuesday 9th March 2010.

Barbara is Director of the Centre for Work + Life at the University of South Australia. She is widely published in the field of work/life balance.

Barbara gave a wide ranging speech – variously described by the audience as “fantastic” and “extraordinary”.

Barbara informed and entertained the audience with her well researched insights into balancing a career and a family.

This small article cannot possibly do justice to Barbara's speech, however, she did leave the appreciative audience with seven tips to achieve a career family balance:

Seven steps to a happier life:

1. Choose a good partner
2. Stay healthy
3. Think collectively to get support for work place flexibility
4. Find a good boss
5. Ask for a work life balance, women do not ask for this enough
6. Take a lifecycle perspective of your career, there is plenty of time to step up and step back
7. Do work that you find meaningful

Listen to the podcast at www.cpsu-csiro.org.au (scroll down the home page)

- Ian Treloar, SA Organiser



At the SA IWD event (L-R): left to right Jan Mahoney, Mandy Walker, Barbara Pocock, Sonia Grocke

PARKVILLE POWER



Monica Long, Meteorology Section Secretary

The CPSU, CSIRO Staff Association and CSL in Parkville celebrated International Women's Day on 22 March.

Over 50 women attended the informal women in science networking event. Monica Long, Meteorology Section Secretary of the CPSU, was guest speaker.

The Staff Association's Victorian and Tasmania Organiser, Louise Jarman, noted that: “International Women's Day is an important reminder of the importance our role in the workplace and why it is important to take time to share with others our challenges and successes”.

Thanks to Louise, Susan Tonks and all who participated in the event.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA: MAXIMISING PRODUCTIVITY, DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION



Cathy Foley



ACT members attend the Cathy Foley talk.

CATHY FOLEY SPEAKS ON 'HOW A GIRL BECOMES A SCIENTIST'

BY JANET ANSTEE AND NICKY GRIGG

The CSIRO Staff Association hosted an International Women's Day lunch at the newly renovated seminar room at Entomology on 9 March. Our guest speaker was Cathy Foley, President FASTS (Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies) and CSIRO physicist. Approximately 35 women from CSIRO Canberra sites came to listen to Cathy and network with others. Mary Mulcahy, the communications manager from the Land and Water and the flagship Water from a Healthy Country, first gave a short presentation on the Women in Science (WiS) initiatives at the Urrbrae site in Adelaide.

This initiative, supported by the Staff Association has reinvigorated the WiS group which includes scientists and support staff from CSIRO Land and Water, Plant Industry, corporate staff, University of Adelaide, the SA Dept of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC) and the Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics. This initiative will be introduced to the Canberra Black Mountain site with the aims to provide networking and mentoring opportunities which aims to run four meetings a year, with invited speakers.

Cathy Foley gave an insightful talk on events leading to her career as a physicist in the context of a talk on how a girl becomes a scientist. The way to a career in physics for girls, it seems, is paved with many pitfalls. The decision points in girls and women's life lead many away from the challenge of becoming a physicist. Cathy talked about the influences and events that encouraged her along the way, paying tribute to her teachers and mentors.

In October last year the FAST's report 'Women in Science in Australia: Maximising productivity, diversity and innovation' by Professor Sharon Bell was published. Cathy reported that not much has changed in the last decade for women working in science and although junior women often initially feel well supported, tenured women often are marginalised and isolated.

Cathy's ideas for improvements in CSIRO include:

- Report on gender issues to ET (in a similar way as HSE)
- Advertise all appointments – no more taps on shoulder
- Require internal and external female applicants to apply
- Ensure there are several women on selection committees (not just one – at least 30%) – invite women outside CSIRO to sit on panels if there aren't women available within CSIRO
- Don't have 'must travel a lot' as a key selection criterion nor criterion for discriminating between candidates
- Cultural change. Easy to say, hard to do. An example is: move away from 24/7 culture (the anecdote of decisions made by email exchanges at 2am)
- Extend Payne-Scott awards
- Improve and resource re-entry pathways.

Cathy then took questions from the floor, and kept us all well entertained until she had to leave for the afternoon session of Science meets Parliament.

