



Wavelength

A newsletter for members of the CSIRO Staff Association

31 January 2008

A Charter to protect CSIRO's independence welcomed

Science Minister Kim Carr has put a charter for CSIRO back on the agenda. A charter was promised by the ALP in the 2004 and 2007 federal elections, in recognition of a growing need to protect CSIRO from increasing political interference and 'gagging' of public sector scientists. This need for a clear separation from political and bureaucratic constraints became evident early with the new Government - the Minister's announcement on 16 January 2008 came after a questionable and inappropriate request was made before the Christmas break for CSIRO's media statements to be vetted by the Prime Minister's office. The CSIRO Staff Association, along with the CSIRO Executive, welcomes the announcement of a charter and fully supports the concept as a significant move towards rights for scientific staff and more open sharing of knowledge.

President Michael Borgas stated: "The Staff Association believes that CSIRO needs to be open, resourced to be independent, and held accountable to the public through the media and Parliament. The renewal of obligations on scientists to be open, independent, excellent, engaged in public debate and speaking truth to power, requires resourcing and protections for this modern era of science in society. A charter would be welcome."

The President of the Federation of Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS) the peak body of the professional societies in Australia, Professor Ken Baldwin has also welcomed the charter: "It is inconceivable that there can be sensible policy on climate change,

water use, bio-security, obesity or ageing without the input and open discussion of good science."

Universities operate on the basis of academic freedom and a number of public sector agencies already have a Charter to protect their independence. One of the best known is the ABC Charter, which carries great cultural significance both within the ABC and with the general public. It codifies more about what staff of the ABC should aspire to in the quality of their work and what the public can expect of the ABC. A number of groups have sprung up in recent years calling for protection of scientific independence in the face of political control. They include the Union of Concerned Scientists that runs a scientific integrity action network. Another group, Scientists and Engineers for America (SEA), have drafted a bill of rights for scientists and engineers on scientific advice to government.

Open participation in the Charter matters

The incoming Minister announced that he will proceed with charters for CSIRO and also ANSTO and AIMS, although he has not defined the process. It is important that the charters be constructed by means of open and inclusive process so that the scientific community and the wider public have confidence and respect in what they espouse. The Staff Association fully expects to have a say. Our Research Policy Committee has begun work on what they think should be in the charter and how it should be developed. *The Committee would appreciate any input from members.*

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Principles for an initial guiding policy

The Minister has acknowledged that “our public sector research agencies, by and large, lack any formal recognition of the rights of their research staff to legitimate freedom of expression.” His statement emphasised participation in public debate. He has set out the following guiding principles for an initial policy:

- Encouragement of debate on scientific and other research issues of public interest.
- Support for the independence and integrity of public research agencies
- Recognition that the Government remains responsible for the articulation, formulation and implementation of government policy.
- Support for the open communication, dissemination of information and debate about the results of scientific, technical and social research.
- Recognition that researchers are encouraged to engage in such communication and debate.

FASTS is running a Forum on rights and obligations of scientists and researchers, arising from the Minister’s decision regarding the public sector science agencies. While the agenda will extend much further to academic freedom and issues for institutions including the universities, the outcomes of the Forum are likely to inform a CSIRO Charter.

The forum will be at Questacon in Canberra from 9.30am to 4.00pm on Friday 22nd of February. The numbers will be limited. Members interested in attending should contact Sam Popovski in the Staff Association office ASAP.
Sam.Popovski@cpsu.org.au

Some further reading:

<http://minister.industry.gov.au/SenatortheHonKimCarr/Pages/CHARTERTOPROTECTSCIENTIFICDEBATE.aspx>

www.fast.org

<http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/ABCcharter.htm>

<http://sharp.sefora.org/bill-of-rights/>

<http://www.ucsusa.org/>

International Presentation – ‘Independent Scientific Advice’

President Michael Borgas was an invited keynote speaker at a symposium on *Public Science in Canada/Strengthening Science to Protect Canadians*, held in Ottawa, Canada on 7-9 September 2007. Michael was able to present a perspective on scientific advice for policy to Government scientists, journalists and policy makers at the

meeting which was organised by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC).

Michael reported that Australian views were highly sought after at the meeting and the Canadians are very interested in increasing their direct lobbying of Government. He commented that ‘The scope for public comment is quite limited and many people I spoke to faced, or had been, censured for comment to the media. All sectors are burdened by overbearing bureaucracy, with layer upon layer of management hierarchy in the modern fashion.’

The Staff Association Council will be looking at setting up a relationship with the PIPSC science policy group, as we have done with the NZPSA Science Committee.

