



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

March 2011



NTEU supports CSIRO Staff Association industrial campaign

The CSIRO Staff Association is about to initiate an industrial campaign to achieve a fair enterprise agreement for CSIRO employees. NTEU members know only too well the difficulties in achieving fair bargaining outcomes in

difficult bargaining negotiations, and offers the CSIRO Staff Association and its members our full support through their campaign.

For over 6 months, CSIRO Staff Association members have been attempting to deal with a very difficult CSIRO executive team who have consistently refused to negotiate on pay, offering CSIRO staff only a 3% pay rise that does not keep up with inflation. Their last payrise was received in December 2009.

The CSIRO management are also refusing to adopt consultation provisions that allow the input of CSIRO employees in important decisions affecting the organisation. Many CSIRO staff believe that a lack of consultation within CSIRO has led to poor decisions having been made in the past.

- Posted 10 March 2011 by Jeannie Rea (National President) from NTEU National Office.

Vale June Grech, 4-6-1960 to 28-11-2010

June Grech spent nearly 4 years with CSIRO in Atherton and in that time she had distinguished herself with her humour, great organisational skills, efficiency in the workplace, and willingness to 'ask the hard questions'. Shortly following her arrival, June was keen to join the Staff Association and was a fierce advocate and supporter for membership. If there were tough questions to ask, June was there to ask them, usually in her typical English style and with similar fervour.

June came to CSIRO with a larger than life personality, an infectious laugh, and a definite strength of character. June worked in several roles in her time at CSIRO, including: PA to the Acting Program Leader of the CSE Tropical Landscapes program, Dave Westcott; Program Support Officer with Peter Stone; PSO to the Climate Adaptation Flagship (where she supported a range of staff in Atherton, Cairns, Darwin, Alice Springs and Townsville); and eventually as Executive Assistant to Ian Watson (Program Leader) & Peter Stone (Deputy Chief). June was renowned for going the extra mile to make things happen – especially in her ability to organize meetings and events that ran smoothly. She was also a keen spokesperson around equality for staff, as demonstrated by her key contributions to the 'Gender Diversity in CSE' report, which she co-authored.

When the division made June potentially redundant in May 2010, true to form, she worked with Staff Association delegates and staff and fought back – she challenged the decision, and took her case directly to Megan Clark, who then worked to help June secure employment with CSIRO in Canberra. June was due to commence the role in early 2011.

On 26 November, June was diagnosed as having a mild heart attack and was taken to Townsville hospital on 28 November for further tests. Tragically upon arrival in Townsville, June suffered a fatal heart attack.

She is survived by her mother, sister, husband Tony, and loving son, Danny.

She was a wonderful comrade and activist, and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

June's family received a contribution of \$1000 through the Staff Association's bereavement fund to assist with costs at this difficult time. RIP June.



Fact or Fiction

The contingency fund.



Report from Staff Association Council, 3-4 March

Council meets in Canberra on the day results of the protected action ballot are received.

Membership report: Recruitment of new members has been strong over the past 7 months, during the enterprise bargaining process. We welcome new members, including staff just commencing with CSIRO and those with years experience of working in the organisation.

Science Policy: We had a very stimulating presentation from the CEO of FASTS (Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies), Anna-Maria Arabia. She has a vision for FASTS to dramatically improve the representation of science in Government and community forums, to clearly demonstrate the benefits that Australian science is providing to society, and to close the gap between the evidence base and decision making in Australia. FASTS holds the annual "Science meets Parliament" forum, which this year is on 20-21 June.

Find out more at www.fastsof.org and contact your delegate if you are interested in participating. This year FASTS will also be hosting a "Science meets policy-makers" forum to increase awareness of scientific perspectives on current issues.

Enterprise bargaining: The results of the protected action ballot were released by the AEC during the first day of the meeting, and this generated considerable media interest. After considering the options available to pursue a timely resolution of the outstanding bargaining issues, Council approved taking the next step towards commencement of industrial action, by way of notifying CSIRO of intention to commence a ban on effort-logging from 8:00 am on Thursday 10th March. The negotiations resumed on 8 March. We will continue to work together to resolve the important issues outstanding as soon as possible. This will require genuine negotiation on these issues by CSIRO executives.

Campaign blog: Member use of the bargaining website and Secure Your Working Future blog (<http://csirobargaining2011.org/>) continues to grow. On the blog's busiest day so far, on 8 December 2010, there were 1,849 views. Overall, the campaign blogs received in excess of 40,000 views and 150 comments since launch in September 2010. The site has been created from freely available blog software and plug-ins, such as the online poll facility.

