

**DRAFT: Update on the University of Sydney's slowly inflating *Australian Paradox* scandal
CPC's disingenuous response to ABC's shredding of *Australian Paradox* "finding"**

By Rory Robertson,
23 February 2014

In the wake of **ABC Radio National's *Background Briefing* report** (link below) and the authors' response (ditto), I offer the following observations to assist investigators assessing the competence and integrity of the University of Sydney's *Australian Paradox* research.

I think most people who have listened to (or read) **ABC investigator Wendy Carlisle's report** will agree that she comprehensively shredded the credibility of the influential *Australian Paradox* paper:

<http://www.abc.net.au/radiational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2014-02-09/5239418>

Clearly, the **research quality-control process** in this case was a catastrophic failure: the extraordinarily faulty paper is so dominated by serious flaws that its main "finding" - "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity - cannot be trusted. Indeed, the ABC confirmed the paper to be a menace to public health. **Accordingly, the scientific record should be corrected - with the deeply flawed paper and its invalid finding retracted - in the usual way:**

<http://retractionwatch.com/>

To assist that process, in the final section, below, I present a **draft Retraction Notice**. Disturbingly, retraction is not what has happened; instead, the authors responded in a way that further darkened the cloud surrounding the integrity of research promoted by scientists at the University of Sydney's fledgling \$500 million Charles Perkins Centre (CPC).

For a growing number of objective observers, the "Australian Paradox" has morphed into a puzzling scandal about how an extraordinarily faulty high-profile paper came to be both "peer reviewed" **and** (still) published! And what are we to make of Professor Jennie Brand-Miller's recklessly false defence on national radio: "**Yes, I'll just correct you there. My paper has not been criticised by any scientist?**"? (**Minute 23:00, and Section 3 below**).

Apologies for the length of this piece but these are serious matters, matters currently the focus of a formal research-misconduct inquiry: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/AFR-report-investigation.pdf>

To assist investigators, my approach below has been to document carefully each observation along the way.

1. CPC PRETENDS ABC'S STAKE THROUGH HEART OF CLOWNISH *AUSTRALIAN PARADOX* PAPER IS BARELY A SCRATCH

Instead of formally retracting their faulty "finding", the authors - **Charles Perkins Centre (CPC) Professor Jennie Brand-Miller (JBM) and her Glycemic Index Foundation (GIF) co-author Dr Alan Barclay (AWB)** – chose to correct several problems, after two years, and present their corrections as minor textual matters, in the process of pretending that the scathing *Background Briefing* report had exposed no problems of substance, nothing beyond the trivial:

*"Abstract: We have found three **inadvertent** errors in our paper published in Nutrients [1]. [a] On page 498, text line 8, the words in brackets " ~600 g per person per year, Figure 6" should be amended to " ~600 g per person, Figure 6". [b] On page 500, text line 17, some words were missing. The amended sentence reads "Food industry data indicate that per capita sales of low calorie (non-nutritively sweetened) beverages doubled from 1994 to 2006 while MARKET SHARE of nutritively sweetened beverages decreased by 10% points." [c] On page 502, line 2, the words "increasing by 300%" should be amended to "increasing 3-fold". [d] These changes have **no material impact** on the conclusions of our paper. We apologize to our readers":* <http://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/6/2/663> (My listing and bolding)