<http://portal.pipsc.ca/portal/page/portal/wesite>

<http://www.hyper-media.ca/pipsc/en/presentations.html>

Participating in public debate is already OK

One member who has not been censured for stating his opinion publicly on climate change is Dr Mike Raupach from Marine and Atmospheric Research. Mike is in the thick of research into climate change and expressed his frustration about the need for action on the issue in an opinion article for *The Age* newspaper last year. Rather than drawing flack, Mike was actively supported in his writing by divisional communications staff; the divisional

management and the Chief Executive were also very supportive.

Mike was careful to seek approval and to stick within the guidelines of the policy on public comment. Yet his article stated his case strongly and added much to the community debate in pushing a greater sense of urgency on greenhouse gas emissions. The public are very receptive to sound, expert scientific opinion and are very much looking for more comment like Mike’s. Energy is one very big issue languishing at the moment without sufficient informed debate, but there are many issues that good science would progress for the community.

Mike’s advice is to encourage others to step out in the public arena the way he did. He says “It’s alright to take a risk.”

CPSU journey insurance safety net for members

In April 2007 the former Howard government used its Senate majority to force through radical changes to workers’ compensation arrangements in the public sector – changes which the union had campaigned against for several years. Among other cuts, the *Safety, Rehabilitation, Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill* removed the right of public sector workers to claim workers’ compensation for injuries sustained travelling to and from work.

As a result, CPSU members (including the CSIRO Staff Association) who are unable to work because of serious injuries sustained on the way to or from work and who have exhausted their paid sick leave entitlements could face extreme financial difficulties. Therefore our union has secured a safety net of journey insurance for members, provided by Lumley General Insurance and contracted through Gow Gates insurance brokers.

This arrangement provides limited income protection for CPSU members *without sick leave credits*, who are seriously injured on their journey to or from work and, in certain circumstances, during authorised meal breaks. The

arrangement took effect from August 2007 and remains in place for 12 months while we lobby the Government to reinstate decent compensation rights. This coverage is provided free of charge but is only available to financial union members.

A detailed product description statement is available online in PDF format from the CPSU website. Please read it carefully to ensure you are familiar with what coverage is available and what you need to do to comply with the terms of the insurance. Below is some summary information, which does not displace the full product description.

Why is the union providing journey insurance? The package that has been put together does not reinstate all of the components of the previous system. We believe the Government and employers should be responsible for this coverage. However, we have arranged this coverage for the next twelve months to help protect members with limited reserves of accumulated sick leave from the risk of extreme financial hardship while we continue to campaign for decent and fair workers' compensation coverage.

What is Journey Insurance? Journey Insurance provides benefits as detailed in the Product Disclosure Statement and Policy should you sustain an injury (as defined) while engaged in direct travel between your normal place of residence to and from your place of employment for the purpose of starting and ending the day's work.

Is cover provided if a deviation is made to the journey to and from work? Cover is provided for any deviation to attend an educational institution to undertake study relevant to your occupation.

Is cover provided while on meal breaks? Yes. Cover is provided while on any authorised meal break provided your journey is limited to a radius of five kilometres from your place of work. Injuries sustained in sporting or theatrical activities are not covered, whereas injuries

sustained during walking or running are covered.

Is cover provided if I become sick? No. The policy only responds if you suffer an injury as defined in the policy wording.

When do benefits become payable? Weekly benefits are subject to an excess period of 14 days. Compensation will only be paid after the first 14 days of disablement **and** paid sick leave is exhausted. The period of disablement commences with the first day of total or partial disablement for which medical treatment was sought in respect of any injury. Once indemnity has been granted, weekly benefits will be paid monthly in arrears.

For how long are benefits payable? The benefit period in relation to any temporary disablement is 104 weeks for members aged up to and including 65 years. For members aged between 66 and 70 years the benefit period is 52 weeks and for members aged between 71 and 75 years the benefit period is 26 weeks.

What benefits does the Journey Policy provide? Cover is provided for a broad range of specified events including:

- lump sum benefits for an injury resulting in death, disablement, loss/use of body parts;
- weekly benefits for injury resulting in temporary total disablement; and
- weekly benefits for injury resulting in temporary partial disablement.

How much are the benefits?

- **Accidental Death Benefit:** \$100,000
- **Capital Benefits:** \$100,000 (compensation is paid for specified events / injuries as a percentage of the capital benefits sum insured as per the policy wording)
- **Weekly Benefit Temporary Total Disablement:** The amount payable for weekly benefits is 85% of your weekly pre-tax income including commissions, bonuses, overtime payments, shift work payments

and other allowances averaged during the period of six months preceding the commencement of disability or \$2,000 per week, whichever is the lesser.

