

Wavelength

NEWS FROM CSIRO STAFF ASSOCIATION – WINTER 2012



Ignore science at the nation's peril

Welcome to Wavelength, news from the CSIRO Staff Association.

Amid all the attention on the SKA decision, an important report was released on the health of Australian science.

The importance of the message from Professor Ian Chubb should not be underestimated. Science plays a crucial and versatile role in advancing the national interest.

The Chief Scientist is concerned. The study of mathematics, physics and chemistry is on the slide.

Undergraduate enrolments in Agriculture and ICT are down sharply - bad news for food security and the so-called digital economy.

The declining trend in the amount of basic research undertaken has not gone unnoticed. Professor Chubb says:

"In the past two decades the proportion of the Commonwealth's expenditure directed to basic and strategic research has steadily decreased, and the proportion directed to applied and experimental research has steadily increased.

"There is no apparent rationale for this trend."

Policymakers must understand that to turn things around, both the quantity and quality of science funding must be significantly improved, in real terms over a sustained period.

It's a message the Staff Association will take to Canberra in September, when Science meets Parliament.



Dr Michael Borgas
Staff Association
President

Read more on the Chief Scientist's report at www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

CSIRO staff welcome SKA bid announcement

News that Australia and CSIRO will play an important role in the delivery of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) has been welcomed by the CSIRO Staff Association.

The SKA is an international project to build the world's largest network of radio telescopes.

Staff Association Secretary Sam Popovski said that the decision was important for world science as well as for the science community in Australia.

"This long awaited news is welcomed and credit must be given to the many dedicated people involved in the Australasian bid," Mr Popovski said.

The project - estimated to cost nearly \$2 billion - will create the world's largest radio telescope by building many thousands of radio-wave antennas arrayed over a square kilometre, all linked by optical fibre.

Construction will occur in two phases over an estimated fifteen year period.



Antenna 1 of CSIRO ASKAP (Photo P.Dawson)

The first phase, commencing in 2016, will involve the further development of CSIRO's Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory in Western Australia, already home to the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) and Murchison Widefield Array.

"Australia will build another 60 dishes in Phase 1 (equipped with the CSIRO-developed Phased Array Feeds) and around 4,000 low frequency antennae (and South Africa would build a further 190 dishes," CSIRO Chief Executive Megan Clark said.

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Inside CSIRO's secret review of Property Services

Get more from your Capability Days
Celebrate 100 years of Ruby Payne-Scott

Get more from your Capability Days

Valuing your capability and development

The Staff Association understands the difficulties staff have with project workloads as well as ensuring sufficient time for important non-project activities, including training and development.

As a result we have advocated and achieved improvements in this area during the last enterprise bargaining campaign.

These improvements include access to capability days and to a minimum amount of training and development days for all staff members every year.

Stage 1 of APA 2012-13

Stage 1 of APA 2012-13 must be completed by all staff (excluding casuals and staff employed for less than three months) by no later than 30 September 2012.

Even though this final deadline is still months away, many staff will be completing this stage of the APA with their supervisor much earlier.

The Staff Association strongly advises all staff to constructively plan the utilisation of capability days and training and development activities as part of their APA.

Capability days

The number of capability days is determined by agreement between a staff member and their supervisor.

There are no prescriptive guidelines or minimum or maximum amount of capability days for each staff member.

However, there is an expectation by CSIRO that the average number of capability days per staff member is approximately 20 per annum across the whole organisation.

We would expect many staff to exceed the average, for example staff that have corporate citizenship role/s, while other staff will have less than the average, depending on need.

Capability days can be used for a range of non-project-related activities which can include:

- corporate citizenship activities (e.g. Staff Association workplace delegate, health and safety representative, equity and diversity officer)
- professional development, training and conference attendance
- conducting research which includes scoping future science possibilities
- additional time to publish work (note: it is expected that time to publish is also part of project work) and
- divisional meetings and activities.

The agreed number of capability days are recorded at Stage 1 of the eAPA and then automatically translated into effort logging information for each individual staff member.

