



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

June 2010

## Childcare victory

CSIRO Staff Association members have successfully campaigned to overturn a Property Services proposal that would have threatened the financial viability of established CSIRO child care centres.

Central to the ongoing success of the Staff Association's campaign for improved child care in CSIRO has been the formation and activity of the National Child Care Committee formed in February of this year. As well as supporting existing centres this group is ensuring CSIRO management lives up to its obligations under the Enterprise Agreement to assess the demand and feasibility of providing additional childcare facilities as part of all new CSIRO building projects or upon any significant additions at CSIRO sites.

Due to the childcare campaign, CSIRO have now agreed with the Staff Association to commence the process of assessing demand and determining feasibility for on-site childcare in Townsville and Perth. If you are interested in joining our childcare committee, please contact us: [csstaff@cpsu.org.au](mailto:csstaff@cpsu.org.au)

## True or False ?

- CSIRO plans to close the Animal House at North Ryde.
- CSIRO's Executive Management Team are encouraged not to travel on the same plane.



## From the President

Michael Borgas, President, CSIRO Staff Association

### Great science needs great support

The Staff Association is an organisation focused on our members. We have responded strongly to the proposed cuts in IMT, and elsewhere in the organisation.

The brutish spill-and-fill processes and communication tactics lack any redeeming features and have rightly outraged staff.

Compounding this is the lack of consultation about losing library and IT resources in the workplace. These strategic 'top-down' changes continue to reduce support for our scientists who, as always, must work harder to maintain capacity for the Organisation.

Meanwhile, the Staff Association and CSIRO staff still await the important reforms flagged in the Psychological Health and Well-Being report. At the end of the day, improving the morale and working lives of those who comprise the science capacity in CSIRO can only strengthen the Organisation, and create better science.

This is the goal we all share.

### ACCESS project

Last month, feedback in Wavelength from one of our members was critical of the ACCESS project, which prompted some forthright feedback.

In response, the Staff Association would like to publicly support the staff working on ACCESS and acknowledge the achievements and hard work linked to the project, including 28 publications, with one in Nature. The new weather and climate model is essential and needs ongoing and increased support. New investments in super computing and staff are developing a significant tool for science in Australia against tight timelines – better, faster and cheaper!

### Social media – it's more than just Facebook

Those of us of a certain age might remember the 'internet superhighway' of the 90s, and how it was going to (and did) change our lives.

These days similar comparisons are made with social media and Web 2.0, technologies which are characterised by interactivity, information sharing and user-led content creation. The impact of Web 2.0's harnessing of collective response and intelligence has implications for the way Organisations operate – and for scientific innovation. Governments around the world are responding to new models of 'open' government and data sharing made possible by Web 2.0 technologies.

The CSIRO Staff Association is studying key recommendations from the Australian Government's Gov 2.0 working group – see <http://gov2.net.au> and <http://agimo.govspace.gov.au/>. We are also looking at social media models for the Staff Association that will add value for members and welcome your thoughts and feedback.

# Great science needs great support!

## Is CSIRO's safety at risk?

By Ian Treloar, SA/WA Organiser, CSIRO Staff Association

The spill and fill carnage at CSIRO has begun, with a number of experienced HSE staff are deemed unsuitable for senior roles.

The CSIRO Staff Association has been advised by members that they have been unsuccessful applying for their own jobs. The reasons given for this include "lack" of leadership ability, or risk analysis skills, or risk management skills.



Ian Treloar

These staff may now be potentially excess to the Organisation's needs. This is despite the General Manager assuring the Staff Association that redundancies were unlikely. Currently there are seven senior HSE roles that are unfilled.

CSIRO will advertise the unfilled roles externally as they want people who can "hit the ground running". The Staff Association wonders how long it will take external applicants to pick up the specialised HSE skills of such diverse scientific disciplines of the Commonwealth's major science agency? Perhaps longer than it would take to train a Divisional HSE Manager to learn leadership or risk analysis skills?

Which leads us to ask, will the safety CSIRO's staff be put at risk?

CSIRO has said that if they can't find suitably qualified staff to fill the positions, they will extend the implementation date until they do – or until the external applicants have gained the skills.

The Staff association has raised staff concerns with the General Manager HSE and Craig Roy, the responsible ET member.

The Staff Association believes that HSE staff who are not successful in the spill and fill process should be given the opportunity to be trained in the skills necessary to fulfil the vacant roles.

Great science needs great support!

## A brave new CSIRO?

By Sam Popovski, Secretary, CSIRO Staff Association

This edition of Wavelength has articles on the impact of redundancies at IM&T and HS&E and the challenge of attracting and retaining PhD candidates for Australian research.