- **Weekly Benefit Temporary Partial Disablement:** 25% of benefits payable under Temporary Total Disablement where there are no light/alternate duties or the difference between what the member usually earned and what the member was able to earn while engaging in light/alternate duties

Will my ongoing medical and treatment expenses be paid? No. Due to the *National Health Act*, no coverage is provided under this insurance for medical expenses.

Is there any Age Limit? Yes. Cover is provided up to age 75 years. However, there are some modified benefits and policy terms for people aged between 66 and 75 years.

What does the current SRC legislation cover? The *Safety Rehabilitation Compensation Act* applies to all Commonwealth and ACT public sector workers. Compensation is administered through Comcare and applies in the following situations:

- if you suffer an injury in the workplace;
- if you suffer an injury out of the workplace but doing an activity associated your employment or at the direction of your employer;
- if you suffer an injury while travelling for the purpose of work (except for travel between home and work);
- if you suffer an injury while at a training or educational facility or travelling to such a facility at the direction or with the approval of your employer or fulfilling a requirement that is a condition of your employment; and
- if you suffer an injury as a result of an act of violence that would not have occurred but for your employment.

What is no longer covered? Compensation through the *Safety Rehabilitation Compensation Act* is

no longer applicable in the following circumstances:

- injuries incurred during normal travel between an employee's residence and usual place of work;
- injuries incurred during an authorised break when you are outside the workplace;
- injuries suffered as a result of reasonable administrative action; and
- injuries where employment materially contributed but not to a significant degree.

Making a claim

CSIRO Staff Association members have the same coverage as other CPSU members. Claims are administered through the CPSU Member Service Centre on 1300 137 636. Please state up front that you are a CSIRO Section member and provide your name and membership number (on your annual Membership Card).

<http://www.cpsu.org.au/campaigns/2301.html>

Terms dispute ends in cheers all round

Officially, 310 fixed term staff were converted to indefinite as a result of the divisional tenure reviews between April and August 2007. In practice, a larger undisclosed number were converted during the 16.5 month formal terms dispute in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) and many jobs that would otherwise have been appointed on fixed terms were made indefinite. Even though the dispute was long and hard fought through technical wrangling and withholding of information, Commissioner Smith recognised the difference it had made for so many staff in their working lives. It was a significant win for the Staff Association.

In June 2006, around the time the dispute was lodged with the AIRC, 27.2% of CSIRO staff were on fixed term contracts; by August 2007, the proportion was down to 18.2% (a drop of 650 fixed term positions). From our own estimates of CSIRO jobs advertised, the proportion of fixed term advertisements dropped

from over 80% down to around 40% (excluding post-doctoral positions).

The standard form of employment in CSIRO is indefinite - a fixed term appointment is only an option where the work is one-off task additional to the ongoing effort. The criteria that must be met for a specified term are set out in Clause 1(b) of Schedule 2 of the CSIRO Enterprise Agreement 2005-2008.

In settling the dispute on 6 September 2007, the Commissioner noted the large number of conversions to indefinite status through the divisional reviews and determined that all three criteria in clause 1(b) should be met for an appointment to be fixed term. The Commissioner also emphasised the importance of openness and free sharing of information as per the Enterprise Agreement.

Subsequent to the dispute, both the Chief Executive Dr Geoff Garrett and the Chair of the CSIRO Board Dr John Stocker commended the Association for its good work in upholding the terms provisions of the Agreement. They acknowledged to our President and Secretary that the result was a positive outcome for CSIRO as well as the staff.

The best feedback came from staff who were converted to indefinite: many told delegates and representatives that it had transformed their careers and prospects and given their families cause to celebrate.

While most fixed term employees don't mind being on contract, at least for the first term or two, they know what a difference it makes to their stability and commitment to have ongoing tenure. CSIRO can only benefit from this.

Our case was competently represented in the AIRC by barrister Mr Martin Willoughby-Thomas. Martin had previously been Secretary of the CSIRO Officer's Association at the time that the original specified term requirements were established in the CSIRO Tenure Award. His impression was that many parts of CSIRO did not seem to be applying the criteria at all and did not appear to understand why they are in place. Even though legal counsel for the case cost the Association many thousands of dollars, the Association Council determined that it was money well spent for capable, informed and committed representation.

