

Public Perceptions of a Management Culture of Intimidation, Bullying and Harassment at CSIRO – 2

Censorship of the Professional Views of Scientists

A Brief Overview of the Concerns:

Censorship and gagging can take the form of intimidation, harassment and bullying. The highly charged environment within which (natural and social) science and research is conducted today has led to increasing concerns over the freedom of scientists to speak in the public interest.

Clive Spash, ex-CSIRO science leader, said:

- [In regard to CSIROs gagging of climate scientists] Spash ... [says]: "The scientists, if they were allowed to speak freely, would be able to inform the Australian public fully. The scientists are basically trustworthy. There is contested evidence and contested truths here, therefore you need open discussion and debate. **The CSIRO is pretending there is one truth most of the time and that truth is being controlled by senior management.**"

["CSIRO in bed with big coal", Brisbane Times & Sydney Morning Herald, 3 Jul 2010](#)

The case of the retired scientists:

- "A group of retired CSIRO scientists has been formally gagged by management and formally cautioned against making public comment about the national research organisation"
- "A group spokesman said the honorary fellows had been 'rapped over the knuckles' and told to 'shut up'"

[Rosslyn Beeby, Canberra Times, 14 May 2005](#)

The 'rap over the knuckles' was given by Andrew Johnson (CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems). In the 14 February 2007 Senate Estimates hearings, then shadow Science Minister Kim Carr noted that Johnson had already been taken to the Industrial Relations Tribunal twice by staff.

[Hansard, Senate Estimates Hearings, 14 February 2007](#)

Brian Martin, commentator, said:

- [In relation to CSIRO]: "Censorship is alive and well in Australia. In all my studies, the thing that stands out is that ... for every one [prominent case], there at least 10, maybe 100 other cases, that never receive publicity

["Censorship 'just tip of the iceberg'", ABC Science Online, 14 Feb 2006](#)

Peter Pockley, editor of Australasian Science said:

- "...staff should be very wary of leaking information ..."

["CSIRO denies backing whistle-blower warning" ABC News 25 June 2006](#)

["Gagging Row Rattles CSIRO Executives", Australasian Science, April 2006](#)

Senator Ian Campbell, Federal Environmental Minister, said:

- “If a bureaucrat is giving directions to a scientist not to say something, then its not something that is sanctioned by me”

[ABC Four Corners – 13/02/2006: Program transcript](#)