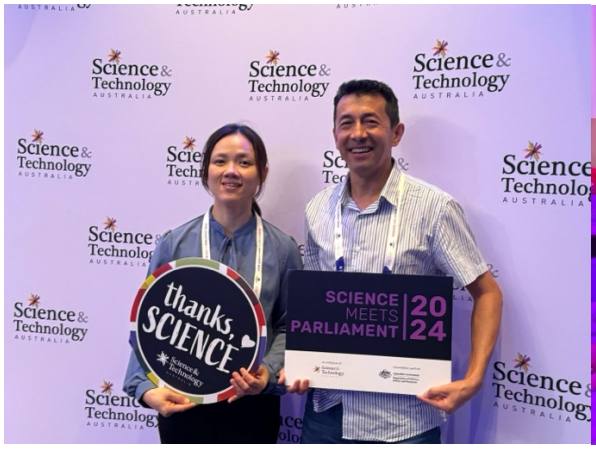
Nijat Imin, School of Science, Western Sydney University.

I co-represented the Australian Society of Plant Scientists (ASPS) at Science Meets Parliament (SMP) in March 2024. Science Meets Parliament (SMP) is a national gathering of STEM professionals designed to foster closer collaboration between STEM professionals and the nation's decision-makers, shaping better policies for the future. Over 360 delegates and more than 90 parliamentarians participated in the event. The goal is to increase communication and collaboration between these two groups. As noted by Professor Brian Schmidt during his presentation, “SMP is a unique event in the world that links researchers with policymakers. Solutions need a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach, and policy makers need to make sure their policies are evidence-based”. I found the event to be a valuable experience and enjoyed the sessions. The event's centrepiece was the Indigenous engagement session, "Next Steps to Elevate and Invest in First Nations Knowledges as a Priority." Indigenous STEM researchers led a discussion on how to ensure Indigenous knowledge receives dedicated focus within national science and research priorities. Below are some other highlights.



- Industry and Science minister Ed Husic announced the changes to the Global Science and Technology Diplomacy Fund (GSTDF). Up to $6 million in total grants are now available for Australian researchers to partner with counterparts in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, New Zealand, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Brazil.
- Ambassador Caroline Kennedy delivered a speech about collaboration between the United States and Australia on scientific issues. The Ambassador highlights three areas of collaboration: health care, national security, and climate change.
- Speaking at the National Press Club today, Science & Technology Australia President Professor Sharath Sriram made a powerful case for rapidly reaching the 3% target to turn Australia into an innovation nation, revealing how to create an innovation ecosystem that will secure the country's economic future, and warned of the consequences of failing to do so. He discussed the potential economic benefits of this investment. Australia currently spends less than 2% of GDP on R&D. If Australia invested 3% of GDP on R&D, the economy would grow by $100 billion and create 42,000 jobs. A connected innovation ecosystem is key to turning Australian ideas into products. Without this ecosystem, Australia will be a nation of consumers rather than creators.





I had the privilege of dining with the Honourable Warren Entsch, Member of Parliament, along with several other scientists. During the meal, we listened intently as he shared insights into his life's journey and remarkable career accomplishments.



I had the opportunity to visit and interview Member of Parliament Rowan Ramsey. It was fascinating to gain a firsthand glimpse into the work and responsibilities of an elected official. During our insightful discussion, we explored a range of topics related to plants, the environment, and agriculture. I emphasised the paramount importance of plant research, to which Mr. Ramsey voiced his strong agreement and support.

It was a wonderful opportunity to engage with our policymakers. Also, it was equally wonderful to be in a room filled with enthusiastic scientists from diverse disciplines and all regions of Australia. There was an abundance of stimulating discussions, and many new connections were forged. I would highly recommend this experience to anyone.