The dispute is terminated but our work on the issue is not over. The Staff Association was not party to the business unit terms reviews and cannot be sure that all inappropriate terms have been converted. The office is continuing to follow up about individuals in ongoing areas of work who are still on contract and has made a request to Corporate People and Culture for information on all fixed term staff on their third or subsequent contract.

Commissioner Smith's statement

"Over the last 12 months I have been chairing conferences about an issue raised by the CSIRO Staff Association relating to fixed term appointments. During this time the Chief Executive of the CSIRO has directed a review of all fixed term appointments having regard to a changed funding environment.

This has meant that over the course of the conciliation process there has been a significant number of conversions from fixed term employment amounting to approximately five per cent of all staff.

The examination of these issues has led the parties to reaffirm the view that the criteria in Clause 1(b)(i), (ii) and (iii) of Schedule 2 are cumulative in their application.

The CSIRO Staff Association will continue to examine the application of fixed term employment and raise directly with CSIRO any concerns. To this end clause 4 of Schedule 2 and clause 44 will be applied.

As a result the current application is withdrawn."

Members on term contracts are advised to check Schedule 2 of the CSIRO Enterprise Agreement 2005-2008 and contact the Association office if they have any concern about the validity of their term appointment.

In the course of the dispute, CSIRO representatives invited the Association to assist with developing consistent approaches to term appointments across the Organisation. We drafted up a set of guiding principles to back up the specified term appointments provisions in the Enterprise Agreement. Members are invited to comment on the draft:

www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

Cornwell's Case: Superannuation and Non Permanent staff

Non permanent employees who worked in CSIRO at the time of the Superannuation Acts of 1922 and 1976 may have been negligently advised that they were ineligible to join the superannuation schemes. They may have subsequently become permanent employees and been admitted to the schemes but their entitlements on retirement will be less than they would have been had they been admitted earlier.

The High Court of Australia last year held that the right to sue for such negligence arises not at the time that the negligent advice was given but on retirement as it is on retirement that the loss actually occurs. The effect of this finding is that the 6 year limitation period for bringing civil proceedings has not yet expired for persons who retired less than 6 years ago and has yet to commence for persons who have not yet retired.

Any members who feel that they may have been negligently advised as to their superannuation rights and who are within the limitation period are invited to send details of their circumstances to the Staff Association.

csstaff@cpsu.org.au

<http://www.csiro.au/news/CSIROPublicStatement.html>

Resources needed for Diversity effort to succeed

A progressive diversity policy is essential to any organisation with a professional workforce, let alone an international scientific and engineering workforce in high demand. It is also fundamental for an enterprise with a global strategy. Yet the CSIRO Strategic Plan 2007-2011 does not have a specific strategic objective about diversity and CSIRO has not employed a fulltime Equal Opportunity/Diversity specialist since 1996. The CSIRO Workplace Diversity Plan 2002-2006 has not been replaced. The Staff Association looks forward to a new Plan in 2008 that is supported with funds and dedicated support.

The Staff Association has strongly advocated for a new Diversity Plan that would drive clear and rapid outcomes in the areas that can deliver the best returns. We believe those areas include: action to support indigenous staff; a program of education for all staff on diversity, equal opportunity and prevention of discrimination and harassment; and dedicated specialist support for the Equity and Diversity (E&D) Contact Officers (COs) in the business units.

In 2007 it was gratifying to see the indigenous engagement plan initiated and two indigenous engagement officers appointed. More generally on diversity, Corporate P&C engaged a consultant to do research to inform new initiative in this area. This was despite the fact that the previous plan was sound but failed to deliver because it was massively under-resourced. Again, a budget has not yet been allocated to allow any new plan to proceed.

The E&DCOs around the Organisation continue to give of their time and energy without the backup they need. Here are the perspectives of two E&DCOs on why they do this work.

I have been an E&DCO in CSIRO Entomology for the last 6 years

Contributed by Sue Brown

I volunteered for this role because I have very strong feelings about what is fair and just, I believe in the value

of speaking up so that change can happen, I like helping people and I like to make a positive contribution to the workplace. Yes, there is a small extra work load. I manage this by choosing carefully which and how many issues I get directly involved in, and by believing that E&D is an important part of my work, so that when I prioritise my tasks the E&D ones are allocated an appropriate amount of time.

The main role of a CO is to act as a confidential support person for someone experiencing difficulty at work. In Entomology, COs also participate in the E&D Committee which meets once every two months to implement initiatives in E&D across the Division. Perhaps most importantly, we have been working on ways to engage Divisional management and People & Culture staff in E&D, and are planning a workshop together to set priorities and actions for E&D in the Division.

