



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

July 2010

Win an iPad in the CSIRO Staff Association social media competition



Tell us about things in your workplace and win an iPad!

The Staff Association is looking for up to three members who like to speak with their fingers.

We are looking for social media enthusiasts from across the analogue and digital generations - I, Y, X and boomers - to show us how better to communicate with our members and CSIRO staff using digital media applications. It might be as simple as a blog, photo sharing page, or creating a community of staff linked by email.



We are particularly interested in communication that can give a voice to a community, streamline the flow of information between the Staff Association and members on bargaining issues, or help profile an industrial issue of concern in your workplace.

This is a real opportunity for you to advocate for better science. It will strengthen the voice of scientists and science staff across a range of policy and industrial issues during the upcoming 2011 Enterprise Bargaining campaign.

Get clicking today! www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

1. The iPad competition is not open to CSA staff or members of Council.
2. Applicants must be a financial member of the CSIRO Staff Association.
3. Applicants must complete an entry form, available on the CSA website, by Tuesday 17 August 2010.

Fact or Fiction ?

Up to 30 communicators will be made redundant in September.

CSIRO redundancy hits hard

Real

CFNS - 23 redundancies

- 11 Werribee
- 7 Nth Ryde
- 3 Coopers Plains
- 2 Adelaide

CMSE

Industrial Research Services - 20
Redundancies (approx)

PROPERTY SERVICES

15 Nationally

IM&T

40 redundancies total - 30 IM&T and
10 Library

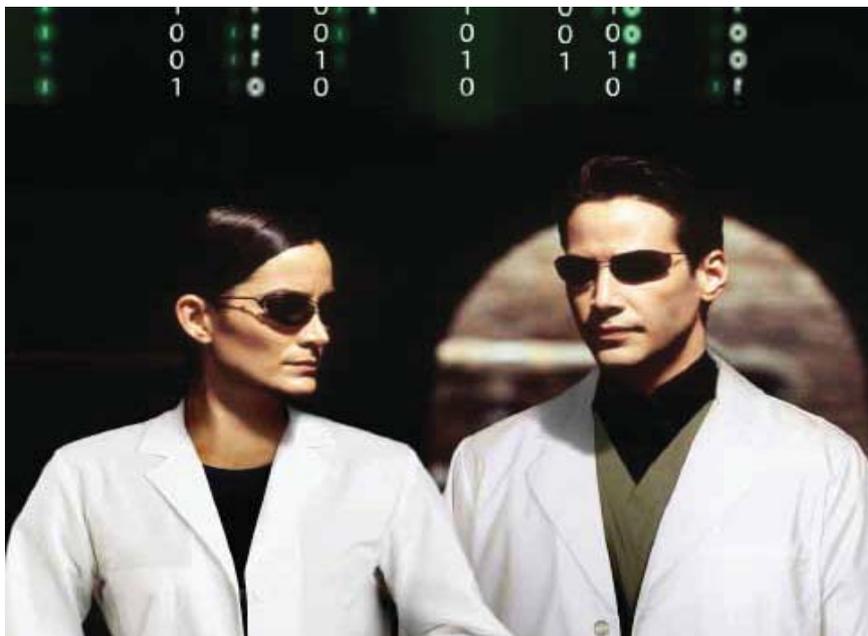
CLI - under 15?

Please note: these numbers have been
supplied to the CSIRO Staff Association
but may be subject to change.

Rumour?

Rumours of future redundancy targets
include:

- Communicators 25-30 jobs
to go to be announced in
September.
- HR to be spill and filled
- Finance
- PI?
- PA/EAs



Tales from the Matrix: An independent university research team has undertaken a study on the working life of CSIRO staff, distributed by the CSA. Results will be available in August.

Life in the Matrix: Independent staff survey

Nearly 2000 CSIRO staff completed the independent CSIRO working life survey, about a third of CSIRO's working population.

The survey has been conducted independently of CSIRO through a university research team. It is supported, although not funded, by the CSIRO Staff Association. The survey results will be available in August.

UK says no to "sausage machine" science

In his first speech to the Royal Institution in London, the UK's new science minister David Willetts says government's role is not to fund a "sausage machine" but should "support blue sky thinking".

