



CSIRO STAFF
ASSOCIATION

Wavelength

A newsletter for members of the CSIRO Staff Association

The CSIRO Staff Association is a section of the Community Public Sector Union

September 2010

Congratulation iPad winners!



Adam (left) and Maarten.

Congratulations to our members Adam Liedloff in Darwin and Maarten Kooiker in Brisbane, both winners of shiny new Apple 64Gb iPads in the CSIRO Staff Association's iPad competition.

Enjoy!



Subscription statements for tax purposes

Your CSIRO Staff Association subscription fees are fully tax deductible.

This year the Staff Association has discontinued the practice of sending members subscription statements for tax invoice purposes. This change was made after feedback from members and reduces the amount of hard copy mail we distribute.

Members are advised to use their group certificates as their tax invoice record for subscription amounts.

All members can still obtain subscription statements by email through a request to csstaff@cpsu.org.au

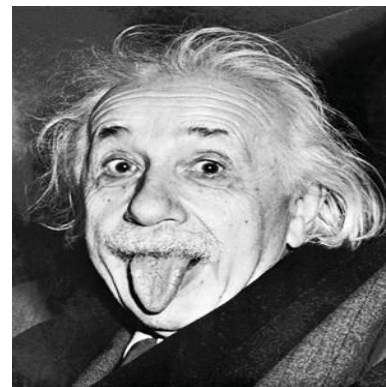
Calling all postdocs!

A postdoc is one of the most critical points of your science career – if you come out with a good publishing record, and extra skills, you'll be set for the future. But what if you aren't given the opportunity to publish? What if you're not given the time to develop your skills?

The Staff Association has long supported postdocs in CSIRO: read how on our blog: <http://bargainingblog.wordpress.com/2010/09/21/postdocs-do-it-better-together/>

Last month, by a vote of 2588 in favour and 121 opposed, the postdocs of the University of California's ten campuses endorsed the first contract negotiated between their union, PRO/UAW, and the university.

To get an idea of the sort of questions asked in bargaining, see the PRO/UAW website, which provides a link to congressional hearings. This gives a good account of what it is like. <http://www.prouaw.org/home/home.php>



"I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and, also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field."

-- Albert Einstein, on why he joined the faculty Union at Princeton as a charter member.

Fact or Fiction

Only union members agree with findings in the independent university *Working at CSIRO* survey report.

<http://csirobargaining2011.org/csiro-working-life-survey/results/>

<http://www.the-funneled-web.com/>



Real efficiencies in CSIRO will come from reform of bureaucratic processes

By Dr Michael Borgas, President, CSIRO Staff Association

Bargaining has come around yet again. This is my third time.

Collective bargaining is a basic right which was under threat in my first campaign in 2005 under Workchoices industrial relations laws. Every effort of management was directed at non-Union involvement.

However the EAWG (Enterprise Agreement Working Group) process and subsequent negotiations with Unions delivered a Union Agreement with gains on post-doctoral and term positions and losses on regional benefits.

My lasting memory from the EAWG was the admonishment 'you can't negotiate in here, this is the agreement room' – for me a real Dr. Strangelove moment.

Between agreements, our activities focus on enforcement and coping with organisational change. The outcome of enforcing term conditions through the industrial courts resulted in major wins for many staff with improved job security.

The negotiations of 2007 involved the Union directly, but still under Workchoices legislation, complicated by a change of government. A long and difficult process delivered our current agreement, maintaining conditions for postdocs but with losses on redundancy and delivered more bureaucracy.

We need a new agreement by February 2011 that maintains our salaries and attractiveness in the market, with particular emphasis on improving redundancy processes and regional science and divisions.

The collective approach in CSIRO, I believe, generates fair remuneration and fair conditions for all, and this particularly means for those people who are most vulnerable whether it is reception, workshop, early career or regional groups. Most of our senior scientists believe that we work better in teams when the workplace is fair.