Many compliments on the quality of the speaker and the lunch were received and all look forward to the event next year!

For more information, see:

Women in Science in Australia: Maximising productivity, diversity and innovation' by Professor Sharon Bell <http://www.fast.org/images/news2009/fast%20women%20in%20science%5B1%5D.pdf>

MULTICULTURAL FOCUS AT FOREAT

By Elizabeth Hulm

A group of around 12 members attended a truly International Women's Day (IWD) breakfast at CSIRO's Floreat laboratory in Perth on 8 March.

This year was the 100th anniversary of the declaration of International Women's Day, an event created at the 2nd International Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1910 when a group of 100 women from 17 countries accepted a proposal put forward by a German women, Clara Zetkin.

Since then, IWD has been a day of celebration for women and is used by the union movement to spearhead campaigns for better conditions for women both within their communities and in their workplaces.

There was no one speaker at the Floreat IWD breakfast but instead all the women present were speakers.

CSIRO Staff Association members from diverse cultural backgrounds were able to discuss conditions for women at work in the countries of their origin and compare that with their experiences in Australia.

The Chinese women present were particularly pleased to celebrate the breakfast. For some it was the first time they had been able to celebrate IWD since coming to Australia. In China the day is a public holiday for women.

The Chinese women felt they had much greater equality in their workplaces in China and are better represented in all levels of management except at the high governmental levels although they felt they were well represented and respected at the provincial and local government levels.

Christiane Ludwig was able to talk about the experience for women from East Germany who had to make the transition to new conditions after the wall came down finding themselves effectively 'locked out' of the workforce without state funded childcare.

One American member said that the affirmative action strategy of the 70's and the 80's in the USA had made a difference there and had been effective in changing attitudes so that there was much greater equality in American workplaces than in Australia.

The conclusion? There is still a lot of work to be done in CSIRO. Addressing issues like childcare, work/life balance and career development and recognition of part-time staff would be great places to start.

The breakfast raised monies for the Haiti Earthquake appeal with Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA. <http://www.apheda.org.au/>



Elizabeth Hulme, WA Councillor

In the news

BIG BUSINESS FLOATS 73 AS NEW RETIREMENT AGE

- NICK BUTTERLY, THE WEST AUSTRALIAN FEBRUARY 15, 2010

Big business says the retirement age may need to be lifted to 73 by 2049 to keep the economy moving in the face of a greying population.

Releasing its wish list to the Federal Government before the May Budget, business groups have again pleaded with Labor to but the brakes on its economic stimulus program.

It also wants the Government cut taxes for big companies in the face of improving economic conditions.

A paper released by the Business Council of Australia has weighed into the debate about Australia's growing, ageing population, warning that that the number of people aged 65 or older will increase from 2.9 million to an estimated 7.4 million by 2049.

The BCA said the growth in the proportion of older people had major implications for the aged pension and for Federal and State budgets if taxation revenues were to shrink.

It said retirement ages would have to be lifted dramatically in the decades to come to ensure the proportion of five people of working age for every one retired was maintained.

The BCA said it was not specifically advocating a jump in the retirement age to 73 "at this stage".

But it warned there was no question "difficult decisions" would be required.

During a series of speeches early this year, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Australia's population was likely to exceed 35 million by 2049.

He has called for a national discussion on the problem of a greying Australia and has mooted lifting the ages at which people may become eligible for a pension.

Turning to the Budget deficit, the BCA said the Government must wind back its economic stimulus reforms and cut company taxes if it was to hack away at the debt.

The deficit is tipped to come in at \$57.7 billion for the 2009-10 financial year, although some have suggest the surprise quick turnaround in the health of the economy could see it come in much lower at about \$50 billion.

The BCA said there were some Government economic stimulus programs in which funding still had to be approved under the nation building and jobs program, but that those funds should now be held back because they were no longer needed.

It also warned the Government against increasing resource rent taxes for oil and gas corporations and mining companies as a way of returning the Budget to surplus.