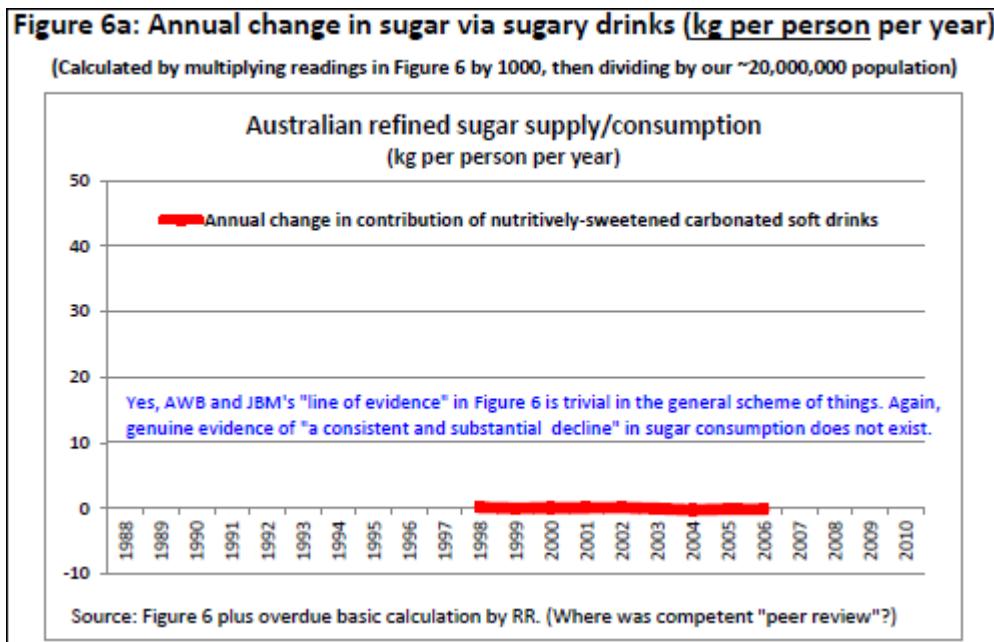
Yes, in a formal scientific journal, JBM and AWB put on their best straight faces and adopted the clownish "[It's] just a scratch...just a flesh wound!" approach made famous by Monty Python's "The Black Knight":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKhEw7nD9C4>

Keep that word "**inadvertent**" in mind for when we get to the "**Australian Blue Kangaroo**" fiasco later on. For now, however, let's benchmark the authors' "**Corrections**" against the Q&A in my correct critique that prompted them: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/quickquizresearch.pdf>

[a] The correction should have been to “~150g per person per year”. JBM and AWB's “correction” to “~600 g per person” is **inappropriate**. Obviously, “**per person per year**” is the only relevant benchmark. The authors failed to note that they had mistakenly exaggerated their claimed (tiny) decline in sugar intake by a factor of four.

Once that largely meaningless “~600 g per person” figure is put into its proper “per person per year” context - in my Figure 6a, below - **the underlying situation is revealed as a flattish line running along the X-axis near zero kg per person per year!** (Please double-check my simple calculations, if you are unconvinced.)

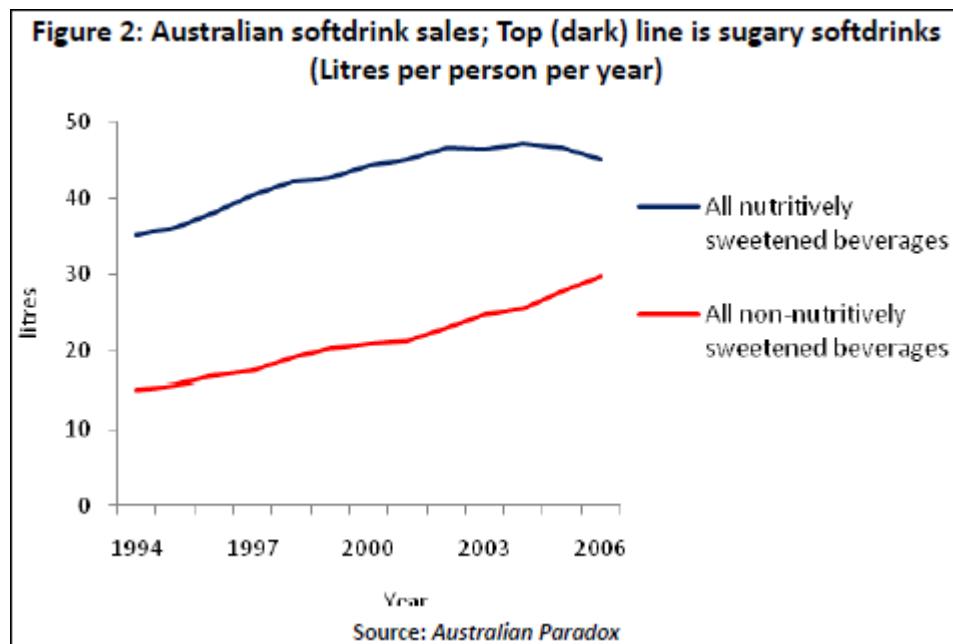


<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

Disturbingly, AWB and JBM again went out of their way to avoid the obvious conclusion: the amounts of sugar shown in the brief period spanned by their Figure 6 are trivial in the general scheme of things (Figure 6a). Again, they provide **no evidence** of a “consistent and substantial decline” in sugar consumption per person between 1980 and 2010.

