

CSIRO Staff Association Member poll on consultation and CSIRO jobs

Background

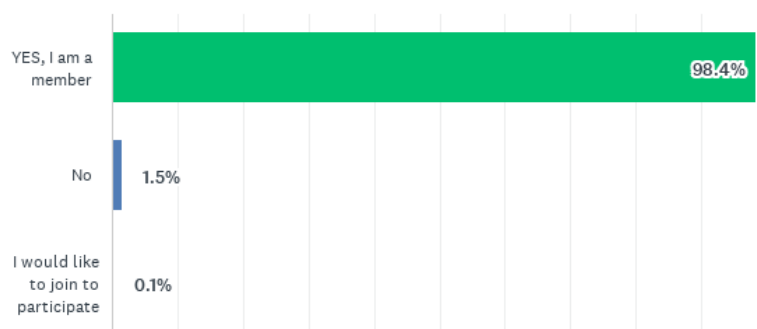
In the short space of a couple of months, CSIRO Executive have announced potential job cuts in Enterprise Support Services across the organisation and in multiple business units including Health and Biosecurity, Agriculture and Food, Manufacturing - with rumours of more to come.

Additionally, there are concerns that CSIRO are not following new rules designed to ensure meaningful and genuine pre-decision workforce consultation.

Over a week in May, we asked Staff Association members to complete a brief, anonymous snap poll as part of our campaign to improve consultation and to protect jobs.

Participation

Q1 This poll closes 12pm (AEST) Monday 20 May 2024 and is open to union members, only. Are you a member of the CSIRO Staff Association?

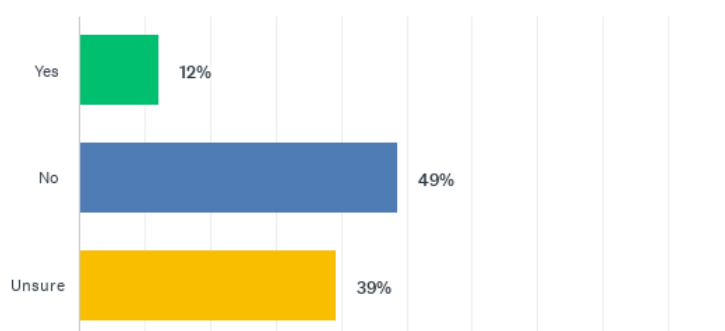


More than six hundred (658) Staff Association members participated in the exercise, a number that represents approximately ten per cent of the total CSIRO workforce.

Member poll on consultation and CSIRO jobs

Consultation

Q2 Consultation - Following news of potential job cuts, do you believe that CSIRO Executive is engaging meaningful and genuine pre-decision consultation?



Only 12 per cent of respondents believed that CSIRO Executive was engaging in meaningful and genuine pre-decision consultation.

The remaining 88 per cent of participants were unsure (40%) or did not believe (48%) that Executive were fulfilling consultation obligations at CSIRO.

Selected comments

“The consultation meetings are being scheduled with 24 hours notice, and the information to be discussed on Thursday was provided with 2 hours notice. This is clearly insufficient for people to have a chance to review and form views prior to the meeting.”

“Terrible so-called 'consultation.' And the way it was announced in an email before a staff webinar and then not discussed first up on the meeting agenda.”

“I would have liked to see more consultation with staff earlier on about how this could be reduced without resorting to job losses. Structural or operational changes to improve efficiency, or changes to existing roles, should come first before considering redundancies.”

“The main problem here is of course the money, that's why the job cuts in the first place. Would be better if CSIRO was better funded by the government. Goes beyond what CSIRO leadership can immediately do anything about. I recognise that the CSIRO leadership tries to be more transparent and have more consultation, but of course there is still quite a bit of room for improvement.”