SCIENCE MEETS PARLIAMENT

9-10 March 2010, Canberra

The CSIRO Staff Association is a member of FASTS, and has been a strong supporter of Science Meets Parliament since the event's inception in 1999.

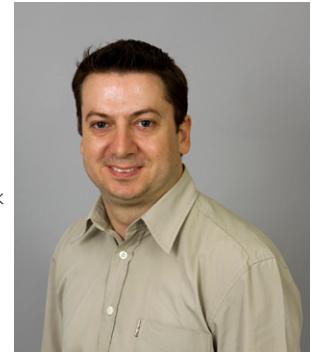
Each year, the Staff Association supports attendance at Science Meets Parliament by interested members of the Staff Association.

Unfortunately, in 2010, some members working at CSIRO who planned to attend Science Meets Parliament, withdrew their applications due to what has been described by the CSIRO Staff Association Council as a "lack of support and/or intimidation".

The reports from participants below indicate the value scientists receive from attending Science Meets Parliament.

The CSIRO Staff Association will raise the matter with CEO Megan Clark to ensure staff are supported and don't feel intimidated in participating in this important Australian science event.

- Sam Popovski, Secretary, CSIRO Staff Association



Sam Popovski, Secretary, CSIRO Staff Association

SCIENCE MEETS PARLIAMENT 2010 AND THE WAR ON SCIENCE

Amy Huva, Water Group, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts



L-R: Michael Borgas, CSIRO; Michelle Jonker, AIMS-QLD; Simon O'Toole, AAO; Cathy Foley, President, FASTS; Karen Kozielski, CSIRO; Amy Huva, DEWHA; Kjetil Wormnes, CSIRO.

Through the support of the CPSU and the CSIRO Staff Association, I was invited to spend two days attending the Science meets Parliament conference held by FASTS.

The conference was very engaging and enjoyable, and also very interesting for me personally.

As a public servant, I often see science communication from the angle of the bureaucracy, so it was interesting to learn about the best ways scientists are trying to put their information forward and the most effective ways of going about this.

The first day of the conference focused on communicating with non-scientific members of the public and Parliament and trying to reinforce the idea that not everyone knows what words like "nanotechnology" mean.

We heard from a wide range of speakers including Dr Cathy Foley (President of FASTS), Sophie Mirabella MP and other journalists (ABC, Canberra Times and Channel 7), public servants (DIISR, the PM's speechwriter Tim Dixon) and communicators.

Highlights included the session on conveying your message to politicians (with a very engaging and entertaining Richard Denniss from the Australia Institute) and Lyndal Byford from the Australian Science Media Centre who got people to give their pitch in the time it takes a sparkler to burn out (literally!).

The conference dinner was hosted by Robyn Williams from ABC Radio National and the keynote speaker was Peter Yates, the Chair of the Australian Science Media Centre, who spoke on challenges for scientists trying to be heard in the media landscape, and how the science community could work to better achieve this. It was a great evening and allowed me to meet many interesting scientists across many fields of research.

The second day meetings with parliamentarians was somewhat thwarted by the arrival at Parliament the same day by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. This event caused many meetings to be rescheduled or cancelled at the last minute. However, the meeting I attended was very interesting and I was pleasantly surprised at the level of interest the senator I met had in being better informed in areas that were not his primary area of expertise.

Lunch at the National Press Club was the highlight of the conference for me, with American scientist Chris Mooney flying in from the States to speak to us about his work, and what he terms the Republican "War on Science".

The conclusion after two days? Scientists need to speak up and speak out about their work because if they don't, in the words of Richard Denniss of the Australia Institute, the 'articulate dumb loud people' will, and they will win the war with misinformation.

I'd like to thank the CPSU and the CSIRO Staff Association for giving me the opportunity to attend this conference – it was an inspiring two days that left me energised and excited about continuing my career as a scientist.

SCIENCE MEETS PARLIAMENT 2010

Simon O'Toole, Anglo-Australian Observatory



Simon O'Toole

I am very grateful to the CSIRO Staff Association and the CPSU for sponsoring me to attend Science Meets Parliament 2010. Also thanks to FASTS for putting on the event.