Mr Willetts indicated that developing "clusters" of academic and business expertise would be considered a "high priority" by the coalition government.

The minister said that as a model for innovation he preferred the idea of clusters such as science parks, which provided a "low-risk environment for high-risk activity", to a "sausage-machine" model that focused too narrowly on inputs and outputs.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/david-willetts-science-innovation-and-the->

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.

Sam.Popovski@cpsu.org.au
www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

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.

My big fat redundancy rant

Why are people treated like this?

By Elizabeth Hulm

As a CSIRO Staff Association representative for over ten years I have had many occasions to meet and support staff facing redundancy in a number of CSIRO Divisions.

I have learnt a lot about workers, managers and systems. What surprises me most is how little we seem to understand about being human.

First up, I have learnt it isn't good to accept unfair treatment with no reply. When hearing of their potential redundancy people are often firstly shocked – then get angry that they accepted less than they should in terms of how they were treated in the workplace.

CSIRO staff put a lot into their jobs

CSIRO staff put a lot into their jobs, they're often motivated by just a love of science. They work long days, weekends or skip holidays when experiments require it. When you put a lot of yourself into an organisation it's hard to hear your contribution is surplus.

When a person is made redundant, they do remember the times they were not treated properly, not paid for overtime, overlooked for promotion, etc.

It made me determined to raise issues at work when they arise, and not ignore them.

Being part of a union is helpful. It gives me opportunities to say when things about the system aren't working for me or others and provides a mechanism for influencing the shape of the workplace.

We are an educated workforce

We are an educated workplace with scientific thinkers and I believe most people can handle being told their positions are surplus if the process is transparent, based on some logical criteria, if the outcome is an improvement for the organisation and if the person is treated openly and respectfully in full recognition of their adult status.

I wonder how we can get it so wrong. I usually have to tell people it's unlikely we can save their job; organisations have the right to restructure. The Staff Association can help a lot in making sure people get their entitlements and are supported through the process.

People are often good at identifying ways to make the redundancy process better for them, such as training that would be useful, a date that might suit them better and perhaps make a difference to their superannuation or some work they would like the opportunity to finish off.

One person I knew said all he wanted was for his manager to say thanks.

Other examples might include negotiating an agreed finish date that still enables

the person to get the 'fast track' payout but reach a milestone at work like 30 years of service.

There is \$3000 provided for training and financial counselling but there are sometimes requests that require a little bit more to do a specialised course or attend a small conference for example.



Flexible Divisions do redundancy the best

Divisions that do redundancy the best make concessions.

I have seen it happen; people have been able to access extra training that makes a real difference to employment opportunities.

Sometimes it translates into some extra costs for a Division but the point is people (those who have left and those who remain) want to feel valued. This should be part of how we restructure.

Productivity is lost in a stressed environment

It's uncomfortable to watch workmates suffer. I suspect we probably underestimate how much productivity is lost in a stressed work environment!

Good managers value people and are flexible. They see that a small loss can translate into a benefit for them too.

They realise helping people transition from their employment helps the person leaving and the rest of the staff. None of us work in a vacuum. It feels better to be in a workplace where people are treated well and with respect.

Poor managers stick to the rules; show little or no flexibility and have little understanding of the human condition. I have heard statements like 'I got where I am with no help', 'CSIRO doesn't owe anyone a living', and 'a job is not forever'.

Having some job security is NOT too much to ask

We are all where we are because of the help we've had from others – and is having some security in a job too much to expect? CSIRO does have some responsibility. One could ask what CSIRO owes the taxpayer and how productive is a workforce under constant restructure?

People should be gaining skills so they don't become redundant! During down-sizing, people should be more employable leaving CSIRO than when they started.

This way they would leave the organisation feeling good about their experience and contribution – and Australian science.

Less staff, less science, and lack of financial accountability

Poor financial management by the CSIRO Executive is leading to cuts in important areas of science capability and leaving staff disillusioned about the future of the Organisation.

Staff are losing their jobs in areas that divisional science reviews have earmarked for expansion; they are losing their jobs in areas that are fully externally funded; they are losing their jobs with the knowledge that their work will be transferred to others after they leave. This is not a positive and sustainable model for an innovative research organisation.