[b] The appropriate correction is “Food industry data indicate that per capita sales of low calorie (non-nutritively sweetened) [no-sugar] beverages doubled from 1994 to 2006 [yes, from 15L to 30L] while nutritively [sugar] sweetened beverages increased by 30% [from 35L to 45L]. Again, JBM and AWB went out of their way to avoid any explicit acknowledgement of the critical fact that sugary softdrink sales increased by 30% between 1994 and 2006.

Readers, why does the Charles Perkins Centre allow its scientists to keep operating without proper supervision?



<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

The new reference to "market share" is **inappropriate** – not to say "slippery" - because market share is irrelevant; it is a furphy. Again, the relevant benchmark here is sugary drink sales **per person per year**, not changes in market shares of no-added-sugar diet drinks and bottled water. (Also, see Section 4, below.)

Importantly, before increasing by 30% per person per year between 1994 and 2006 (Figure 2), sales of sugary softdrinks would have increased by something similarly chunky over the previous 14 years, 1980 to 1994. Clearly, sales of sugary softdrinks per person per year would have increased by something like 50-100% over the relevant 1980 to 2010 timeframe. Yes, sugar consumption via sugary drinks increased massively between 1980 and 2010.

In my opinion, the authors - while under journalistic scrutiny - just put themselves on rather thin ice, by **again cleverly avoiding the long-required and long-overdue acknowledgement** that their sugary softdrink "line of evidence" does not support - indeed, it contradicts - their claim of "a consistent and substantial decline" between 1980 and 2010. (Do others agree that "disingenuous" is the appropriate word?)

[c] Yes, a conspicuous minor error. Importantly, where were the **multiple peer-reviewers** that the University of Sydney's senior management claims were doing **world-best-practice quality control?** (Q&A 1 in my *CPC Quick quiz*.)

[d] Amusingly, after two years, JBM and AWB felt the sudden need to "correct" as minor textual problems the matters highlighted in **Q&A 2-4** in my *CPC Quick quiz*. Disturbingly, they chose not to correct - nor even mention - the dominating problems exposed to the world by Wendy Carlisle and *Background Briefing*, the dominating problems that wholly invalidate the Australian Paradox "finding" - highlighted in my **Q&A 4, 5, 6 and 8**.

JBM and AWB's **outrageous response** to *Background Briefing*'s comprehensive shredding of the credibility of their Australian Paradox "finding" has been to pretend that nothing happened: "**no material impact on the conclusions of our paper**". Yes, "**it's just a scratch! Not even a flesh wound!**"! Stop it, Black Knight. My sides ache.

Readers, how serious a problem is it that JBM and AWB are pretending that nothing just happened? Well, awkwardly for them, there no longer is any hiding from the fact that JBM's understanding of the ABS and FAO datasets - the former discontinued as unreliable, the latter simply a made-up flat line - was flimsy at best (minutes 23-25).

Importantly, it turns out, according to JBM, that JBM and AWB incorrectly "assumed" (on the basis of nothing) that their remarkably flat FAO series had been sourced from "the International Sugar Organization". Alas, no. The critical FAO series for the 2000s is just a made-up – falsified - flat line: (Slides 21 and 22)

<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/22Slideshowaustraliangoestoparadoxcanberrafinal.pdf>

Instead of noticing - and then discussing - the remarkably flat line-segment in their preferred chart, JBM and AWB simply declared a "paradox"! As I said in the *Background Briefing* report, "Scientific observations of animals, humans and plants don't happen to be flat lines. If you see a flat line, that is a **red flag** that something is wrong":

<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/FAOfalsifiedsugar.pdf>

In their third round of clever "Corrections" – after those on 9 August 2011 and 12 February 2014, if it comes before the paper's overdue retraction - JBM and AWB will need to formally document their previously undisclosed faulty assumptions. And then they'll need to explain how, miraculously, their Australian Paradox "finding" is valid despite it explicitly relying on **falsified/invalid data** that competent analysts would not consider credible, to put it mildly.