Training and development

All staff are entitled to a minimum of five days training and development within each APA cycle (July to June), exclusive of travel time. The training activities are to be reflected in the eAPA and/or in an agreed development plan.

The CSIRO Enterprise Agreement 2011-2014 recognises that a large number of staff will exceed this minimum.

The agreed activities should lead to the development of skills and/or knowledge and may include formal program and conference participation and on the job assignments.



Capability Days can be used to conduct research including scoping future science possibilities

Staff should consider their individual needs, along with the needs of their CSIRO projects and business unit, in determining training and development activities each year.

Staff Association support

As stated previously, we strongly encourage all staff to assess the need and plan for capability days and training and development activities as part of Stage 1 of APA 2012-13.

The APA process is intended to be a constructive framework in communicating and determining work requirements, both project and non-project-related.

Staff can be represented at any meetings where the APA is discussed by a Staff Association workplace delegate.

The Staff Association can also provide advice to members if any disagreements arise during the APA process.



Sam Popovski
Staff Association
Secretary

For more information or assistance
email csstaff@cpsu.org.au

CSIRO Property staff cop a serve

- Management has ‘no clear ownership of strategy’
- Staff described as ‘largely stagnant’ and ‘overpaid’

A private consultant’s review of CSIRO’s Property Services - released under Freedom of Information legislation - has tacitly encouraged the pursuit of an outsourcing agenda, describing the goal as “leading practice.”

In a highly critical report, Grosvenor Consulting dammed Property Services management for “no clear ownership of strategy” and “no processes for the development of strategic planning and measurement of strategic goals.”

The report also described the current workforce in critical terms, characterising the majority of employees as “largely stagnant”, “overpaid” and “unlikely to embrace major change well.”

CSIRO Staff Association Lead Organiser Paul Girdler described the portrayal of Property Services workers as “highly unflattering”.

“The Grosvenor report does acknowledge that the qualifications and experience of the Property Services workforce are quite high,” Mr Girdler said.

“However the ultimate conclusions reached by the authours of the report- that the Property Services workforces is overpaid, reactive, too old and resistant to change - is misguided and offensive to many of our members,” he said.

To request a copy of the entire Grosvenor Review email csstaff@cpsu.org.au

COMMENT

Explosive report fans outsourcing fears

This is the review that CSIRO didn’t want to release.

And after reading the report, it’s easy to understand why senior management wanted to keep the Grosvenor Review under wraps.

While Grosvenor reached some unflattering conclusions regarding staff and management alike, perhaps of most concern to Staff Association members should be the underlying assumptions about the issue of outsourcing.

The report - while stopping short of reccomending the privatisation of Property Services - makes the case for outsourcing, stating that “leading practice in the industry is to outsource operational property services.”

It’s unclear how these conclusions will comfort Property Services already concerned about job security. That job now falls to the Board and CSIRO Corporate.



Paul Girdler
Staff Association
Lead Organiser

Science meets Parliament

The 13th annual Science meets Parliament will be held 17-18 September.

The event will bring together about 200 of Australia’s top scientists and puts them face-to-face with the decision makers in Canberra.

The theme for this year’s conference is The importance of Science to the Economy.

This annual event is strongly supported by the Government and Opposition, engages most MPs and a large number of scientists.

For more information, visit www.sta.org.au

Delegate election time

Have you ever wondered what it was like to be a workplace delegate?

Becoming a delegate is a great way to learn more your workplace rights, represent your colleagues and support fellow Staff Association members.

If you’re interested in finding out more, please contact your local organiser, call us on (03) 8620 6348 or email csstaff@cpsu.org.au for additional information.

Nominations are being accepted now Staff Association members are encouraged to participate if voting is required in your workplace.

Did you know...

Your union fees are tax deductible?

Staff Association members who pay their fees via payroll deduction (PRD) will not be sent a hard copy tax statement.

The amount of your deductions for the 2011/2012 financial year will be found on your PAYG summary from CSIRO.