Other achievements have included a new Divisional web site, an information pack for overseas staff moving to Australia, bullying awareness training, occasional special seminars on topics such as work-life balance, getting a Diversity category added to the CSIRO staff awards, plus many other achievements.

What I would like to see done most importantly in E&D at the enterprise level in CSIRO would be an organisation-wide E&D strategy that is resourced with people and money so that key initiatives can be proposed and implemented. Our data collection and analysis needs to be improved so that we can track our progress in E&D and determine priority areas. Divisions should be required to report on and improve their E&D performance.

COs need a higher level of training in areas such as the CSIRO-specific policies and how to change workplace culture. We need a re-designed organisation-wide intranet web site for E&D information. Initiatives such as these to improve the equity and diversity of a workplace have been shown to lead

to improved productivity and profit. So let's do it!

I have been an E&DCO at Plant Industry, Merbein for more than ten years

Contributed by Ilma Lolacono

Why do I take on this additional role? I believe that all staff should be treated fairly and equally and it is important that all sides of any issue are heard. A CO can assist this process. I want to help build a positive, friendly workplace that respects all members of the community. A positive, inclusive workplace also improves productivity and staff can actually enjoy coming to work. Attracting and retaining staff at regional laboratories can be a challenge. It is vital that an inclusive and supportive work culture is in place to prevent unacceptable levels of staff turnover.

I like to help others and believe that we need to treat our colleagues as people, not just as numbers or IDs. As a CO, I can provide personal support and advice to assist staff address problems. This is especially important for staff in remote regions who initially may not feel comfortable raising issues with off-site P&C staff, local management or through the Employee Assistance Program.

E&DCOs provide a contact point for diversity/equity/harassment issues in the workplace. They provide confidential support and advice to staff in handling problems at work and at home, because home issues also impact on the ability to perform at work.

In my role I provide current awareness services for site staff via email and an EEO/Diversity notice board in the tea room. I disseminate information on CSIRO policies at monthly program meetings, alert fellow E&DCOs to relevant journal articles and other information resources, contribute to the development of CSIRO E&D policies and have assisted in the Divisional roll-out of bullying/harassment training sessions.

I hope that CSIRO will continue to build on the good work that has already been carried out in this area, much of it by Roman Ruzbacky. In particular, I look forward to the implementation of a new Workplace Diversity Plan with real outcomes, adequate support and resources at a Corporate level for E&D and more training for CO. In addition, I would like to see the implementation of some sort of mentoring system across CSIRO that will encourage and support young scientists, especially females, to continue with their careers.

Forestry Bioscience Hobart annual clean-up

Contributed by Dale Worledge

As the site delegate for Forestry Bioscience (formerly Ensis) Hobart I have coordinated an annual building clean-up followed by a Staff Association sponsored BBQ lunch for the last 13 years; the CRC for Forestry pays for desserts. Gourmet sausages and marinated kebabs, veggie burgers, sumptuous salads and bread and cakes from some of Hobart's best food outlets is provided for approx. 40 CSIRO and CRC staff on site at lunchtime. The purpose of the lunch is to reward staff for participating in the clean-up and promote the Staff Association.

Everyone participates, from CSOF8s and CEO of the CRC to PhD students and visiting scientists. Each year around June 30th all the common use areas - glasshouse compound, potting and fertiliser sheds, store rooms and sample processing areas, basement and car park - are cleaned and each year we manage to fill a 10m³ hired skip. Two main areas have group leaders who assign staff with jobs, brooms and dustpans and everyone mucks in for an hour and a half cleaning everything and throwing out anything that is not labelled. It is a fun event and lifts morale with a feeling of everyone chipping in to make the building and our science run smoothly. In 2003 the Clean-up was recognised by CSIRO with an Occupational Health and Safety Achievement Award.

CSIRO's commitment to gas safety is flawed

Contributed by David McCallum

In light of the tragic accident in 2001, where a CSIRO member, Set Van Nguyen, died from a lack of oxygen after being trapped in an airlock chamber at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong, the CSIRO Staff Association thinks it rather damning that CSIRO made redundant the position of CSIRO Minerals Gas Safety Adviser. Peter Steeden, a 19-year CSIRO employee, was made redundant on Friday 13th July - a black day for safety - leaving no internal expert to mitigate gas risks.

In her report on the inquest, the Coroner said that Mr Nguyen's death "can only be attributed to a level of complacency" at CSIRO. In an email to all CSIRO staff after the Coroner's report, CSIRO Chief Executive Geoff Garrett expressed "deep condolences" to Mr Nguyen's family and sought to draw a line under the affair. "We have learned several important lessons from this tragedy to help us ensure that a similar event should never happen again," he said.