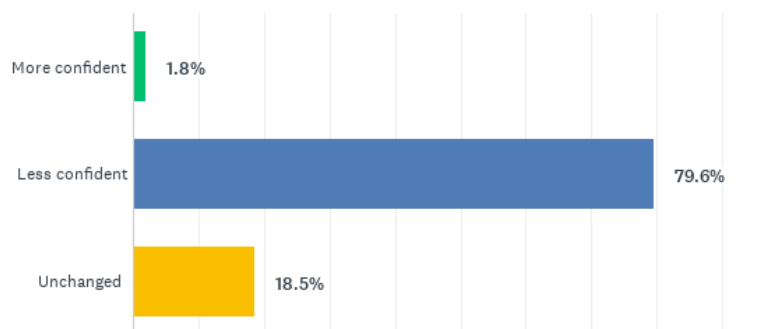
“There was no staff consultation prior to deciding on areas in which jobs were to be cut in CSIRO Agriculture and Food. The first we heard was that 30 jobs were to go, and that the decisions had already been made about what areas (the cuts would be located).

CSIRO Staff Association

Member poll on consultation and CSIRO jobs

Job security

Q3 Job Security - Given the recent announcement of cuts, how do you feel about the current state of job security at CSIRO?



Almost 80 per cent of participants reported feeling less confident about the current state of job security of CSIRO, with less than 2 per cent reporting feeling more secure.

Selected comments

"I chose to work at CSIRO after being offered other roles (significantly better pay as well) because of the perceived job security that this role presented. While I might not be affected right now, it does not give me a lot of confidence in the long term when it comes to job security if regardless of your loyalty to the organisation or your impact within CSIRO you could be made redundant."

"I won't be having my contract renewed, despite there being obvious business need for my specialist skill set. Staff productivity is being negatively impacted. Central services are becoming harder to get as staff in those areas are under increased pressure and job insecurity. People are scared, stressed and uncertain."

"Being on a (non-ongoing) contract I am more worried about job security."

"Everyone is less certain about job security and we all think that cuts are coming for our business unit as well."

"My position has been designated as impacted. My colleagues are concerned about their job security."

"It's tricky to maintain a sense of attachment to CSIRO as an organisation when it feels like all the job security has gone."

"The situation has caused significant disruption and uncertainty in the office. Many employees are concerned about their job security in the coming months, and the delay in communication is further disruptive, leaving them unsure whether to start searching for new employment or not."

Member poll on consultation and CSIRO jobs

Impact

Poll participants were asked to describe the individual impact of cuts, including the effects on colleagues and the workplace at large.

Of the more than 475 comments, here a selection of responses, in the words of CSIRO staff themselves.

Selected comments

“I'm feeling extremely anxious at work right now with the lack of transparency and the sudden nature of the recent job cuts.”

“My mental health has taken a hit which is also affecting my physical health. My colleagues seem more stressed and on edge. Being a non-ongoing employee, I fear I won't have a job in four months.”

“I don't know if my team will experience cuts but we have several people on contracts so the team are stressed about whether they will retain their jobs. People are also stressed about their own jobs and whether they will be made redundant. The morale in the workplace is fairly low at the moment.”

“The cuts are having an emotional impact on me and my colleagues who are worried about job losses. It's easy for someone to say ‘you can see change as a problem or an opportunity’ when it isn't likely a change that could bring unemployment affects them. I'm also aware of colleagues who are impacted where positions have been effectively cut from their team without anyone in the team being consulted.”

“I'm unsure about my future. Having more discussions about how certain my position and pieces of work are, both directly and indirectly. For example, if support roles are not there then either stuff won't get done (which will impact research) or I'll have to do it and it will also impact research and my workload.”

“We went through a large reduction in staff just under two years ago and it brings back memories of that episode. The business unit management recently had an all-staff webinar where they carried on as if nothing bad was happening and then announced the cuts at the end after having a few ‘light-hearted’ sections of the webinar. It was tone-deaf and embarrassing, frankly.”

“Massive mental health impact as well as physical impact due to lack of sleep, in additional heightened stress levels due to job uncertainty, possible financial impacts, lack of information and detail provided to date, withholding financial and career support until ‘formalised’, flow on effects to family and friend interactions.”