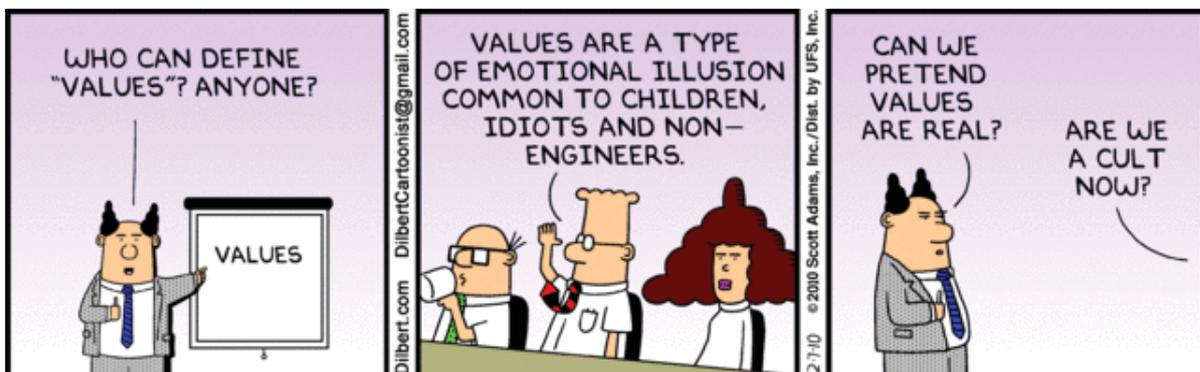
Have you got Health, Safety and Environment on your mind? Several vacancies exist representatives on the Staff Association HSE committee. This committee represents member interests in HSE to CSIRO, a critical need given the recent HSE restructuring and corporatisation. Progress on implementation of the Psychological Health and Wellbeing report (see background in Wavelength) remains very inadequate. At the next consultative council meeting between the Staff Association and CSIRO executive, we will be requesting a comprehensive update on progress in implementing the CSIRO sustainability strategy.

Job security: Council heard some examples of workplace bullying and HR mismanagement affecting individual members, and such cases seem to be more common recently. Several honorary and paid office bearers of the Staff Association have been providing support to the individuals affected, and several examples of amazing successful outcomes were discussed. This was a reminder to keep our eyes open for issues in the workplace, and involve your local delegate or organiser if you are unsure where you stand.

Finance: The Staff Association has reserves exceeding \$1M, which provide us the certainty to maintain operations. These are invested with several credit unions, where they can provide benefit to members. To increase diversity in our investments, Council authorised investing a portion of reserves into a managed share fund with Australian Ethical Investments <http://australianethical.com.au/>. This investment strategy is consistent with our goals to achieve returns for our campaigns and also to demonstrate responsibility, by investing in environmentally and ethically-sustainable companies



Dr Scott Wilkinson, (photo CSIRO), Team Leader in the Catchment and Aquatic Modelling Group & Northern Australia Councillor.



'Best boy' or scientists in training?

Although US specific, this article posted in News and Views on The Funneled Web blog raises some interesting questions.

Last month the US National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) released a 28-page draft document Investing in the Future... Strategic Plan for Biomedical and Behavioral Research Training which was meant for review by its Advisory Council and which has now approved it fit dissemination.

Putting it succinctly Science's Jeffrey Mervis writes: "It's a familiar complaint: Academic researchers intent on cranking out another paper and obtaining their next grant sometimes see their students as little more than another pair of hands rather than as scientists in training."

Therefore, the NIGMS is advising its grantees that they have a duty to help create a more diverse workforce. Furthermore, graduate students and postdocs supported on research grants, the most common means of NIH support for graduate students, deserve mentoring that is just as good as that offered students on institutional training grants and fellowships.

The draft document is short on detail but clear on overall goals: A training program should give students the skills to not only follow their adviser into academia but also allow pursuit of a variety of scientific career paths.

Various members of the advisory council raised several concerns. Vern Schramm, a biochemist at Yeshiva University's medical school in New York City noted: "The goal of an R01[grant] is to discover new knowledge. This would expand it to include education and learning. Would those now become review criteria for study sections?"

NIGMS Director Jeremy Berg, who initiated developing the draft, told Professor Schramm: "We don't intend that to be the outcome." He estimated that the average faculty member would devote "1 hour per trainee per year on an IDP [individual development plan], which is hardly excessive. We don't want to burden those people who are already doing a good job [while continuing] to miss those who aren't. We need to find the sweet spot." Dr Berg made the point that a number of the individuals being supported through a PI's R01 grant "may not want an academic job... We need to remove the pejorative aspect of the term alternative careers."