If you still require a hard copy of a statement, you can request one via email at csstaff@cpsu.org.au

Essential viewing

Do we undervalue our public sector innovations?



Nadine Flood

CPSU National Secretary Nadine Flood appeared on Essential Vision’s 3Q Program to discuss Innovation week, the importance of public funding for science and research and the difficulties imposed by Government spending cuts.

Nadine spoke about how the CSIRO’s development of wi-fi technology transformed the world and brought \$500 million into Australia through patent fees.

Watch at essentialvision.com.au/do-we-undervalue-our-public-sector-innovations

CSIRO staff welcome SKA success

From page one

Professor Peter Quinn, director of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research anticipated that the first phase of the build would be complete and operational by 2020.

“We’ll pause and make a decision about what phase two is going to look like and then we’ll deploy phase two and that will be operational, we hope, around 2024, 2025,” Professor Quinn said.

The second phase involves the building of the medium-high frequency arrays in South Africa while the Australasian team constructs a low frequency array locally.

Ms Clark said that the SKA decision would help keep Australia on the world map when it came to astronomy.

“We should all be very proud to be part of the efforts that will see Australia and New Zealand remain at the forefront of global radio astronomy,” Ms Clark said.

Mr Popovski paid tribute to the leading role played by ASKAP researchers in the bid process.

“I have written to the SKA Project Director - CSIRO’s Dr Brian Doyle - offering my congratulations on behalf of CSIRO Staff Association members,” he said.

“We’ve also asked for a briefing on the potential implication of the decision on staffing and related issues, like regional capabilities.

“It’s important that we gain a better understanding of the foreseeable impacts on staffing, resources and timeframes and the Staff Association will have our delegates from CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science (CASS) involved in the briefing process,” Mr Popovski said.

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Online at www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

RUBY PAYNE-SCOTT CENTENARY

CSIRO Star Achiever



Google pays tribute to Ruby Payne-Scott

The news that the SKA will be now proceed as a joint venture between Africa and Australasia arrived - almost to the day - one hundred years after the birth of radio astronomer and CSIRO trail-blazer Ruby Payne-Scott.

Ruby’s centenary did not pass unnoticed with Google paying tribute to Payne-Scott with special artwork - a Google Doodle - celebrating her likeness on their homepage.

Ruby’s career at CSIRO began in 1941 in the radiophysics division, working with colleagues such as Joseph Pawsey, Lindsay McCredie, Marie Coutts Clark and Alec Little.

The team’s research using a sea-cliff interferometer led to breakthrough discoveries concerning the temperature of the sun and the identification of solar flare types.

An active member of the Officers Association - precursor of the CSIRO Staff Association - Ruby Payne-Scott was a fearless advocate for equal pay and the rights of women in the workplace.

Her career was cut short in 1949 when CSIRO management discovered that she had been secretly married five years earlier. At the time, regulations forbade the permanent employment of married women in the Australian Public Service.

Payne-Scott was subsequently reduced to temporary employment status and following her second pregnancy resigned from the CSIRO in 1950, aged 39.



Ruby Payne-Scott

1912-1981

More about Ruby online at www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

Support for Library Services

Thanks to the hundreds of Staff Association members who completed our survey on Library Services.

Nearly fifty per cent of respondents said that they used library services more than five times a year

There were some interesting responses to the question on the impact of losing access to this service.

“Librarians are very important to research organisations, they source material, they manage complex licence agreements, they embrace technology, and enable access to content.

“Anyone who thinks a librarian is stuck in a library pulling books off a shelf needs to investigate the minefield of the publishing industry.

“Librarians save money for organisations they don’t waste it.”

“The CSIRO services that have been consolidated so far leave people frustrated due to poor systems that don’t fully meet requirements and which have slow if not non-existent support.

The Staff Association will take the results and findings the next Consultative Council meeting on 19 June.

CSIRO SE Queensland Councillor Anna Campbell (a librarian at QCAT) will be presenting the findings of the survey and raising these issues with senior members of the CSIRO Executive.

Send a message of support to csstaff@cpsu.org.au