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

The Staff Association is fighting to minimise all involuntary redundancies at CSIRO and to support career development. However, it a grim picture we now see for CSIRO in 2010 and beyond.

We have systems that have fundamental flaws (e.g.

SAP); too much short termism (e.g. SIP); smart trained researchers over burdened with bureaucracy; staff (and parts there of) being 'flagged' and 'negotiated with' in the matrix; and decimation of areas like IM&T and HS&E.

We know that largely this is not due to a lack of government funding (now at a record high) or the ~4% p.a. pay rise increases coming out the last enterprise bargaining negotiation. Our current situation is the consequence of decisions of the CSIRO Executive.

Whether its members at regional sites or big city sites, or members that are Chiefs or PAs, or members that are Post Docs or project leaders, our interaction with staff everyday confirms these views.

The enterprise bargaining campaign in the next six months will be a critical milestone period for staff to influence the type of CSIRO we want in the future.

## 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.

Articles should be between 150-500 words in length. Please attach photos separately. The deadline is the 20th of each month.

Please send your ideas/comments/feedback and articles to: [csstaff@cpsu.org.au](mailto:csstaff@cpsu.org.au) or to the Editor - [Margaret.Puls@cpsu.org.au](mailto:Margaret.Puls@cpsu.org.au)

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### Dr Who? Attracting quality PhD candidates

"The Australian research community is heavily dependent on overseas PhD students.

In CSIRO, PhD student researchers are our pathfinders. They can take on higher risk, less outcome-defined or constrained research. Their findings help us navigate and develop future projects. Without a strong cohort of PhD students, the National Innovation System risks stagnation and Australia's competitiveness in a number of research/technology intensive fields will be lost.

This is a critical issue for CSIRO and universities alike.

In 2006, the New Zealand government changed its policy on international students to subsidise foreign doctoral candidates as if they were domestic students, enabling universities to reduce fees for foreign PhD students to the same level as for domestic students. This had a big influence on international student numbers, reducing fees from NZ\$28,000 to NZ\$5000.

Might Australia consider a similar policy, or automatic residency, in order to attract and retain quality international students, in a time when science and engineering PhD students are forgoing a career in research for high-paid employment?"

### Locals shun doctorates for jobs

By Bernard Lane, The Australian Higher Education supplement, 31 March 2010

AUSTRALIA has become heavily dependent on overseas students to tackle PhDs in the hard sciences as locals choose well-paid industry jobs over insecure careers in research, according to a new analysis.

"That's quite serious from the point of view of the aspirations of government and the universities and scientific community, which want to encourage high-level research in Australia," Monash University's Bob Birrell said.

Working with customised official data for 2002-08, Dr Birrell showed 142 per cent growth in PhD starts by onshore international students in the natural and physical sciences (357 more students in 2008 than in 2002), compared with 7 per cent for locals (80 more students).

In engineering and related technologies, locals were down by 19 per cent (116 fewer students) and overseas students up by 161 per cent (350 more). The strongest growth for locals was in creative arts, up 39 per cent, although the absolute numbers remain small (91 more).

Dr Birrell said the data as a whole suggested little chance of growth in local research output in the medium term because of the time taken to complete a PhD.

The Australian National University, the most research-intensive in the country, has described the decline of the domestic PhD as "our national calamity".

Dr Birrell said the weakness of local PhD starts during the past few years represented a sharp reversal after healthy growth from the late 1980s through to late 90s, when economic growth and job opportunities were patchy.

But in recent times, at least until the global financial crisis, students emerging with a bachelor's degree in some sciences and engineering could choose between decent starting salaries in industry or poorly paid entry to an insecure career as a researcher.

Ian Graham, a geologist at the University of NSW, said students with a bachelor's degree in his discipline could command "a significant amount of money [\$80,000 as a starting salary] so it's very hard for us to retain them as [masters or doctoral students]".

Glenn Withers, chief executive of Universities Australia, said: "Even senior staff [in areas such as engineering and commerce] are being recruited away from universities, making it harder to expand graduate numbers."

Read more: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/locals-shun-doctorates-for-jobs/story-e6frgcjx-1225847646514>

### A 20% loss of IMT staff in CSIRO WILL impact on science!

Flood of support for IM&T staff received by the CSIRO Staff Association



"We all understand the reason why the cost of Microsoft licences increased is that CSIRO is no longer an academic institution.

The ET/Board obviously did NOT consider the increased cost of Microsoft licences when the Board decided the IT costs for IT centralization in 2004.

The point is that the licences are used by all CSIRO staff and not just by IM&T staff.

It's not fair to ask IM&T to absorb the increased cost.

If it is possible to distribute the increased cost of Microsoft licences to Business Units, it will save IMT about \$3million."