In support of the draft Carolyn Bertozzi of the University of California, Berkeley, and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator said: "I really like the idea of an evaluation of the training component of an R01, but I'm wondering about how to include those who drop out and end up working at Walmart because they couldn't stand the pressure of the lab."

Denise Montell of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine was cautioned "not to discriminate against women, who are more likely to leave to raise a family."

But it was left to James Stevens of Lilly Research Laboratories in Indianapolis to ask: "Have you thought of taking all the postdocs off R01s and putting them on training grants? [Then] anyone who wanted to be a research associate would be hired as an employee," thereby separating those preparing to become independent investigators from the rest. "It would also force graduate students to think earlier about what they want to do after graduation."

Finally, Helen Sunshine, head of the institute's Office of Scientific Review while admitting that revisiting the criteria for evaluating the results of R01 grantees posed challenges, she nevertheless assured council members that: "The reviewers come from the same background as you do. ... It's a question of [achieving the right] balance."

Dr You - unionisation and the postdoc



By Michael Borgas, President of the CSIRO Staff Association

Post Doctoral Unionisation – Implications for CSIRO Staff Association

Post Docs are organising in North America in a harsh industrial relations climate.

It is an inspiring story, with lessons for early career scientists and also for industrial negotiation and bargaining.

The lesson is that media campaigning and lobbying of politicians with the outcome of a congressional hearing (with rules of evidence), was needed to force a spin-driven modern hard-line HR system to the table in good faith.

I have prepared a lot of useful links for postdocs wanting to advance their opportunities online on our bargaining website: <http://csirobargaining2011.org/2011/03/09/dr-you/>

We look forward to hearing from you.



Wavelength

Wavelength is a quarterly 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 csstaff@cpsu.org.au, or contact your Organiser.

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.

International Women's Day

Women in science at CSIRO

CSIRO has few women particularly in the higher levels and in the physical sciences across all levels:

- 38.5% of all CSIRO employees are women
- 8% of level 8 employees are female. This represents an increase from 4.5% ten years ago - at this rate of increase, it will take about 60 years until female at Level 8 equal the level of representation across CSIRO (i.e. 38%).

- From *Women in science at CSIRO: (from 2009: FASTS Women in Science in Australia: Maximising Productivity, Diversity and Innovation report)*.

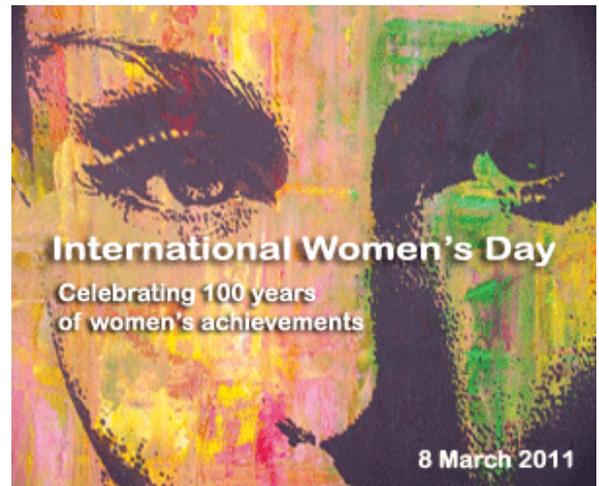
Professor Michael O'Donnell, co-author of the independent university [Working at CSIRO](#) staff survey was quoted in the [Canberra Times](#) saying that he thought the survey just touched on the "tip of an iceberg" about gender issues in CSIRO.

CSIRO is also perceived by many female scientific and administrative staff interviewed as embodying a masculine culture that fosters competition and individualism.

For many female employees interviewed this created obstacles to their career development within the organisation.

Within Flagships women leading projects teams comprised of mainly male team members could experience inappropriate or unprofessional behaviours from other team members. The following example was provided by one female participant in a project team comprised predominantly of male scientists:

"And I remember one time going 'can't we just talk like civilised people? Do we have to shout and scream and swear and put each other down. Now can't you just talk normally'. And one of them, [a manager], said '... you're playing with the big boys now. If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen!'" (CSIRO Scientist, 2009).



Other female scientists noted that it had proven extremely difficult to get promoted into senior roles in the organisation:

"actually it's a pretty well known phenomenon in CSIRO that it's very hard for women ... to go from level five to level six. And there was actually an enquiry about that and I contributed into that enquiry in an anonymous way because I felt unsupported..." (CSIRO Scientist, 2009).

The Staff Association is an active support of Women in Science, International Women's Day and other networking events for women

Overall in the Engineering and ICT disciplines, women continue to have low levels of participation. There are high levels of attrition in the post-doctoral years of women's scientific careers and only a small number of women in leadership roles in science.