Peter, a member of staff in Minerals, had been carrying out duties in support of the CSIRO Gas Safety procedure for over two years. This work was formally recognised with a CSIRO Award in 2006 for supporting "the CSIRO OHS&E Network and Corporate Property in meeting compliance with compressed gas use and installations in CSIRO projects and facilities. The Project has contributed towards better managing gas safety risks in a well-informed, timely and cost-effective manner." Apparently that contribution was not seen to be an on-going need across CSIRO!

Although Peter had been accountable through the HSE team in CSIRO Minerals, his position was partly funded by Property Services. As a consequence of the new RSS restructure, Peter's position became vulnerable. Even though there was a great deal of support from the Staff Association, the Minerals management and Dr Rod Hill,

former Chair of the CSIRO HSE Committee, there was a lack of commitment to fund the position through the corporate HSE office as an enterprise service across CSIRO. Representations were made to Mr Craig Roy, Executive Line Manager for HSE, Mr Colin Macdonald, CSIRO HSE Manager and Mr Trevor Heldt, General Manager, P&C, without response.

The specialized knowledge that Peter carried of laboratory scientific operations and modes of operating in CSIRO is unique and has been lost through scrimping on budgets and avoidance of responsibility in the new One-CSIRO. There is a lack of leadership in corporate decisions in supporting research staff with the proper tools for compliance and in difficult areas, with HAZOP and clarification of standards including installation specifications. The biggest area of gas safety is the myriad of conflicting and confusing standards on the subject. Now CSIRO has no-one in an expert position to advise on laboratory gas installations.

The “lessons” that Dr Garrett referred to in his staff email appear to have been those of both avoidance and evasion of responsibilities. The Staff Association strongly condemns the CSIRO’s lack of commitment to the gas safety service and urges an urgent review of the HSE decision-making process.

Health and Safety Management Arrangements (HSMA) Working Group

The Staff Association Council has appointed Dr Mark Bown from CMHT Clayton as our representative to the HSMA working group. This group has been established by CSIRO Executive to develop new organisational arrangements for health and safety committees.

In July and August 2007 the Chief Executive initiated a process for nomination of staff representatives to the HSMA working group. This process appeared to have been established to remove union involvement in CSIRO Health and Safety arrangements. This was in

line with the attitude of the previous Government but inconsistent with established research that unionised workplaces are safer workplaces. In response, 83 of our Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and members nominated the Staff Association as their representative to the HSMA working group. It took several months and a lot of pressure on our part for the nominations to be recognised by CSIRO executive management.

The Staff Association Council’s view is that CSIRO could readily have adapted the existing OHS Policy to comply with the changes instituted to the *OHS* Act in March 2007 without the time and expense of a major policy revamp. Generally the HSE committees and the HSE community around CSIRO have been effective in their work and the CSIRO HSE Committee has done critical work in ongoing monitoring of the Organisation’s HSE performance.

The Council’s Health and Safety Policy Committee had a tough time in selecting a representative as there were many members with the interest and strong capability to contribute on the HSMA working Group. Mark Bown takes to the group a solid background in Health and Safety, both as an experienced HSR and as a Staff Association representative on the CSIRO HSE Committee. We look forward to Mark’s reports once the working group gets under way.

Work-related stress initiative

The Staff Association has been raising the issue of work-related stress in CSIRO for a number of years. At the most recent CSIRO Consultative Council in November 2007, CSIRO HSE management brought a proposal to our representatives for a joint project to assess work stressors in CSIRO. We are very pleased to participate in this important and overdue initiative.

Our delegates in South Australia, led by Richard Merry, conducted the South Australian Stress Survey in 2004 and a study of stress on IT staff following their restructure to an enterprise service. Both studies showed up indications of workplace

bullying and work-related stress. The South Australian Delegates Committee took the findings to divisional management at affected sites and there was some local attention to the issue. But IT management rejected the IT stress study before it got under way by discouraging staff from participating. Nevertheless, there was enough IT staff response to indicate a serious situation.

A New Zealand study released in August 2007 has show that work-related stress can be a cause of clinical depression and anxiety among young adults. The New Zealand legislation formally recognises ‘physical or mental harm caused by work-related stress’ – the Australian legislation does not, although it is evident in case law. Recent changes to the OHS Act reported to members last year has sought to reduce Comcare claims for work-related stress.

