



*Bardell*

**Submission No. 02**  
(CSIRO ACT)  
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## **CSIRO STAFF ASSOCIATION**

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Secretary  
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

20 January 2014

By email [pwc@aph.gov.au](mailto:pwc@aph.gov.au)

### **Submission into the Inquiry into the CSIRO ACT Consolidation Project**

Dear Committee,

The CSIRO Staff Association is a section of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). We represent 2800 staff in CSIRO, including scientists, engineers, research project, support and administrative staff.

**Recommendation 1:** The CSIRO Staff Association supports the CSIRO ACT Consolidation Project.

However, there are three aspects of CSIRO's statement of evidence that we would like to draw to the attention of the Committee: office accommodation, child care provisions and staff amenity.

#### **Office accommodation**

At paragraph 16, CSIRO state that 'Whilst CSIRO as a statutory authority is not currently required to achieve PRODAC compliance, its aim on all new developments and refurbishment works is to align with current PRODAC guidelines.' PRODAC guidelines from the Department of Finance specify a gross office accommodation density maximum of 14m<sup>2</sup> per occupied work point. This density maximum is significantly lower than the current normal CSIRO work environment and can only be implemented through widespread open plan office accommodation at Black Mountain. At paragraph 17b iii, CSIRO states that a project objective is to 'Implement a new CSIRO model of workplace design with the adoption of open plan office accommodation, shared science facilities and staff amenities.' This objective is intended to maximise economic utilisation, without any emphasis given to the potential effects on productivity.

The CSIRO Staff Association believes that widespread open plan office accommodation is unsuitable for the work role and function of many CSIRO staff and that it may lead to reduced productivity and increased workplace absenteeism. In our experience, open plan accommodation is problematic in CSIRO workplaces, particularly for scientists/engineers and for numerous functions including the preparation of scientific publications, research proposals, funding applications and data analyses. These roles and functions routinely require isolated spaces for concentration and contemplation, and are critical to maximising scientific output as well as revenue to conduct research. In addition, in response to open plan office accommodation, the CSIRO Staff Association has observed an emerging trend for staff to work from home to avoid interruption and maximise productivity. We believe that this trend is increasing health and safety risk factors and is deleterious to workplace culture and collegiality. We submit that collaboration in the workplace is better achieved through retention of discrete office spaces and the clever design of common areas, rather than open plan accommodation.

**Recommendation 2:** That the Committee request CSIRO amend its strict adherence to PRODAC guidelines in order to implement the most effective and collaborative workplace design for CSIRO's scientific productivity. This should include undertaking a participatory design approach, encompassing input from staff, without the constraints of PRODAC guidelines.

**Recommendation 3:** That the Committee request CSIRO provide demonstrable evidence that scientific productivity and workplace attendance will not be diminished as a result of introducing open plan office accommodation in CSIRO workplaces at Black Mountain.

The support the Committee's considerations, the CSIRO Staff Association provide the following points of reference on open plan accommodation:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781119992592.ch6/summary>

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/currency/2014/01/the-open-office-trap.html>

### **Child care provisions**

At paragraph 181, CSIRO state that 'A childcare facility operates at the Northern end of the Black Mountain campus and is sufficient to meet the expanded needs of the site.'

Under Clause 77 of the CSIRO Enterprise Agreement 2011-2014, CSIRO is required to:

1. conduct a staff demographic analysis and staff survey each time there are significant additions to current facilities, and for new building projects, at all CSIRO workplaces; and
2. assess the feasibility of the provision of additional child care facilities at CSIRO workplaces; and
3. raise awareness of CSIRO procedures and guidelines.

To date, the above requirements have not been met for the CSIRO ACT Consolidation Project. The CSIRO Staff Association therefore submits that it is presumptuous for CSIRO to state that the existing facility will be sufficient. This is particularly the case as the existing facility already has a significant waiting list and staff numbers at Black Mountain will increase by 39% as a result of the CSIRO ACT Consolidation Project.

**Recommendation 4:** That the Committee request CSIRO withdraw paragraph 181 in its statement of evidence and comply with requirements under the CSIRO Enterprise Agreement 2011-2014 (Clause 77) as soon as practicable.

### **Staff amenity**

CSIRO's statement of evidence outlines the state of buildings at Black Mountain and other ACT sites, especially the progressive inability to upgrade and replace buildings to maintain the condition of CSIRO property infrastructure. Over the medium and longer term, this has been the case for all CSIRO buildings nationally.

At paragraph 37, CSIRO state that 'The provision of quality science and office accommodation is an important factor in the recruitment and retention of quality staff. This has been identified as an issue for CSIRO for a number of years as CSIRO competes with other research institutions for staff, who in recent times have invested heavily (through Commonwealth's Education Investment Fund (EIF) and other grants) in modernising their accommodation to contemporary standards.'

The CSIRO Staff Association fully supports the statement at paragraph 37. Many CSIRO staff currently work in facilities well short of the standards of Australian universities and research institutes, who have had greater access to Government funding (both State and Federal) for capital investment. Notably, unlike some competing institutions, CSIRO is also required to operate substantial national facilities and retains an innovation footprint through most of regional Australia.

**Recommendation 5:** That the Committee be aware of the inability of CSIRO to maintain world class property and research infrastructure under recent and current funding and structural models. That the Chief Scientist be requested to consider how this could be addressed as part of the strategy ‘Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in the National Interest: A Strategic Approach’.

Best practice approaches to staff amenity at Black Mountain should be implemented to relation to pedestrian accessibility, bicycle paths and bicycle storage facilities. The CSIRO Staff Association is aware that a significant proportion of staff cycle to work at Black Mountain and this could be further encouraged through the provision of enhanced facilities.

**Recommendation 6:** That the Committee recommend to CSIRO that staff at Black Mountain are provided with access to no less than 300 bicycle storage bays, that are appropriately located, secure, covered and well lit.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Popovski  
Secretary