

CASE STUDIES FROM PUBLIC INFORMATION SOURCES:

CASE STUDY OF A CSIRO DIVISION

The Division of Molecular and Health Technologies / Molecular Science in 1998-2009

45%-55% of highly-cited scientists involuntarily separated after 2001

<9% of other scientists involuntarily separated after 2001

The CSIRO *Division of Molecular and Health Technologies* carried out research in chemistry, biochemistry and biology. Between 1998 and 2005, it was named the *Division of Molecular Science*. After 2009, in 2010 it merged with several other Divisions to form a new “super-Division” named the *Division of Materials Science and Engineering*.

The Institute of Scientific Information’s *Citation Index* database, which provides information on the number of times scientific publications have been cited by other scientists in their publications, showed that, over the period of 2001-2009, half of the group leaders of the most highly cited research groups in this CSIRO Division appear to have been involuntarily separated from the organization in one way or another. There have been no political or public policy controversies surrounding the work carried out by the Division.

Within the scientific community, the *Citation Index* is widely considered to give a good measure of the importance and impact of the work done by scientists and their research groups. The more citations a publication attracts, the more significant it is generally considered to be. In several countries, citation statistics are used to determine and justify the public funding afforded scientists.

According to a study undertaken at the end of 2009, the above database showed that, during 1998-2009, there were 44 scientific publications which attracted 100 or more citations and whose most senior author had the CSIRO Division of Molecular Science/Molecular & Health Technologies as their primary affiliation. These publications came from the research groups of 13 different scientific group leaders.

While few scientific units in Australia could boast such a record of achievement, of the abovementioned 13 group leaders:

- 5 or 6 were, apparently, subsequently involuntarily separated from the organization. That is, they were made formally redundant or placed in allegedly untenable situations which left them with no alternative but to resign. All 5-6 group leaders left after 2001.
- 4 or 5 left voluntarily to take up senior executive positions elsewhere (including as a University Pro-Vice Chancellor, a Company Vice-President, a Company CTO, and as a prestigious Research Fellow). Two of these left during or before 2001; two left after 2001.
- 3 remained in the Division at the end of 2009. One of those allegedly complained generally to staff about apparent management harassment in the period 2001-2004.

Thus, the attrition rate due to involuntary separation during 1998-2009, amongst the most highly-cited scientific group leaders in the Division, appears to have been 0% in the period 1998-2000 but 45%-55% in 2001-2009 (5 or 6 out of 11 in 2001-2009 and 0 out of 13 in 1998-2000). Only 23% of the highly-cited scientific group leaders have been retained since 1998 and were still with the Division in 2009.

By contrast, only a handful of other scientists were apparently made involuntarily redundant by the Division during 1998-2009. To the best of our knowledge, there was only one round of redundancies for

scientists at the Division in the above period, and that was voluntary. On that occasion, it is believed that, at most, 20 scientists and support staff (out of approximately 250 in the Division) volunteered to become redundant. That equates to <9%. At least some of those were support staff, not scientists. The report detailing that round of redundancies is provided at the end of this document.

The rate of involuntary separation amongst the body of scientists in the Division therefore appears to have been negligible and, certainly, very significantly lower than that amongst the top, most-cited scientific group leaders.

This record is, by any measure, extraordinary. Details of the study are given below.

RESEARCH GROUP LEADERS LISTED ON PAPERS PUBLISHED DURING 1998-2009, WHICH HAD ATTRACTED MORE THAN 100 SCIENTIFIC CITATIONS (AS AT LATE 2009)

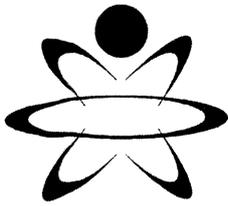
(FOR THE *CSIRO DIVISION OF MOLECULAR AND HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES* (2005-2009) AND ITS PREDECESSOR, *THE DIVISION OF MOLECULAR SCIENCE* (1998-2005))