"After reading the pamphlet where it says that senior managers have not been informed about this restructure, and have expressed their concern, I feel compelled to ask: who came up with this in the first place?

And did they have their compass of values handy?"

"I just received a phone call from a Librarian at CMIS Macquarie. Yesterday afternoon she received a phone call from the Head Librarian, accompanied by a HR Officer, and was told that she has been made redundant.

There was no mention of period of notice, options to take FastTrack or about redeployment options. She has since learned of that from our own HR Manager.

She has been told to expect another phone call today at 3pm.

Just getting a phone call out of the blue was a remarkably cruel tactic."

"I learnt today that the long serving librarian at Griffith (Fiona Painting) is to be made redundant, as related on Monday Mail - 'Library services will have increased e-Library capability and will deliver service through a remote service model. This will result in the closure of a number of smaller regional libraries'.

This is a terrible outcome for Fiona and our laboratory. Fiona is a long serving librarian with a wealth of skills and experience. She is undoubtedly the most experienced librarian with regard to irrigation and water management issues. This removes the last vestige of a support service at the Griffith laboratory, and further undermines our numbers.

Please can you find out why Library services thought it so important to specifically target regional libraries. In this day and age where all work is undertaken from a computer then there can be no excuses as to location. Fiona can as easily execute library services here as in Canberra or anywhere else.

I have heard that four regional libraries are targeted, the others being Darwin, Townsville and one other. Again this will be a blow for those regional laboratories with low staff numbers.

"I am appalled to hear of the scale of the IM&T redundancies, 44?, and that regional libraries have been targeted. In an informal meeting of Griffith staff we think that is too much. We think that these redundancies do not sit well since the huge waste of money in SAP could have offset these required savings. Those who oversaw the move to SAP and centralisation of IM&T services retain their jobs whilst the workers are made redundant, we don't think that is fair.

So at Griffith, we wish to take action to prevent these redundancies. We especially want to save the librarian here (Fiona Painting) but also feel for all the others made redundant. This targeting of regional labs surely will not sit well with Megan Clark who has given her support to regional laboratories?"

"The mood of the affected people in IT, when they were given the new "proposed structure", is really bad! Some people are facing demotion of two CSOF levels. Most are facing a drop of one level, and one guy I talked to this morning said that in his group of 6 people there are only two jobs and they are at lower levels, and they will have to compete for those or they're out of a job!

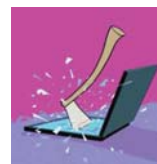
This is incredibly harsh – unbelievable!

And surely the 3 million dollar price hike for CSIRO's Microsoft licensing (they didn't like us beating them in court over the wi-fi thing...) could be funded from some of the income generated by that very thing.... Instead of further cutting into the already decimated IT staff?

Senior management in CSIRO is demonstrating a complete absence of accountability – they make monumental stuff-ups, and then penalise the staff at lower levels.

Maybe they should demonstrate some of their own "Value Compass" and give themselves a hefty pay cut..."

## Great science needs great support: Member feedback



### IMT update

"I am not a union member.

[The IMT cuts] are regrettable, but seems to be a trend that has already been observed in the universities: in-house, specialised IT expertise is considered too costly.

For whatever reason, it seems preferable to use external consultants, leaning on 3rd-party infrastructure to solve problems on a project-by-project basis.

Any reduction of the in-house capability of CSIRO IM&T should come with a formal acknowledgement of (and plan for dealing with) this eventuality.

le. A formal statement or set of guidelines on what exactly research projects can expect from CSIRO IM&T, and when to go elsewhere for services, support of activities that are now considered out of scope.

And so on reflection, a casual glance at this situation seems to show some sort of circle: centralisation of IM&T resulting in fewer jobs, and then an undoing of this centralisation by forcing projects to once again chase their own expertise for their own problems using their own budget."

"Does anyone believe that IM&T support for our site, costing 3 FTE's (1 each of a CSOF5, 4 and 3), is anything but a highly cost-effective and efficient structure?

From my view at the science coal face, a proposal to reduce this support is an ill-informed error of judgement and undermines our productivity; demoting staff is an insult to their professional standing, as well as circumventing due process.

If costs have to be cut, there must be better ways to do it - including by making some hard decisions that don't involve the cowardly and demoralising 'spill and fill' method apparently favoured by our senior managers."

"If it were not for the massive waste of money we have had on SAP and the matrix these cuts would not be on the table. Heads should roll in management for the money wasted, not cut the workers who have kept on keeping on despite the atrocious treatment and for whom we have to thank that there is still a functioning CSIRO."

"I strongly share your concerns. I agree that we get great and efficient service from our local IT and library staff. Support services are clearly not valued properly in CSIRO - witness previous attempts to 'outsource' IT."