But why is this happening? As the CEO and the Executive have admitted, appropriation and external revenue are up relative to last financial year. Where has the revenue gone? Why are Business Units being directed to cull jobs in this environment?

Although there may be a variety of factors at play, cost blowouts in SAP implementation is one obvious candidate. The Staff Association has recently learned that 47 Fujitsu IT contractors are still on CSIRO's books.

This is in addition to the significant in-house resources

dedicated to propping up this underperforming system. Why haven't staff seen any accountability from the CSIRO Executive for this?

CSIRO science depends on teamwork and positive morale amongst scientists, research projects and support staff.

Surely this is the culture we want to create where transparency and accountability are paramount?

We don't need a Values Compass to understand that.



Sam Popovski, Secretary, CSIRO Staff Association, and former CSIRO scientist

Staff Association travel allowance win in South East Queensland

Travel allowances

Travel allowances are used to compensate staff for the inconvenience caused by having to relocate to a new site. The CSIRO policy on travel allowance for relocation of sites in South East Queensland is quite clear – if, due to a site relocation, the journey to your new site is more than 20 minutes, and increases by more than 15 minutes, you're entitled to the allowance.

The issue

In a recent move, HR managers in South East Queensland incorrectly applied the allowance policy and denied staff access to the allowance.

Following a members meeting where the issue was raised, the Staff Association contacted CSIRO senior management asking them to immediately rectify how the policy was applied.

The following day, the members were contacted by management, and are now receiving their allowance.

During Enterprise Bargaining we'll be campaigning to move policy, such as this, into the Agreement – this prevents management from shifting the goalposts on policy when it suits them.

Future relocations

Travel allowances will be available to staff relocating to Boggo Road, Coopers Plains, and other sites across Australia. If you're part of these moves, and believe you've not received the correct allowance, please contact the Staff Association immediately.

The CSIRO Staff Association campaigns to improve your working conditions and to enforce your rights at work – if you're not a member, join us now and ensure that we continue to do this in the future.

For more information, contact Tom Dixon, Organiser, Queensland and Northern Territory, tom.dixon@cpsu.org.au - or the CSIRO Staff Association csstaff@cpsu.org.au

Don't kill creativity!

"How do we get the message across to management that modern science is about building teams out of finance, HR, communication, technicians, experimentalists and theorists?"

At least leave us the walls

"It is amazing how executive junkets, huge salaries and large office spaces are not seen as a "business overhead" but having two PCs, walls and solid furniture are seen as extravagant luxuries."

Business Unit review

"There is definitely a 'Business Unit Overheads' review being done by the EMC, chaired by Bart Follink. This is probably where PA/EA staffing cuts are going to come from. The goal of the review is to save \$10m this financial year."

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Clause for concern?

"I'd like to express my deep concern about the usage of Clause 11s in this Organisation (not a new topic but one that isn't being addressed). With now >600 Clause 11s (I think) my fear is that this employment option is being abused by management to explicitly control it's "leadership team". Whilst we are not privy to the obligations under Clause 11s I've heard staff citing productivity bonus requirements like "has successfully ensured all projects were completed on time and within budget". This is clearly a business incentive issue, not a scientific excellence issue. As importantly, in their current usage they are basically AWAs, something we all fought vehemently against introducing."

Nice work

"Nice work in sorting out the actual redundancy provisions for the CMSE staff involved; this will set a nice precedent for all staff facing redundancies at the moment." (See page 6 for more information).

Tom Online

www.tomdixon.org
twitter.com/tomdixon

Tom Dixon is the Queensland and Northern Australia Organiser. Tom spent six years as a postdoctoral researcher in CSIRO. 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. Tom's website will allow him to connect to delegates and members in Northern Australia and Queensland, and update people regularly on campaigns.



Save Regional Science!

CSIRO staff based at regional New South Wales sites recently took part in a teleconference hookup to discuss issues of importance to their sites, and to the future of regional sites in CSIRO.

Staff from Griffith, Armidale, Myall Vale, Culgoora and Parkes participated in the discussion.

"We are looking to expand this network to regional sites in other States," said NSW Organiser, Jeff Carig.