The concept of this meeting has always interested me. As someone who deals regularly with the media, but mainly the science media, it was very interesting to hear perspectives on what makes science stories interesting to non-science journalists.

The first day was made up of a series of seminars and forums on communicating science to a general audience. The first session included a welcome from FASTS president Cathy Foley and Executive Director Anna-Maria Arabia.

We were given an exercise on the various levels of influence amongst politicians, the media, lobby groups, and the general public. This was very informative to me, as it showed how complex our society is, especially when you are trying to influence policy – whether it be science-based or otherwise.

Next up was a great session on conveying your message to the mass media, i.e. not just science journalists! At first, I'll admit, I thought having non-science journalists in attendance was a bad thing but I soon realised that if you want to reach a truly broad audience, then you have to speak to more than just 'New Scientist', etc. Scientists need to know how to reach out to people who don't go looking for science stories (i.e. most people).

In the afternoon, there were two sessions that over-lapped in some sense: the first was about conveying your message to politicians, while the second tried to develop the ability to be as clear and concise as possible.

The highlight for me (perhaps of the whole meeting) was the presentation by the Prime Minister's speechwriter, Tim Dixon. He spoke very well, and gave us six key points to consider when dealing with politicians. Some of these had been covered earlier (e.g. finding a key message or hook), but others, such as considering issues that are on the public policy agenda and framing your message within the politician's agenda, not your own, opened my eyes somewhat. It was very good preparation for our actual meeting with politicians the next day.

In the second part of the afternoon, we practiced delivering our message in the time it takes for a sparkler to burn, or at least we got to think about it, as there wasn't enough time for everyone to have a go. This really highlighted to me that short sound bites – often lambasted – are actually quite important in political communication, given the limited amount of time politicians have to discuss all the issues.

The conference dinner gave us a great chance to meet other scientists, especially those in very different fields. I was very happy to meet some climate scientists, in particular. I wasn't that impressed by Peter Yates' dinner speech, although I do appreciate his great enthusiasm and support for science.

Before meeting two parliamentarians, I attended a breakfast briefing dealing with open access to research articles in Australia, which was very informative. I actually found that the model used in astronomy and astrophysics is possibly the best one there is!

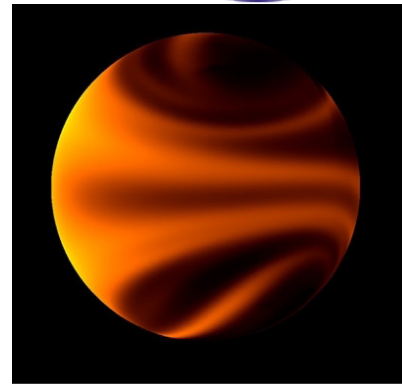
I was lucky enough to meet with two politicians (the Indonesian President's visit caused disruption for some), one from each side of the political divide: a Liberal backbench MP and an ALP senator. Both seemed very interested in astronomy in Australia and one even expressed interest in visiting Mt Stromlo Observatory just outside of Canberra.

Unfortunately, the Senate called for a division, so my second meeting was cut short, but I still managed to get my message across – luckily I was very well prepared by the previous day's seminars! I was also very impressed with the general awareness and even enthusiasm of all the politicians I met (there was one at my table at dinner as well) for perhaps the largest astronomical project on the horizon, the Square Kilometre Array.

Finally, we were fortunate to be able to go to the National Press Club to hear author and science communicator Chris Mooney speak on the issues for scientists surrounding the communication of climate change information, along with what he called the US Republican's "war on science".

It was a great way to cap off the two days for me, and showed how science can be hijacked by what Richard Dennis of the Australia Institute had earlier called "articulate dumb loud people" and also what we can try to do about it.

Thank you again to CSIRO Staff Association and the CPSU for giving me this great opportunity!



61 Virginis is a G5V class star slightly less massive than the Sun (G2V), located about 27.8 light-years away in the constellation of Virgo. Simon is part of an international research team that has discovered four new planets orbiting this earth-like sun.