The membership of our collective is diverse and stable at about 3000 members. More members obviously makes us stronger and better able to support staff in our diverse, interesting and sometimes challenging organisation.

An inspiring story of collective success comes from the postdoc unionisation occurring in the University of California system, which has about 10% of US postdocs.

For five years they fought to establish an industrial union, as part of the United Auto-Workers (UAW), to win an agreement for just the most basic conditions and a fair pay rise. The bargaining was brutal but last month they just agreed to their first collectively negotiated contract.

The world views of governments, management and scientists are different. To achieve good-faith bargaining, the UAW post-docs had to drive a congressional hearing where all sides gave evidence and eyes were opened to other world views. An audio podcast speaks to the sobering reality of modern corporate managerialism in conflict with democratic collectives of both the union and the congress.

It is in the interests of both CSIRO as an institution and its staff that we improve our own matrix management and corporate processes.

The real efficiencies to be unlocked in our organisation are not to be found in picking off or exploiting small vulnerable groups. The real efficiencies are reforming some of our bureaucratic processes.

The matrix is meant to focus us on long term strategic goals important both scientifically and practically. The reality has been the fragmentation of our minds into thousands of projects, even exhausting WBS codes in some Divisions.

Practical answers to these problems are not easy, but when our 3000 members are regarded as a minority interest by management we achieve less than we can together.

The Staff Association needs to be an industrial union in the current era. Our history as an Officers Association and Technical Association merging, and then joining the Community and Public Sector Union, is a natural and important progression. The challenge is to represent and be fair to all staff, from managers to receptionist, and this is only possible with our broad spectrum of active members.

New members are essential and always welcome, because bargaining is tough and sometimes disappointing.

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.

Please send submissions to Margaret Puls, Editor – Margaret.Puls@cpsu.org.au or the CSIRO Staff Association - csstaff@cpsu.org.au

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

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The views of members and other content submitted by members published in Wavelength may not reflect CSIRO Staff Association policy or be endorsed by the CSIRO Staff Association.

Why scientists need Librarians more than ever

In the age of information, with billions of documents available online, research organisations need the specialist skills of Librarians more than ever, says Ms Suzie Davies, Librarian, Science Technology and Information Group, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

"The recent review of the IPCC showed how easy it is to place too much weight on some published research that does not merit this endorsement and recommends the IPCC should strengthen its guidance on how to evaluate information.

Yet what we see in science organisations in the APS at the moment is scaling back of the specialist skills of librarians and a move to centralise library services.

Scientists in some regional and city locations now might find themselves with a solitary computer terminal to provide the service their local Librarian used to provide.

Sure, it's wonderful in this day and age to have so many electronic resources at our fingertips. In the old days you could only use what information you had in your building and getting information in or out of the building was a time-consuming process.

In the past the problem was getting access to information. Librarians were good at getting access. We have networks set up. For example, I work in a marine library and we participate in networks with other marine libraries in Australia and around the world.

We all support each other and have always done so since the days of card catalogues – only now we can do it more quickly.

These days you can access billions of web pages and billions of documents online. So in the past people could not find information because it was hard to access, these days they can access information but still don't know what is out there!

They look at a website but don't know if it is an authoritative website, or whether the published PDF document they see on the web has any credibility, or whether there is any peer-review process that has gone with it. They aren't trained to know that but Librarians are.

Instead of being overwhelmed by all this information, Librarians use the same techniques and principles to identifying information that we've always used, whereas individuals get overwhelmed and can go for quick and immediate response that comes up, which is often not the best or the most measured response.

The thing I find disappointing is that organisations that should know better don't see librarians as the people who have those skills.

Librarians can say, 'this is a document that is worth looking at because it has 250 other documents behind it, whereas this document was



L-R Michael Borgas, Kathy Allan, Scott Wilkinson, Suzie Davies, Tom Dixon.

written by Bill Blogs yesterday over his cereal!' That is the skill librarians have.