Check Wavelength for future updates, or contact Jeff for more information - jeff.carig@cpsu.org.au

Follow me on Twitter

Jeff Carig, NSW Organiser

I represent the professional and industrial needs of scientists and science support staff across New South Wales.

My current campaigns include linking regional staff with other regional sites facing similar issues in New South Wales - and beyond.

I am also strongly advocating against the inhumane 'spill and fill' process.

Prior to joining the Staff Association, I worked on various workplace campaigns in Telstra, Tax, Centrelink and Medicare for the CPSU.

I have tertiary qualifications in Business and Management and spent time working in Community Development doing Community Organising in Local Government.

My travels have taken me to Asia, South East Asia, North America, South America, Europe and various places in Polynesia. Future travel plans include Japan and South Africa.

twitter.com/csansworganiser



Fair Work for a fair day's pay

Resolution of a Fair Work Australia dispute concerning the provision of information to potentially redundant staff on redundancy benefit options

By Paul Girdler, Lead Organiser, CSIRO Staff Association



Background

During redundancy processes conducted in CSIRO Materials Science and Engineering (CMSE), your union became aware that potentially redundant staff were only being provided with financial cessation estimates for the so called "fast track" redundancy option. We maintained that the Enterprise Agreement required CSIRO to provide financial cessation estimates for all redundancy options ("fast track", "slow track" and income maintenance).

CSIRO Corporate HR vehemently disagreed and continued to not provide estimates for all options for staff right across the organisation. After three meetings the matter could not be resolved, so your union notified a formal dispute to Fair Work Australia (FWA).

Why is this issue significant for all staff?

It's important that when staff are required to make crucial financial decisions, they have all possible information at hand so that they can make a truly informed choice. This is particularly so when considering potential redeployment or in determining which redundancy option is most suitable. For example, when visiting a financial advisor, we believe it's critical that detailed financial cessation estimates are provided by CSIRO, in order for staff to get the best possible financial advice. For many staff this is the most important financial decision of their life.

What happened as a result of the FWA hearings?

After two conciliation hearings at FWA, CSIRO HR have now agreed that they will provide estimates of the cessation payments for each of the options for each potentially redundant officer. This will occur at least four weeks prior to the scheduled date of formal advice to an officer that a redundancy is to proceed.

Furthermore where an individual potentially redundant officer requests the provision of earlier estimates because they need it to make an informed decision concerning CSIRO alternative employment options (i.e. redeployment), CSIRO will provide the information earlier. These requirements will apply to new potential redundancy situations from 3 July. If you would like a full text of the statement from FWA or a sample proforma of the new financial cessation estimates, please email csstaff@cpsu.org.au

How is your union supporting staff with redundancy issues?

Firstly we continue to strongly enforce the provisions of the current Enterprise Agreement and provide support for all members. Secondly we are proactively developing a new redundancy process as part of our claim for the enterprise bargaining negotiations this year. Our proposed new process will be based on feedback from members and will seek to discard the current flawed method of "spill and fill". A workshop on redundancy issues was held with CSIRO HR on 29 June to start exploring some alternatives to current processes. We will be seeking further feedback from members on this issue at enterprise bargaining forums to be held before the commencement of negotiations.

Member Feedback:

"Congratulations on this result and on being proactive in working for better redundancy arrangements.

An "employer of choice" should be seeking to handle redundancies respectfully if only because it is very important for the moral, loyalty and retention of the staff remaining."

Rebooting democracy (and science?)

In the age of the internet and politics, the killer new 'app' is you!
Rebooting America is a series of essays about digital activism and regenerating government for the Internet Age.
<http://rebooting.personaldemocracy.com/>



Curious about Cuba?

Are you interested in:

- agricultural sustainability?
- food security?
- global social justice?
- universal health care?
- education?
- socialism in practice?

Be more than a tourist!
Join the Southern Cross Brigade to Cuba!

The brigade runs 27 December 2010 - 20 January 2011 and costs \$1000*.

Find out more and register your interest now!
www.cubabrigade.org.au

*\$100 late fee applies for bookings received after 31 July 2010. Cost includes all accommodation, meals and excursions while in Cuba. Cost does not include international airfares & taxes or compulsory travel & health insurance.