1. Neil Furlong (1 publication) Dr Furlong resigned from the Division in 1999 to become Pro-Vice Chancellor at RMIT.
2. Calum Drummond (1 publication) Dr Drummond was seconded from the Division in 2001 to become Vice-President Research at a spin-off company, Cap-XX. He subsequently returned to CSIRO to become Chief of the Division of Materials Science and Engineering.
3. Liming Dai (6 publications) Dr Liming Dai and his group discovered how to synthesize carbon nanotubes in aligned arrays. He published numerous ground-breaking and high profile papers in this respect. In 2001, his research group was allegedly turned into a "virtual" company without his knowledge, input, or approval. Dr Dai was allegedly placed in an untenable position and resigned. He is presently a distinguished professor at Case Western Reserve University in the USA.
4. Hans Griesser (2 publications) Dr Hans Griesser left the Division suddenly in 2001/2 after a new Division Chief was appointed. Dr Griesser is now Deputy Director of the Ian Wark Institute at the University of South Australia.
5. Ezio Rizzardo (18 publications) Dr Rizzardo is a CSIRO Fellow and a highly regarded scientist at CSIRO and in Australia. Rizzardo remains in the Division and is one of the most highly cited CSIRO scientists of all time.
6. Graeme Moad (1 publication) (Rizzardo not an author) Dr Moad remains in the Division.
7. Ruth Hall Dr Hall was retrenched from the Division in 2003 under controversial

- (2 publications) circumstances. Within two years she was elected to the Australian Academy of Sciences. She is currently a professor at Sydney University.
8. Susan Clark
(4 publications) Dr Clark was based in the Sydney laboratories of the Division and left to join the prestigious Garvan Institute as an NHMRC Research Fellow.
9. Chris Strauss
(2 publications) Dr Straus is internationally considered a “father” of microwave chemistry. He was the recipient of numerous awards. In 2005, he won the prestigious Birch Medal, awarded by the *Royal Australian Chemical Institute*. He was the first-ever CSIRO recipient of the medal. In 2006, he was named in Senate Estimates as having been allegedly involuntarily separated by the Division. Dr Strauss thereafter took up a chair position at Queens University in Belfast, Northern Ireland.
10. Colin Ward
(2 publications) Dr Ward was allegedly separated from the Division under controversial circumstances within weeks of winning the CSIRO Chairman’s medal in 2006. Dr Ward has since won numerous awards, including, in 2007, the prestigious Lemberg Fellowship of the Australian Academy of Science. Dr Ward is currently a Fellow at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.
11. Tim Adams
(1 publication) Dr Adams remains in the Division working on, amongst others, the Insulin EGF receptor family that Dr Ward pioneered.
12. Peter Hudson
(2 publications) Dr Hudson is believed to have left CSIRO (in 2007/8) to become CSO at a spin-off company, AviPep.
13. Gerry Swiegers
(2 publications) Dr Swiegers was allegedly involuntarily retrenched in 2009 after complaining of bullying/harassment and commercial impropriety.

(Total: 44 highly-cited publications)

(Note: there were 2 other publications in which individual CSIRO scientists were listed as minor authors which received more than 100 citations)



News Extra

Attn: All members CMHT

www.cpsu-csiro.org.au

20 July 2006

Meeting re CMHT staff reductions

Clearer communication and kinder process put to the Chief

On Monday the 17th of July, Staff Association representatives met with the Chief Graeme Woodrow and senior managers to discuss matters to do with the current round of job cuts in CMHT. The meeting had been requested by the Staff Association in response to concerns raised by members about lack of communication and a very traumatic 'spill and fill' process that had been announced for two projects at Parkville. We sought from the Chief his more direct interaction with staff for a better understanding of the situation and approaches and a wider range of options to minimise forced redundancies. The chief was receptive to our input and undertook to make improvements.

Confusion and Concerns

The Staff Association was represented by Parkville delegates Lynne Waddington and Laura Castelli, Association Secretary Pauline Gallagher and Organiser Nathan Oakes. Attending with the Chief Graeme Woodrow were Deputy Chief Ros Hore and People and Culture Manager Graham Black.

We requested an explanation of the situation in the Division that was driving the need to reduce staffing, the number of staff anticipated to be affected and where they are located. Rumours have been circulating that up to 30 positions will eventually go and staff needed to know what was planned.

In view of the lack of clear information and different understandings from site to site, even between individuals, we asked the Chief to communicate directly with staff, as they would expect this from him in these circumstances.