2. STOCKTAKE: WHAT TO MAKE OF CPC'S FORMAL AUSTRALIAN PARADOX CORRECTIONS, AFTER TWO YEARS?

(i) Clearly, influential Charles Perkins Centre scientist Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and her low-GI sidekick Dr Alan Barclay **struggled with basic maths, and with interpreting simple time-series data**. Extraordinarily, they still are claiming a "consistent and substantial decline" in sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010, **despite the valid indicators – those that were not discontinued as unreliable and then falsified – tending to trend up not down**, in their own published charts: Figures 1-6a in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

(ii) In this Australian Paradox scandal, the **quality-control process** at the highest levels of Group of Eight research suffered catastrophic failure. An extraordinarily faulty paper with an obviously false conclusion – "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity – by highly conflicted authors made it onto the scientific record

and poisoned the critical debate on the origins of obesity and type 2 diabetes, together the greatest public-health challenge of our times.

Disturbingly, the **(false) claims by senior management at the University of Sydney** – Vice-Chancellor, Dr Michael Spence and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Jill Trewhella – that the spectacularly faulty paper was properly "peer reviewed" before publication - while lead author JBM oversaw the process as "Guest Editor" - have been confirmed as nonsense.

In my opinion, it remains self-evident that no-one competent read carefully through the hopelessly flawed paper before it was plonked on the scientific record. As I have been saying for two years, **the peer-review process clearly was incompetent, non-existent or ignored.**

Notably, Vice-Chancellor Spence referred to MDPI's *Nutrients* journal as "that reputable journal" (as documented in my *CPC Quick quiz*). What is he saying now that Jeffrey Beall has added MDPI (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute) to his widely cited "**list of questionable publishers**"? Is an influential Charles Perkins Centre scientist having her highest-profile paper published by what is widely known as a "predatory publisher" a good thing or a bad thing? <http://scholarlyoa.com/2014/02/24/under-pressure-mdpi-tries-to-clean-house-retracts-paper/>

Importantly, how come senior scientists at the University of Sydney felt the need to publish their supposedly important "finding" in an obscure pay-as-you-publish e-journal? I will tell you: the *Australian Paradox* paper would never have been published in a real journal with real quality controls.

Despite the University of Sydney having been advised multiple times about the paper's various serious - and obvious - problems, senior management chose to do nothing other than pretend everything was in order. If I were Vice-Chancellor Spence - who says he was "advised" that the paper had been subjected to a rigorous "peer-review" process - I would be looking to replace the source of that faulty advice.

Looking further afield, the Group of Eight (Go8) needs to step up and fix this Australian Paradox scandal, ASAP, because at present it is advertising the false claim that it is uniquely devoted to "excellence" in research. It isn't. It turns out that there is no real Go8 research quality control when it matters. Thus the Go8 is greatly exaggerating its qualifications, in the process of extracting hundreds of millions - even billions - of dollars of research funding from Canberra, in the national interest, you understand: http://www.go8.edu.au/_documents/go8-policy-analysis/2013/role-importanceofresearchunis.pdf

(iii) The sugary softdrink "line of evidence" for the Australian Paradox "finding" has been shredded. JBM and AWB's implicit formal acknowledgement that **sales of sugary softdrinks did not decline by 10% but in fact increased by 30%** between 1994 and 2006 confirms what was already widely known: the Australian Paradox "finding" is rotten to its core.

To repeat for the umpteenth time, sugary softdrink sales - thus sugar consumed via sugary softdrinks - were substantially up not down over the relevant 1980-2010 timeframe. Moreover, I'm not sure the paper's dataset properly includes "post-mix" beverage sales: those sugary drinks sold in big and bigger cups filled from taps at McDonald's, KFC, cinemas, bars, etc. Would such sales be up or down since 1980?

Importantly, missing subsets of sugary drink consumption appear to be a major flaw in a new high-profile paper, ***Quenching Australia's Thirst*** <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1747-0080.12108/abstract> : <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-17/new-soft-drink-study-ignores-fast-growing-frozen-coke-market/5265024> ; <http://www.lancerbeverage.com/blog/what-s-happening-updates-and-conversations/frozen-drinks-hot-at-the-australian-open>

Here's my "takeaway" for the 1980 to 2010 timeframe: Sugary softdrink sales up. Sugary energy drink sales up. Sugary milk drink sales up. Sugary juice drink sales up. Sugary "post-mix" drink sales up. Obesity up. What paradox?