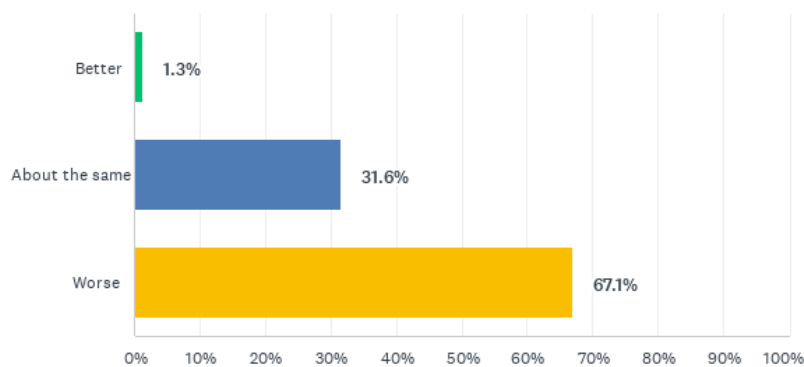
“I don't understand why we have this constant hire-and-fire cycle, it's like we never learn. Every time it's the same: there's job cuts, then there's fewer people doing the research and fewer people to support us, so we spend less time on the science.”

CSIRO Staff Association

Member poll on consultation and CSIRO jobs

Morale

Q5 Morale - How would you describe staff morale at CSIRO right now?



Staff morale at CSIRO has taken a battering, with more than two thirds (67%) of respondents reporting feeling worse off.

Selected comments

“Morale is very low. Lunchtime and other conversations often circle around the topic of redundancies and staff insecurity.”

“30 per cent of my team is to be made redundant... morale is pretty low.”

“There has definitely been an effect on overall staff morale and the atmosphere within my immediate space has been affected.”

“Morale was (already) down because of a lack of commercial work and meaningful projects, being further reduced by notice of redundancies amongst senior staff.”

“There’s a general feeling of hopelessness. Lack of morale equals no trust.”

“These cuts are really impacting morale and sense of CSIRO being a great place to work.”

“Redundancies are having an adverse effect on morale of myself and colleagues in my area. These changes have come without any warning.”

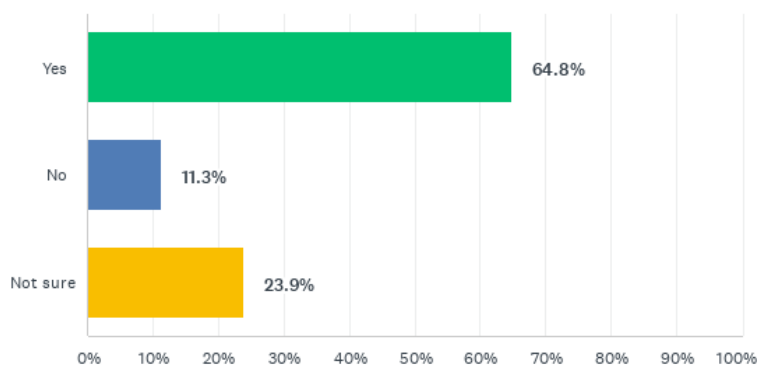
“There’s a lot of apathy due to not knowing if we’ll have a job in a few weeks. Morale at historical lows, stress at all-time highs.”

CSIRO Staff Association

Member poll on consultation and CSIRO jobs

Research capability

Q6 Research capability - Are you concerned that potential job cuts will impact CSIRO's science capability to support Australian industries and public good research?



Almost 65 per cent of respondents are concerned that potential job cuts will impact CSIRO's research capability, the organisation's ability to support local industry and science in service of the public good.

Selected comments

"Less support staff means more work for an already stretched research workforce."

"I'm an impacted staff member and experiencing uncertainty of future of science and research. Will aim to leave science for next part of career."

"Uncertainty and insecurity about what will happen over the next year regarding infrastructure and research capability."

"A major impact on colleagues and our workplace with cutting our entire work world which is conducting clinical research trials."

"I feel that we are being run more and more as a business and not a research organisation. The push to make money or bring money in is overwhelming and if you don't you are axed, research is about spend money to make money for our industries not us."

"Transparency needs to be given about how the proposal came about in detail - how can so much investment be already put into growing clinical research trials unit and then all of a sudden cut out without warning or chance to defend ourselves, find external potential new projects or collaborations?"