The project will be conducted through the CSIRO HSE Committee and the detail is still to be developed. Members should be alert to the Stressor Survey coming out this year and make sure that all staff participate, including those under pressure.

http://www.otago.ac.nz/news/news/2007/01-08-07_press_release.html

Support Services under outsourcing threat

Fallout from the Research Support Services (RSS) restructure continues into 2008. After vocal and vigorous lobbying of the Chief Executive by AAHL members, the transition to Property Services for Engineering Services at AAHL in Geelong was deferred for two months from July last year. It then proceeded, despite AAHL’s need for local control to maintain biological, physical and operational security. Affected staff, all with specialised knowledge of the facility’s unique requirements, were faced with having to apply again for their own jobs - an unnecessary and risky imposition at a time of trades skills shortage. Now that the RSS transition is complete, various functions in the support services are under threat of outsourcing.

The Staff Association raised concerns with the Chief Executive and Property Services management about contractors in respect of occupational health and safety (OHS) and, in the case of AAHL, biosecurity concerns. Members at AAHL held a number of meetings through to October 2007 to voice their concern about some incidents involving contractors. They demanded that CSIRO provide their representatives with information on all outsourcing assessment, decision-making processes and contract reviews as per Clause 46 of the Enterprise Agreement. This information has not been provided to date.

In the meantime, Property Services have instituted a maintenance review. We are not sure how extensive this review is or what staff are affected because we hear that only affected staff are seeing the generic parts of the draft report and the section about their own job. The draft report of the review is labelled Commercial in Confidence and Staff in Confidence. We understand that the review is covering services provided by Groundsmen and Cleaners. Both functions are undervalued for the quality of service provided to the sites and their adaptability to various and changing demands.

Members, as clients of the services, are encouraged to seek a copy of the report from your Property Services manager and send in your feedback for the review. Comments are due to close by the end of February.

IT desktop services outsourcing averted

Also in October, CSIRO IM&T put out a Request for Tender for a large chunk of desktop services currently provided by our own staff. While the contract did not proceed beyond the first assessment of tenders, the process was kept secret for some time before the tender went public and we understand staff involved in the preparation of the tender were subjected to confidentiality. There was no real staff consultation and the criteria for the tender assessments

were not provided to us for the stated reason of commercial-in-confidence.

The Staff Association again took the matter to the highest levels of CSIRO management and made our dissatisfaction known. Questions were asked of the Chief Executive when he visited some sites which added to our message of concern. Staff in the IT services were already under-resourced and under pressure – the tender added significantly to their work-related stress. In early December CSIRO advised it was not proceeding with the parts of the tender applying to existing internal services.

Members should keep very alert to further contracting of services as CSIRO management are taking steps to avoid appropriate consultation with users or accountability to staff about outsourcing jobs.

Childcare progress in WA

Contributed by Elizabeth Hulm

Clause 70(b) of the CSIRO Enterprise Agreement 2005-2008 defines a commitment by CSIRO to assess staff demand for childcare and raise awareness among staff of policies and procedures for establishing on-site childcare facilities. But the commitment has not been given priority and little progress has been made on work-based childcare at any site.

In July 2006 WA Staff Association Councillor Suzy Rea used the Staff Association networks of Councillors, organisers and delegates to collect data on what was already available or happening on childcare at all other CSIRO sites. With her toddler in one hand, the collated National information in the other, Suzy started the ball rolling at Kensington and Waterford. What she found was enthusiasm and interest in the issue and a number of members willing to get active and get things moving.

Some local Chiefs and OICs came on board, a joint CSIRO/Staff Association committee was formed and a survey was compiled. The survey results provided a strong basis for progressing childcare for the Waterford and ARRC sites. The Staff Association Council has

determined to provide contributing funds to engage a consultant to develop an options paper and business case on CSIRO provision of childcare facilities for that precinct.

On 23 July 2007 the Staff Association at Floreat put on a morning tea that was well attended by eleven staff, with almost that number again expressing their interest in the issue. Comments at the meeting: 'it was a nightmare trying to find care in the area', 'I live south of the river - if there was CSIROCare there I would like access as well', 'I would have returned to work 6 months earlier if there had have been childcare', 'I'm back at work but it's still an issue; I am using the goodwill of relatives at the moment to get by!!'

A fledgling committee was formed at Floreat and the survey was to be adapted to be distributed electronically to staff at this WA site. We look forward to this happening in 2008.

At the moment only the situation with small kiddies is being assessed but many other staff are expressing their frustration and their need for childcare of another sort. Talk to anyone with school age kids about after school care or even more importantly school holiday issues. There just isn't enough recreation leave to cover it! Staff need to get active and stay active particularly in areas where new building is happening. And the Staff Association is here to help.