(iv) JBM and AWB's notably flimsy understanding of the origins of their discontinued/made-up ABS/FAO series (minutes 23-25 in *Background Briefing*) – including their **previously undisclosed faulty "assumption"** that the International Sugar Organization was on the job originating data in the 2000s (it wasn't!) - serves only to highlight the invalidity of their Australian Paradox "finding".

(v) In summary, there is no “Australian Paradox”, just an idiosyncratic, unreasonable and indefensible assessment of the available indicators of sugar consumption, by those who coined the phrase before plonking their invalid “finding” on the scientific record via a pay-as-you-publish e-journal lacking competent quality control. Disturbingly, the authors have engaged in a clownish defence of their spectacularly faulty paper, a defence that has been little-constrained by the underlying facts. (Further evidence for that statement is provided in the charts in my *GraphicEvidence* link, above.)

(vi) Three important questions for investigators:

- What is the usual approach to "peer reviewed" scientific "findings" in formal journals that turn out to rely on data that were discontinued as unreliable and then simply made up – falsified - with no firm basis in reality?
(Hint: <http://retractionwatch.com/>)
- **At what point does persistent negligence or recklessness in defending obviously flawed analysis as flawless - and claiming that utterly invalid "findings" on the scientific record are perfectly valid: “no material impact on the conclusions of our paper” - morph into scientific fraud?**
- Whatever happened to the guy who "inadvertently" discovered an unlikely new species, the "**Australian Blue Kangaroo**"? Chart 44 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/AUSTRALIAN-PARADOX-101-SLIDESHOW.pdf>

3. PROFESSOR BRAND-MILLER’S MISINFORMATION: "MY PAPER HAS NOT BEEN CRITICISED BY ANY SCIENTIST"

One of the “crunch times” in *Background Briefing* was when Professor Jennie BrandMiller interrupted Wendy Carlisle to observe, “Yes, I’ll just correct you there. My paper has not been criticised by any scientist” (minute 23:00).

That is a recklessly false claim. For starters, Dr Rosemary Stanton and Professor Boyd Swinburn publicly rubbished the paper in 2012. Dr Rosemary Stanton stated:

“And yes, I agree with you [Rory] that we have no evidence that sugar consumption in Australia has fallen. A walk around any supermarket shows that huge numbers of foods contain sugar. I argue this point frequently with colleagues”; “I have many objections to that particular paper and to the idea that sugar is not a problem”; and “I have expressed my opinion about the paper to the authors ... I will almost certainly cite it at some stage as an example of something I consider to be incorrect”: Charts 18 and 19 in www.australianparadox.com/pdf/22Slideshowaustraliangoestoparadoxcanberrafinal.pdf

Importantly, for those who have respect for "peer reviewed" science alone, and tend to ignore the work of a clearly credible if long-winded economist, please note that **five** University of Western Australia (UWA) scientists last year savaged JBM and AWB's paper in a "peer reviewed" journal:

This finding calls into question the existence of an Australian paradox as reported by Barclay and Brand-Miller”
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2458-13-668.pdf>

My guess is that JBM was rather familiar with that particular "peer reviewed" scientific critique - by five scientists - of her spectacularly faulty paper, given that she and AWB had already published an utterly unconvincing formal rebuttal (p.9). Extraordinarily, AWB tried hard to change the UWA paper's title, to **remove the words “Australian Paradox”**: (Point 8; then Point 1 in second bite) <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/668/prepub>

Amusingly, AWB also complained that his other "lines of evidence" were being ignored, even though they tend to point up not down, contradicting the basis of the always-unlikely Australian Paradox claim! (*GraphicEvidence* link)

Readers, it was JBM and AWB's determined efforts to discredit that UWA paper via another faulty publication in another "peer reviewed journal" - "...**there is an Australian Paradox**": <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/898> - again without proper "peer review": <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/898/prepub> - that prompted me to write to the Academic Board of the University of Sydney to seek a research-misconduct investigation: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Letter-UoS-Academic-Board.pdf>