"It will only lead to greater stress especially on the high achievers and those meeting external deadlines."

"Every time they push costs onto projects it makes it harder to meet milestones on budget, especially when they do this within contract periods without notice. At a minimum this notice would have to be three years notice in advance to allow project budgets to be properly prepared. In reality, we are often negotiating contracts a couple of years before work actually begins, so 5 years is a more realistic time frame. (as an aside, note how this doesn't align with quadrennial funding, EBA periods or SIP rounds!).

Of course, if CSIRO overheads were to be decreased by the same amount as the extra costs to projects, this would be a cost neutral thing. In reality, the overhead calculations on the common costing spreadsheet have never been reduced as more costs have been forced into projects! Add into this increased compliance costs, and inflation, and you can see how hard it is to make a realistic project budget and stick to it.

All this means we get less and less competitive with other agencies that offer research services.

I realise this isn't a very staff-orientated discussion, but the monetary realities of running projects feed back into our ability to attract staff, keep staff and prevent the loss of staff. Staff allocation to projects is now the key measure of a staff member's exposure to redundancy, as pointed out below. It seems the level of commitment to projects is also a measure used to assess the viability of divisions and smaller units of capability management as well."

"After reading the attached bulletin I'd like to comment that the Library and IT staff in CMAR Hobart are brilliant at their work, always extremely helpful and essential in supporting research staff to carry out their work.

Any reduction in the number of IM&T personnel here could negatively impact research work, and hence science output. Scientists are already required to spend an increasing amount of their time in administrative-type duties - are we now facing the prospect of further reductions in essential support staff?

In what scientific journal will I be able to publish my work on "How to effort-log, reconcile my Visa, fix my pc, repair the printer, provide my updated CV publications detail, negotiate SAP, maintain TRIM records & fiddle with Confluence within CSIRO"?

Then again, if I had to Wiki my Greenhopper via Jira I might be glad to take a redundancy!!!!"

# “Thank you for coming in Aaron...” Scripting corporate redundancies

Perhaps the most depressing part of the scripted messages that internet giant Yahoo! used to layoff 1,500 staff in 2007 is that it becomes less about people and more about sticking to the script.

Details of Yahoo’s scripted messages for handling the mass of redundancies was leaked to ‘Gawker’. Yahoo wasn’t firing 1,500 people en masse – it was “getting fit”.

Yahoo’s script for performing the actual layoff begins with the boss instructed to walk up to an employee who is getting the sack. The boss then says, “Thank you, [FIRST NAME HERE], for coming in. I have some information regarding our organization I’d like to tell you in person.”

The script continues: “As you know Yahoo! has had a challenging year and is focused on reducing costs. We’ve had to make some tough decisions about eliminating a number of positions. Your position is one of those being eliminated.”

Sound familiar?

## Introduce Employee to Right Management Yahoo! Confidential Do Not Forward

- When finished with notifying your employee: “I’m going to introduce you now to Right Management who will tell you about the career services you’ll be receiving.”
- Walk him/her to the consultant and introduce the employee: “I’d like you to meet Aaron. He’s been with us for \_\_\_ years or months and has been a key member of our team.”
- Repeat information on what to do when they are finished with Right Management. “When you’re finished here please go to your desk and pack your personal belongings. Please let me know if you need any help as I will need to collect your company assets in the next two hours.”

**Be a LEADER. Be available and visible throughout the day. No war stories, no gossip. Show respect and dignity for impacted employee**

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View more on Gawker <http://valleywag.gawker.com/5106184/yahoos-secret-layoff-doublespeak-revealed>

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## Do’s and Don’ts when Notifying Employees Yahoo! Confidential Do Not Forward

### Do’s:

- Stay Focused – Stick to the purpose of the meeting & own the decision
- Meeting length **15 minutes maximum**
- Provide business rationale (see slide 3)
- Be clear, concise, and respectful
- Be attentive – Maintain open communication by listening; pause before continuing
- Allow the employee to respond
- Refer to employee packet contents including both the Separation and Supplemental Release
- Explain the exiting process and collection of Y! and employee’s property
- Be very clear on the next steps and the remainder of the day
- Direct employee to the Right Management consultant

### Don’ts:

- Engage in small talk about personal matters, **DO** get directly to the point
- Attempt to answer the “why me?”
- Own the employee’s feelings
- Discuss other employees or make comparisons
- Say that you disagree with the decision
- Get into individual’s job performance/past issues or make comments that suggest he/she might be able to return in the future
- Make comments like: “You’ll have time off for the holidays” or “Who knows how long I’ll be here”
- Negotiate the separation package or try to reverse the decision
- Minimize the importance of their work
- Make it about you and your feelings

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