

**Science and Technology Australia
Science Meets Policy Makers 11 February 2015 ANU, Canberra**

Meeting attended by Tony Koppi, ACDICT Executive Officer, and the summary below is his personal report.

<http://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/focus-on/science-meets-policymakers-3/>

Many speakers and panel members (total 19) from 9 – 5pm

Speakers included:

Ian Chubb (Chief Scientist Australia)
Brian Schmidt (Nobel Laureate – astrophysics)
Bruce Chapman (Economist and HECS architect)
Aidan Byrne (ARC CEO)
Hugh White (Strategic Studies at ANU)

The thrust was about scientists influencing policy makers who are not scientists and who do not understand the jargon and are motivated by political outcomes.

Recommendations, based on common views by many presenters

- Represent scientific consensus and not personal or minority views
- Consensus itself not trustworthy because it changes so need to include probabilities
- Triangulate the evidence and consult to ensure science is being represented
- Building a credible and trustworthy reputation takes years
- Present the large-scale scientific evidence intelligibly without reference to political alignment
- Don't ask for more money but make sure benefits of actions are clear
- Understand the context of the policy makers and their motivation to allow alignment
- Speak to them in their terms and their interests and focus on helping them make the decision they need to make
- Think like the person you are trying to advise
- Telling them what's the right thing to do will not work
- Science cannot be trusted in making predictions because there are always contradictory views – must include probabilities in making predictions
- Initial political objectives are modified by the cost in an iterative process
- Direct letters to politicians have much less influence than them reading about it in the media
- Policy makers want answers when they ask for it; act quickly (hours) and don't ask them for more time to do more research.
- Success is a result of the right evidence available at the right time, and seen by the right people
- Policy is complex and the right scientific evidence is critical

These principles could apply to managing upwards in any organisation