That JBM under journalist scrutiny - on ABC Radio's widely respected *Background Briefing* program - **went out of her way** to claim falsely to hundreds of thousands of listeners that “My paper has not been criticised by any scientist” -

despite the credibility of her "findings" having been shredded in 2012 and 2013 by me, by Dr Rosemary Stanton and by those five UWA researchers - is **really quite unsettling.**

I was **gob-smacked**, in part because I had raised the matter of those five scientists and their "peer reviewed" UWA paper with JBM when **we discussed – face to face** - her faulty paper at the Australian National University in November: p.4 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/LettersProfTrewella.pdf>

There may be a pattern here. After all, the last time JBM and AWB were under intense journalistic scrutiny, back in 2012, they invented the clownish story that a big chunk of the available sugar in our food supply was being consumed by cars not humans, despite sugar not being used as a "feedstock" for ethanol production in Australia: ("Ethanol mix-up") <http://www.smh.com.au/business/pesky-economist-wont-let-big-sugar-lie-20120725-22pru.html>

4. WHY IS PROFESSOR BRAND-MILLER SO UNFAMILIAR WITH THE BASIC DETAILS OF HER HIGHEST-PROFILE PAPER?

Beyond the problems with competence and integrity outlined above, many listeners found it notable – even excruciating - that Professor Brand-Miller appeared to have little acquaintance with the detail of her own paper. Yes, indeed (p. 4 in *LettersProfTrewella* link, above).

In particular, Correction [b] above confirms that JBM and AWB had themselves into silly tangles on the simple but irrelevant matter of "market shares" (again, confirming what I've been saying for two years). Yet when Wendy Carlisle asked about the 30% rise in sales of sugary drinks – described in the paper as a 10% decrease - JBM was all at sea.

Transcript: (25:30) <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2014-02-09/5239418>

Wendy Carlisle: *So Background Briefing put this to Professor Brand-Miller. How could she say that Australians were drinking less sugary drinks when the graph in her paper [Figure 2, above] shows we're drinking more?*

Jennie Brand-Miller: *I'm saying that the amount of sugar that went into those soft drinks declined by 10%. [Wrong.]*

Wendy Carlisle: *All right, but you don't say that in this paper. You say, 'The food industry data show that per capita sales of sugar-sweetened beverages have decreased by 10%.'*

Jennie Brand-Miller: *Sales of low-calorie sweeteners doubled from 1994 to 2006 while nutritively sweetened beverages decreased by 10%. I would [will] double-check that for you...*

Wendy Carlisle: *That's talking specifically about sales.*

Jennie Brand-Miller: *I'll double-check it for you.*

Wendy Carlisle: *All right, okay, thank you.*

Jennie Brand-Miller: *It might be that a key word came out, which is normally...a key word has come out, okay? [Wrong again, unless JBM's key word is "UP".]*

Wendy Carlisle: *Okay, so you're saying a key word is missing from this paper?*

Jennie Brand-Miller: *It's possible that this should be, 'While nutritively sweetened beverages...10% sweetened beverages decreased by 10%.' [Not even third time lucky!] So I'll double-check it.*

.....

Sorry, wrong again and again and again. Readers, that fiasco always involved the simple matter of the "market share" of sugary softdrinks falling by 10 percentage points, from 70% to 60%. Yet JBM appeared to be clownishly unfamiliar with the issue: unsure if her paper was talking about "the amount of sugar"; guessing "a key word has come out, okay"; and, finally, speculating on a "10% decline" in "10% sugar" sugary softdrinks, like Coca-Cola, Sprite, Fanta, etc. Oh, dear!

