

# DR RAGBIR BHATHAL



Dr Ragbir Bhathal is an award winning author and astrophysicist, who carries out research in Australian science studies, physics and astronomy at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur. He was the recipient of the prestigious Nancy Keesing Fellowship in 1996, by the State Library of New South Wales. This was to carry out a major study on the scientific life and letters of Australia's most famous 19<sup>th</sup> century astronomer, John Tebbutt. His recent book, *Australian Astronomers: Achievements at the frontiers of astronomy*, published by the National Library of Australia, was on the best seller's list. In launching the book in Canberra, the President of the Australian Academy of Science, Sir Gustav Nossal said that the publication was "an important and major book on science and astronomy in Australia".

Dr Bhathal teaches physics and astronomy and was Foundation Chairman of the SETI Australia Centre at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur. He teaches the only University based course on SETI (Searching for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) in any Australian University. Called *Astronomy and Life in the Universe* the course is one of the most popular courses at the University and attracts students not only from the Faculty of Science but also from the business, health, humanities and law faculties. A member of the International SETI Committee of the International Academy of Aeronautics and Astronautics and was the Chairman of the International and Local Organising Committees of the Conference on SETI in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This was the first international conference in the world to discuss the scientific and social aspects of SETI. He is Chairman and Project Director of the Campbelltown Observatory at the University and is working on optical SETI with a group of scientists. He is also Foundation Chairman of the Australia-Singapore Centre and a Councilor of the University of Western Sydney Macarthur Council and is also the Foundation President of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia (NSW Chapter).

A member of the academic staff of the University of Singapore before becoming Foundation Director of the Singapore Science Centre, a "science museum of influence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century", he was a member of the senior management team that built the Power House Museum. He was the Foundation Head of the Science and Technology Division and was responsible for the supervision of the design and construction of the science and technology displays in the Museum, and was appointed as Project Director of the Sydney Observatory building restoration and exhibit programs.

Dr Bhathal served as Director on the International Board of Directors of the Association of Science and Technology Centres in Washington, USA, and was a distinguished visitor of the US State Department. He was secretary of the Singapore National Academy of Science and the Singapore Association for the Advancement of Science of which he is a Fellow. He was Foundation President of the Singapore Society of Science Writers.

**Appointed as adviser to the Australian Federal Minister for Science and was asked to serve as an UNESCO consultant on science policy and to represent the Australian and Singapore governments at international conferences on the public understanding of science. He was the leader of the Singapore government delegation to the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ASEAN Experts Group on marine pollution and has served on various high level committees of the Singapore government including the Science Council of Singapore, National R & D Committee, etc.**

**His publications include, *Australian Astronomers: Achievements at the frontiers of astronomy*; *Under the Southern Cross: A brief history of astronomy in Australia*; *Australian Astronomer: John Tebbutt*; *Astronomy for the Higher School Certificate*; *Searching for ET*; *Australian Scientists and Inventors*; *Singapore Towards the Year 2000 (co-ed)*; *Non-formal education in Singapore (co-ed)*; *Singapore Science Fiction (co-ed)*; *Government and University Research (co-ed)*; *Cultural Heritage Vs Technological Development: Challenges to Education (co-ed)* and numerous papers in international journals..**

**He was former editor of the *Singapore Scientist* and a Contributing Editor of *ASIA 2000* and has served as President of the Royal Society of New South Wales and was awarded the 1988 Royal Society Medal for services to science. Also, Dr Bhathal was awarded the prestigious 1991 C. J. Dennis Award for excellence in natural history writing.**