John Little Scholarship 2007

Congratulations to Alexandra Fry from Land and Water in Floreat WA, who was the 2007 winner of the John Little Scholarship. Alexandra is studying for a Bachelor of Social Science in Geography at the Curtin University of Technology. We wish Alexandra success in her studies.

The John Little Scholarship is awarded annually to Association members undertaking a course of study up to the level of a first bachelor degree or equivalent. The Scholarship was established to honour John Little, a former Technical Association Federal

President and Victorian Branch Secretary who suffered an untimely death due to a heart attack. John was a Technician who strongly believed in the role of a Technician as a skilled practical scientific researcher. John's foresight and determination set the Association on a path towards professionalism.

Nominations for the 2008 John Little Scholarships will be called in March. Up to five Scholarships are awarded each year. In 2008 the criteria for eligibility will be extended to include four-year degrees.

Academic Award for John Little Recipient

Congratulations to Karen O'Rourke who graduated from Canberra Institute of Technology in October with a Diploma of Business Management. In recognition of her outstanding academic achievement she was awarded an Institute medal. Karen is a project officer with the International Unit at Limestone Avenue, Canberra and was a recipient of the Staff Association John Little Scholarship in 2006.

The following citation was published in the graduation program:

Karen is an outstanding graduate of the Diploma of Business Management. In completing this program, Karen received a combination of high distinctions and distinctions for all graded subjects. During her period as a student, Karen always provided a high level of leadership contributing to the quality of the experience for both students and teachers. Her passion for learning and excellence inspired those around her.

Our congratulations to Karen for her continued achievement!

Farewells and Office Changes

Mr Russell Marnock retired from CSIRO in March 2007 and resigned from the national offices he held six months later in September. Russell held many positions and offices for the Staff Association and its predecessor the Officers Association over the more than 30 years in CSIRO. From Health and Safety Representative through to Deputy

President, Treasurer and CPSU Governing Councillor, Russell acquired a remarkable knowledge of the many roles of the Association in CSIRO, in the CPSU and in our political and policy engagement.

In his farewell message Russell said, *"Over the years there have been many rewarding achievements. I recall the line that first got me involved in the Officers Association 'You can make a difference'. Well we can and you do! So keep up the good work and all the best for the future in a hopefully more enlightened industrial relations environment."* The Council congratulates Russell for his commitment and diligent work for the Association and thanks him for the difference he has made.

In January, **Mr John Adeney** from Land and Water in WA, retired from CSIRO. John contributed for many years in a number of roles too, including workplace delegate, Councillor for WA and WA Secretary. John was an exemplary participant who will be very much missed in the Floreat workplace. Congratulations to John on your retirement!

Farewell also to our former Finance and Administration officer **Ms Mary Anne Macko**, who left the Association in August 2007, and the Administration and Membership Officer, **Ms Lorna Craig**, who finished 16 years of service for the Association in December 2007. Both Mary Anne and Lorna had served through all the transitions and changes from the days of the Officers Association and the Technical Association. They showed outstanding commitment to the Staff Association through the union amalgamations of the 1990's and massive restructuring within the CPSU through the 2000's. The Staff Association Council and members acknowledge their service and wish Lorna and Mary Anne all the very best for the future.

The Melbourne office has new administrative staff and a new street address. Welcome to **Ms Angela Fang Yuan** who has responsibility for the Association's Membership and Finance in a full-time position.

Ms Julie Carlin joins us as the new administrative/organising support officer. Julie will answer your queries on the phone and help with better management of the Association website.

Both Julie and Angela started in the New Year after our office move around the corner to Collins Street in Melbourne. All correspondence should now be addressed to The Secretary at

**CSIRO Staff Association
Level 10
440 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000**

Members are always welcome to call into the office at any time during business hours. Our staff welcome your friendly conversation.

From the Editor

We had a large number of important issues to report on in this edition of Wavelength. Some significant items, including a report on the Brisbane building developments, Post Doctoral conditions and the CPSU moves to affiliate with the ALP are therefore being held over to the next issue.

Quite a few of our members received professional recognitions and awards in 2007. We congratulate you all, particularly those of you who were involved with the IPCC and shared in the Nobel Prize.

We anticipate more frequent and better quality reporting on the Association's website in the coming year so that members will not have to wait for Wavelength.

Member feedback on any of the stories in this issue or contributions to future editions of Wavelength are welcome. A special thankyou to the contributors for this edition!

*Authorised by: Pauline Gallagher
Secretary, CSIRO Staff Association
31 January 2008*

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