We recommended that he hold in face staff meetings at each site allow for question and answers

to reach a common understanding around the Division. The Staff Association representatives let the Chief know that staff had trouble interpreting communications released to date. We made clear that communications needed to be explicit rather than implicit, unambiguous and not be couched in *management-speak*. Dr Woodrow agreed to this.

Impacts on Different Sites

The Chief advised that the current status is:

- **Parkville:** 16 staff affected with five to be potentially redundant after a *spill and fill* process.
- **Adelaide:** of five staff potentially redundant four may be redeployed and there are special arrangements being negotiated for the fifth.
- **Clayton:** reduced staffing requirements have been met through natural attrition via retirements, redeployments, secondments and the like.
- **Diagnostics CRC:** CSIRO are withdrawing from this CRC by the end of December with six

staff potentially excess. The Chief was uncertain about what would happen to them.

Why is This Happening?

At this meeting the Chief justified the job cuts solely in terms of scientific restructuring – a consequence of the divisional merger in 2005, CSIRO's Science Investment Process (SIP), the move to Themes and the project reviews in March 2006. The Chief said he was seeking to align all of the division's efforts to meet with the four research themes identified.

We discussed finances only briefly. From SIP, the division was allocated an appropriation increase of about 1% for the new financial year, which did not meet general cost increases. The division was prevented from taking a loss forward for the 06-07 financial year. The Chief said, however, that this did not have a huge bearing on the reduction of jobs within the division.

We also raised the returns from IP and their significance in

balancing divisional budgets before the merger. The Chief made no comment of substance on this or on Corporate clawbacks for support services.

New Staff and Job Cuts?

In response to our concerns about new staff being recruited to the division at the same time as these cuts were being announced – we were advised that the new positions were all Post Doctoral Fellowships as per agreements CMHT has with its commercial partners. The division was seeking to fill these positions with ongoing research staff where it could alter those arrangements with the external partner.

Selecting for Redundancy

We put strong concerns about the ‘spill and fill’ and questioned why a general call for expressions of interest in redundancy had not gone out. We put that ‘spill and fill’ should be a last resort in these situations as they were demoralising, they pitted staff against their colleagues and workmates and there is always a tendency to feel that management have already decided what staff members they want to keep and have written the jobs to fit them.

Both the Staff Association and the CMHT managers were keen to pursue voluntary departures where possible, through expressions of interest in redundancy and redundancy substitution. Ms Hore agreed to put out a clearer more

explanatory message to staff about it.

Redundancy substitution is always a confused issue.

Redundancy substitution can mean:

- *putting one's hand up to be made redundant as part of a general cutback*
- *putting one's hand up to be made redundant instead of another officer with similar skills*
- *putting one's hand up to stay on where another officer with similar skills would prefer to take the package.*

Substitution should not require an exact skill match – reasonable retraining should be provided where needed.

Long Term on Terms

We also raised our concerns about the treatment of a number of staff at Parkville who have been on multiple contracts over extended periods of service, whose tenure should have been reconsidered previously.

This is of particular concern where these staff may be excluded from any process such as a spill and fill.

Association Staff Access at Parkville

The Staff Association delegation also questioned the Chief as to why Staff Association Organisers were being restricted in their access to the Parkville site when they have been

notifying a visit. Our Organisers have been instructed to go to one room and only stay on site for a defined limited period. This is the most restrictive access we have to any site in CSIRO and appears to be nothing more than a literal application of the minimum rights provided under the new Workplace Relations Act.

The Chief and Deputy Chief have indicated that if the Staff Association were to request access, stating what the visit is for, whom the Organisers will be speaking to and how long they need to do this, then he would allow them to visit.

Members should consider collectively if they find this restriction reasonable

Help in Redundancy Situations
The Staff Association is available as an alternative source of advice and support to members in redundancy situations. We can offer a helping hand in covering all the practical things that need to be considered or done in times of potential redundancy. This includes financial or legal referrals.

Members should note that access to unfair dismissal provisions under the amended Workplace Relations Act is very limited and is pretty much excluded where a redundancy or restructure is a contributing factor.

The CSIRO Staff Association is the voice of staff in CSIRO.

Not a member of the Association?

***Contact your workplace delegate for a membership form or email
csstaff@cpsu.org.au***