Again, awkwardly, as I wrote back in November last year, "I was left to wonder **how much involvement** Professor Brand-Miller actually had with the production and defence of her paper, beyond contributing her name and a place for it to be published": see (xx) on page 20 of <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

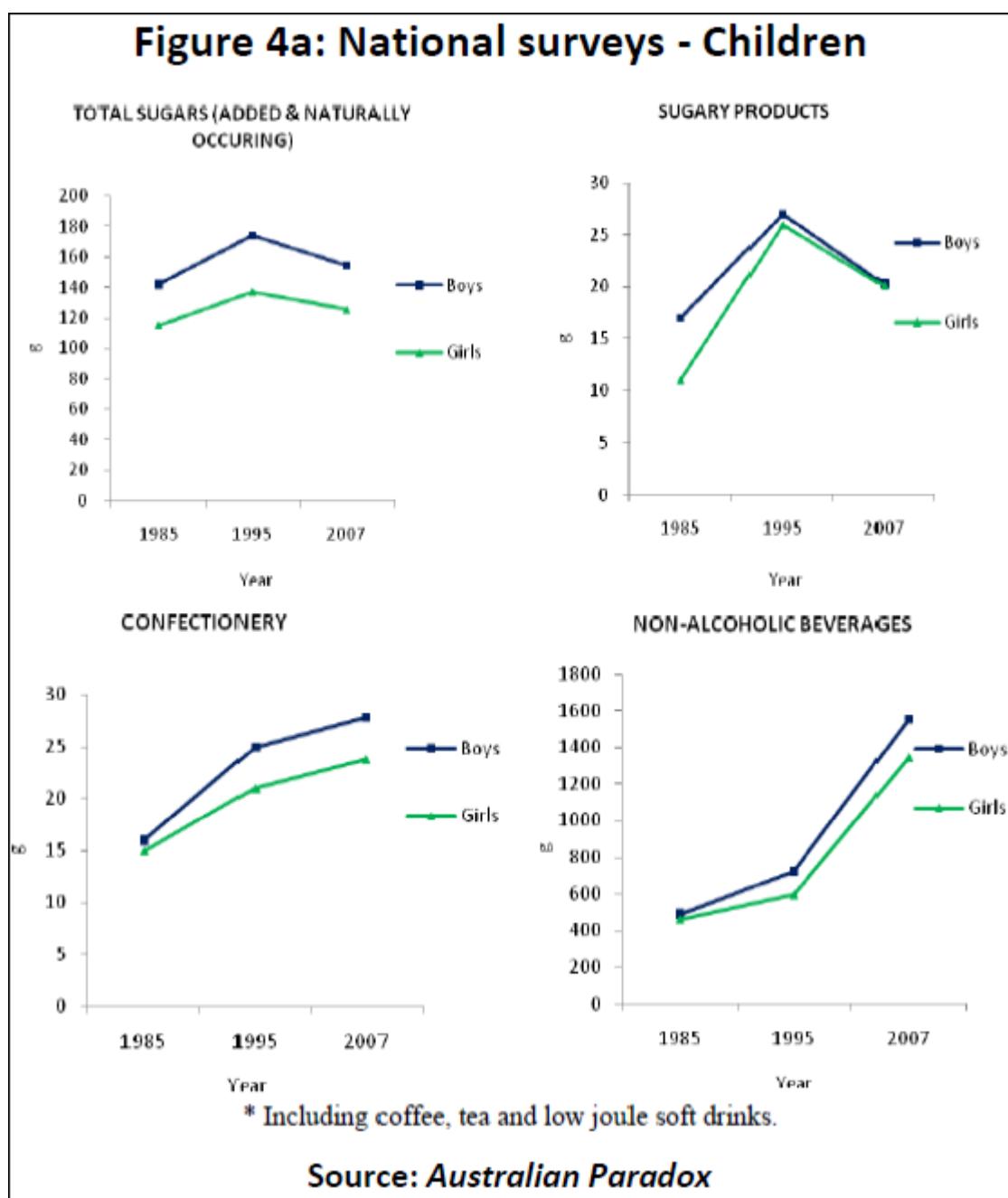
Meanwhile, David Gillespie – a competitor of JBM and AWB's in the pop-sci diet-book business – has observed bitingly that "Brand-Miller was apparently so impressed by Barclay's findings on sugar consumption [presented at the Dietitians Association of Australia annual conference in 2010] that she became the lead author of the paper by the time it was eventually published in 2011": <http://davidgillespie.org/?p=946>

I don't know about that. But the extraordinarily faulty *Australian Paradox* paper does indeed have fascinating origins. What I think is well documented I have reproduced for investigators in that *GraphicEvidence* reference above.