If you are a scientist and familiar with information and publishing processes, then you are a step ahead of most people but it is not necessarily the best use of your time, and you still won't know the best options and places to find information as a Librarian does.

As far as we are concerned, we work like research assistants to scientists. We get them the information they need and they use their scientific knowledge to evaluate that information.

Scientists want us to keep performing that role – whenever there is the threat of a cutback to library research services it is the scientists who always leap to our defence.

Google is a commercial information vendor and the information you find online reflects the commercial structure of online search engines. Libraries, for the most part, don't have this commercial focus.

But I think the thing that gets completely ignored by those reducing and "rationalising" library services is the relationships that get built up by having the resources on site.

Losing this local support and the knowledge and understanding built up over time, will inevitably prove an impost on scientists' time and the way they do science."

Regional science campaign update

Regional delegates and activists have been meeting to discuss regional specific issues that are commonly faced at all of CSIRO's regional sites. From these discussions the Save Regional Sites Campaign was born.

The Save Regional Science campaign aims to resolve a lot of the issues faced by regional sites by obliging CSIRO to do a comprehensive review of regional sites, as well as speaking directly with the executive at the bi-annual Consultative Council meeting.

Some of the issues the campaign tackles include:

- a) Lack of Support Staff
- b) Training Issues
- c) One Division sites and vulnerability
- d) Travel allowance issues
- e) Inequities in facilities
- f) Funding issues

We urge all of our regional members and staff to support the campaign as this impacts not only their working lives but the communities that the sites reside in.

The National Secretary of the Staff Association has written to many of the Federal MPs of the electorates in which CSIRO has sites to inform them of our position when it comes to regional sites. If you would like to see these letters please speak to your local delegate or contact the Staff Association.

To read more on the issues the campaign is addressing please visit <http://csirobargaining2011.org/campaigns/save-regional-science/>

Pop this link into your favourites and visit often. We encourage you all to have a read and leave your 'two cents' worth!

Over time we will be holding meetings/BBQs for the chance for all staff to get together and discuss the progress of campaign and give their input and get involved.



Jeff Carig, National Regional Science campaign leader

Last days at Davies: CSIRO Staff Association launches 2011 bargaining campaign in Townsville



Member Comment

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From our bargaining website

www.csirobargaining2011.org

Boo!

Spill and fill is a cruel form of restructure and a lazy management tool. It also gives management the provision to re-define positions and re-classify them at a lower level. Boo to managers who do this.

- Mark

Time for a science seachange

The point has been made that costs of regional labs are probably lower than other labs due to fewer support staff, yet are costed at the same rate. A further issue is site costs, both direct costs and costs to the environment.

Does it cost CSIRO the same to own or lease real estate in cities as in regional centres? Is the cost to the environment of locating research centres in cities the same as locating in regional centres?

I recognise that in some cases it is cheaper (in terms of \$ and the environment) to do things in cities and in some cases it is cheaper outside cities. And there are certainly inefficiencies, such as so many (often trivial) management decisions about our leased regional lab space actually being required by CSIRO to be made in Canberra or Melbourne rather than locally.

However such issues do raise the question of whether proper and fair accounting for all costs might show it is rational to have more of CSIRO's research happening in regional centres. rather than less.

- Jocelyn Davies

Do the job properly

I agree with Jocelyn's comments 100%. Another line of enquiry pertinent to this discussion is – we are here to serve Australia in its entirety, not five relatively small coastal areas on the (mostly) southern half of the continent (SPAMB). To properly conduct scientific investigations of our landscape and our industries, surely we need regional sites distributed over our entire landscape. Modelling and satellite imagery, etc. whilst helpful, cannot substitute for properly conducted work on the ground. It's not about north versus south or inland versus coastal; it's about doing the job properly, or not....

