



CSIRO

CSIRO resolves to strengthen values and culture

Inappropriate behaviour is not to be tolerated in CSIRO. Chief Executive Megan Clark announces an independent review to investigate allegations by former staff and to ensure CSIRO's values and culture support all its people today and in the future.

5 February 2013

We only really know what we stand for when faced with a challenge and we have to make a choice whether to take the path that reflects our values or not. I have always held health and safety and creating a workplace built on trust and respect where people can flourish as key values.

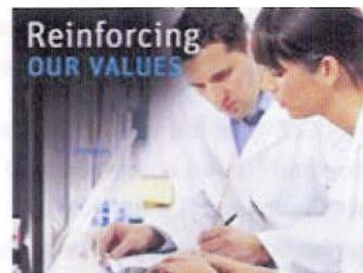
I share a deep concern with the community about any report that staff in CSIRO may have been bullied, harassed or mistreated and I have paused to reflect on how a trusted scientific organisation, held in high esteem globally could be standing accused by some of its former staff of not being able to deal effectively with their issues.

I want to be clear that I, my management team and the Board are committed to providing a positive working environment where all forms of inappropriate behaviour – including discrimination, bullying, harassment, intimidation or threats – are absolutely not tolerated. It does not fit with our values or our culture. I know that stopping inappropriate behaviour in the workplace and the fear of it is a challenge. It involves both the complex interactions between people and the role the organisation takes to manage it at the case level and in systems and processes.

At CSIRO we aim to foster a working environment where people are safe, feel valued, are stimulated, encouraged and rewarded, and where they can reach their full potential. This environment is what I, with the CSIRO's Board and management team, are committed to ensuring we provide for all of our people.

We have set very clear expectations through our values and Code of Conduct of what is appropriate behaviour and we know we will not be successful until everyone goes home safely with a sense of pride and satisfaction. Setting clear expectations and aspirations are not enough if we are to move to a future where our decisions and interactions are guided by our values and we take responsibility for our behaviours. It also means understanding the impacts of inappropriate behaviour – including bullying and harassment – ensuring we all have the tools and skills to resolve issues as they arise in the workplace in a collaborative manner and learning from our past experiences.

The awareness of the impacts of inappropriate behaviour in the workplace – including bullying and harassment – has grown significantly over the past decade. An issue previously hidden from public view is now known as a significant contributor to workplace stress and one of the drivers of an increasing number of workplace relations claims across Australia. The feelings of intimidation, anger and injustice that emerge can have long term impact on those affected and their families. The key issues being raised by former staff include not having contributions to projects and publications adequately recognised, unfair dismissal, intimidation through



Reinforcing our values (Image: iStock)

performance management, unresolved disagreement on ownership of intellectual property, denying scientists "free speech" and failing to take timely and effective management action on issues that have been raised in the workplace.

CSIRO treats any claims, from current or former employees, of inappropriate behaviour extremely seriously. We work hard to ensure that the systems we have in place to prevent or deal with staff concerns are working properly. If they fail, we are committed to improvement.

So when Comcare found in its recent review of the operations of one of our Canberra Divisions that we needed to improve how we assess and manage the risks relating to psychological ill-health in managing allegations of misconduct, we immediately set about addressing those issues.

Although Comcare found that we could make improvements in the way that we do things, they also reported that they had "found no evidence of system deficiencies or a culture within the CSIRO ... that enabled or promoted bullying type behaviour". This is heartening, however, we believe that just as we have matured as an organisation with our safety performance we can also improve in the area of staff welfare because one case of inappropriate behaviour is one case too many. This means commitment to a multi-year strategy with clear benchmarks on which we can be assessed and held accountable. It also means learning from our experiences and building them into our future strategies.

While a number of issues raised by former staff have previously been the subject of independent review, I have, together with the Board, decided to appoint an eminent and experienced independent person to review claims by former employees, ensure our duty of care has been met to these staff, assess whether previous investigations were adequate and recommend where further action is required and what lessons we can learn to build into our future strategies. The terms of reference of the review are in the process of being finalised with input from the independent investigator and I will be providing further details about this once they have been finalised.

My lead indicator for success is that more people speak up, I want to hear about concerns and I want our managers to also hear about them. We need to ensure we do this in a way where all those involved are supported and not harmed. I believe the independent review will help us learn and manage this challenge effectively.

At the core of our culture and values is the integrity of our excellent science. This embraces the highly demanding scientific rigour of ensuring the integrity of data and being clear of the uncertainties, of challenging peers and leaders and in turn accepting the critical review of peers from around the world. That is a culture we have and in which we take pride.

Our recent staff survey showed 85 per cent of our staff support and are engaged with CSIRO's mission to use our science to deliver profound impact to Australia and humanity. This is one of the highest levels of engagement for an Australian organisation.

The ability to transform the lives of Australians is one of the reasons why our people are passionate about who we are and what we do. It's why Australians trust and respect us. It's why we are committed to ensuring that CSIRO remains a safe, healthy, productive and rewarding place to work.

For more information on the independent review process see [Reinforcing CSIRO values](#).

Contact Information

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