The issue of women in S&T has fallen off the equity and productivity agendas in Australia at a time when other OECD countries have launched major initiatives.

N.B. quotes in this article have been edited for privacy reasons.

Love the logo?

The CSIRO Staff Association is looking at updating its logo.

The Staff Association is an important part of CSIRO history. We aim to stay that way, by updating our brand to remain relevant and accessible to members and potential new members.

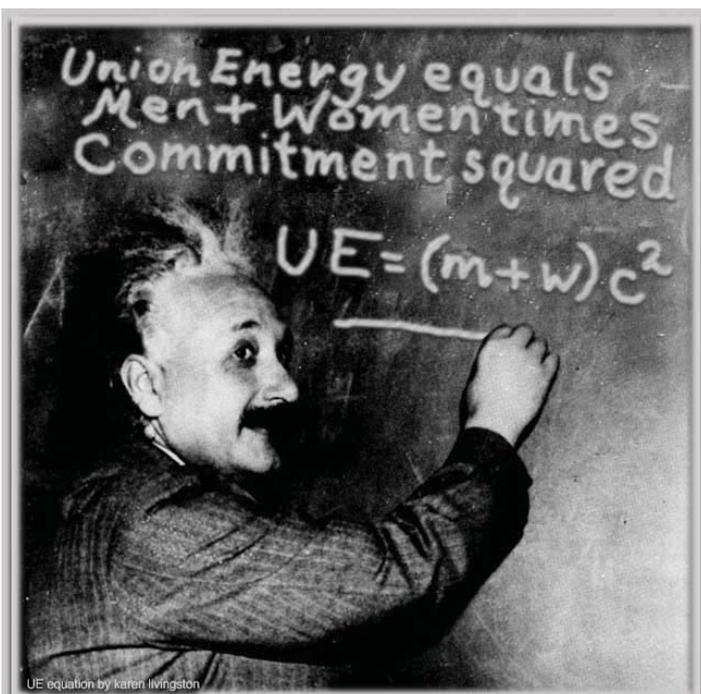
We know the word "branding" tends to make scientists shudder but we'd welcome any thoughts on this potential new logo for the Staff Association.



Current logo



A new design



It's not rocket science, but it's a fact: Albert Einstein, the theoretical physicist whose theories of relativity revolutionized modern thought, was a union member. He was a founding member of AFT Local Union 552, the Princeton Federation of Teachers, and was a signer of the application for the local's charter in 1938.

When I'm 64



Denying staff the same redundancy entitlements as others because they've turned 65 is morally, if not legally, wrong.

Tom Weir leaves CSIRO proud of his 34 years service and work on one of the biggest insect collections in Australia.

Tom taught at the University of Queensland before joining CSIRO.

Tom was made redundant when he turned 65, without access to redundancy entitlements in the EBA.

Save Regional Science campaign

The Draft Terms of Reference for the Working Group into enhancing Science Capability and Vibrancy at Regional Sites are under discussion.

As CSIRO continues to focus its research on national and global challenges, there is a need for the Organisation to ensure it makes best use of, and delivers national benefit from, its extensive national footprint.

CSIRO is currently developing its 2011-15 Strategy which includes an objective to "ensure our regional sites have clear missions, and add distinctive value through robust science delivery, capability plans and collaborative partnership arrangements".



Jeff Carig, Save Regional Science campaign coordinator

At the Consultative Council on the 4th of November 2010, CSIRO and the Staff Association agreed to establish a working group to review issues affecting regional sites, identify opportunities for improvement, and develop a plan for action to enhance science capability and vibrancy at CSIRO regional sites.

What are the Working Group's Objectives and Deliverables?

The working group should deliver a report to the CSIRO Executive Team (with input through the Consultative Council) addressing the following issues:

1. Produce a stock-take of key features of CSIRO regional sites, particularly regarding:
 - a. Staff demographics
 - b. Function/Science of site
 - c. Site facilities
 - d. Key external partnerships
2. Identify the key criteria (features and attributes) that should be met for a site to be considered vibrant and successful within the context of the CSIRO 2011-15 Strategy;
3. Identify any systemic gaps in regional site features and attributes and any key systemic barriers to addressing these gaps;
4. Make recommendations that would aid in meeting the identified criteria for regional sites, assessing their ease/complexity of implementation and associated resource implications; and
5. Identify any sites where special attention or investigation is required to meet the criteria.

The report will be delivered in a timeframe agreed between the Chair of the Working Group and DCE, Science, Strategy and People, and is expected to be considered for input from the Consultative Council within 4 months from establishment of the working group.



CHANGE YOUR REALITY



**Secure your
working future**

csirobargaining2011.org