- Peter Hunt

Wrong advice

Spill and fill can only be described as an anti-human process and hopefully Staff Association members can exert some influence to stop this 'lazy' management tool, as Mark described. In the meantime there is a lot of confusion. I recently heard a HR manager misrepresent to a member that if they didn't apply for a 'spilled' position they had effectively resigned. The process is bad enough without the intimidations of poor advice. If you are going through the process access the link below from the CSIRO intranet capability page contact your delegate to get the help and support of the Staff Association.

<http://intranet.csiro.au/intranet/hr/ctt/faq.htm#75>

- Elizabeth

Pakistani flood event raises \$2,500

By Elizabeth Hulm, CELS, Floreat, Perth

On Thursday last week, the CSIRO Staff Association and Floreat Social Club joined with the Pakistani community to raise money for victims of the floods in Pakistan.

We served well over 100 lunches and made close to \$2500.

The food was cooked by the families of three of the Pakistani scientists who work on the Floreat site and the Naan bread was donated by a local Pakistani restaurant and served by the local Pakistani scientists, a visiting scientist, the wives and Staff Association volunteers.

A big thank you to the local Pakistani scientific community and their families, our union delegates, the social club who also came on board with the initiative, the site coordinator Damien Newman, the OIC's on site who endorsed the event – and to Connie who runs the canteen but allowed us to take over her lunchtime trade for the cause.

All the funds raised will go to the Imran Khan fund; a conscious decision by the SDC based on the premise of self reliance and self determination not charity, that the Pakistani people can administer the funds and direct them to where they determine the need is and they use Pakistani volunteers and labour.

It was a great day for everyone involved. It was a good reminder that unions are about more than just industrial matters, that we are a part of many communities – our workplace community, our broader local communities and the International community.

Unions are an organised section of the workforce that can rapidly mobilise. We can play a role in contributing directly to countries and regions of the world where men and women are disadvantaged through poverty, lack of workplace, human rights, civil conflict and now more often from natural and environmental disasters.

Women in Science

The Women in Science (WIS) initiative supported by the CSIRO Staff Association was launched in Floreat on 13 September by CLW Deputy Chief Jenny Stauber, who has been instrumental in getting this initiative up and remains a strong advocate and supporter.

There are now three sites in CSIRO where WIS has been established - SA, WA and Black Mountain ACT. The Staff Association, particularly through the work of organisers Rod Drinkwater and Ian Treloar, is a partner in the initiative and contributes both funds and staffing resources for events. The initiative has solid backing by organisers and Staff Association delegates and councillors.

It is interesting to compare the numbers of women in science from the University of Western Australia with CSIRO:

	CSIRO	UWA
% all staff that are women	39%	50.5%
Academic staff	n/a	35%
Managers	7%	59%
General 'support' staff	~70%	63%
Research Scientists	23%	n/a

UWA used to have stats that looked very similar to CSIRO but things really turned around for women at UWA (in terms of pattern of employment, etc.) when Prof Fay Gale, the first female Vice Chancellor at UWA and the second in Australia championed the role of women in much the way Jenny Stauber and others in CSIRO are doing – Jenny has played a strong role in getting the Executive's attention on this and securing some funds to support the initiatives which CSIRO hopes to roll out to even more sites!

This is important, as University of NSW professor of human resources management Michael O'Donnell, a co-author of the independent university survey of CSIRO staff was quoted in the *Canberra Times* saying he thought the survey may just have touched on "the tip of an iceberg" in relation to gender issues within the organisation. See survey results at <http://csirobargaining2011.org/csiro-working-life-survey/results/>

- By Woodward and eBernstein



NO CITY IS AN ISLAND



Great Barrier Reef

No man is an island, entire of itself
every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main
- John Donne

Let's find the right balance between critical research mass based in cities and 'place-based research' in regional landscapes among community and industry stakeholders.

National challenges have regional characteristics.
Join our campaign to Save Regional Science.

csirobargaining2011.org