5. BOTTOM LINE – IT'S "RETRACTION TIME"

After listening to (or reading) *Background Briefing*'s investigation, I think most reasonable observers will agree with my assessment that the deeply flawed *Australian Paradox* paper - featuring the invalid yet influential "finding" of "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity - is both **an academic disgrace and menace to public health. And so should be retracted:** <http://retractionwatch.com/>

Indeed, in my opinion, it now is quite clear, after two years, that this slowly inflating *Australian Paradox* scandal features "**inadvertent scientific fraud**" along the lines undertaken by the fictional "Professor Sydney Nutrition" in Slide 44 at <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/AUSTRALIAN-PARADOX-101-SLIDESHOW.pdf>



Accordingly, I encourage Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and Dr Alan Barclay to give priority to the integrity of the scientific record – and **priority to rescuing perceptions of integrity in research at the University of Sydney's fledgling \$500 million Charles Perkins Centre** - by formally retracting their obviously faulty *Australian Paradox* "finding".

Failing that, I encourage **Professor Stephen Simpson - the boss of the Charles Perkins Centre**, and so the boss of Professor Jennie Brand-Miller - to instruct his underperforming scientists to do the right thing without further unreasonable delay: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/LettersCPCProfSimpson.pdf>

To assist the process of correcting the formal scientific record, I have drafted [an excellent Retraction Notice](#):

Abstract: *It has been brought to our attention by a reader of Nutrients that the conclusion of “**a consistent and substantial decline**” in per-capita sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010 in “The Australian Paradox: A Substantial Decline in Sugars Intake over the Same Timeframe that Overweight and Obesity Have Increased” is based in part on a data series that was falsified over the 2000s by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). MDPI has a strict “**zero tolerance policy**” towards the use of falsified data, whether the authors were aware of the invalidity of the data or not. Moreover, there are further serious errors and misinterpretations that collapse the credibility of the finding of “an inverse relationship” between sugar intake and obesity. For example, the authors’ own chart - Figure 5A [or Figure 2, above] - suggests strongly that **sugar intake via softdrinks increased as obesity increased between 1980 and 2010**. Unfortunately, that observation eliminates a central plank of the authors’ claimed “paradox”. Indeed, the same is true of Figure 4 [Figure 4a, above] which shows four different indicators of sugar consumption by children all trending up not down over the relevant timeframe. The authors’ business links to the sugar and sugary food/drink industries also are somewhat unsettling. Taking public-health considerations into account – particularly evidence that excessive sugar consumption is a major contributor to global obesity and type 2 diabetes, together the greatest public-health challenge of our times: <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/33/11/2477.full.pdf> – the Editorial Team and Publisher have determined that this manuscript should be retracted. Further, MDPI intends to conduct an investigation into how these problems successfully evaded all our normal quality-control processes. Twice. In the meantime, we also intend to retract *Australian Paradox Revisited*, a second faulty work by the same Charles Perkins Centre author; and further, to seek the retraction of another sister paper published last year in *BMC Public Health* journal. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, but have chosen to take the only approach that gives proper priority to the integrity of the scientific record.*

[An earlier version of that proposed Retraction Notice is posted at <http://retractionwatch.com/2013/08/22/journal-to-feature-special-issue-on-scientific-misconduct-seeks-submissions/>]

Readers, how hopelessly faulty does a paper – and its defence - need to be before the paper should be retracted? And are we there yet? Yes, I think so.

Again, the authors' assessment of the range of available data is amazing, given that they both are PhDs, and both are extremely influential in Australia's nutrition-science space. And yet their own Figure 4 - on the previous page and in my proposed Retraction Notice - obviously and utterly contradicts their “finding” of “a consistent and substantial decline” in sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010. I'm right on that, yeah? Ditto, Figure 2 earlier? So too on the range of available data in that *GraphicEvidence* link?

So, where should we go from here? Well, once their faulty paper is retracted, if Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and Dr Alan Barclay really still believe in their *Australian Paradox* “finding” – “an inverse relationship” between sugar consumption and obesity – they should start from scratch and write a new paper that properly deals with the dominating issues that Dr Rosemary Stanton, five University of Western Australia researchers and now *Background Briefing* confirm have shredded the credibility the original paper.

If they are able to produce such a paper - and get it published in a real journal with real quality control - then good luck to them. But don't hold your breath. In the meantime, readers, it's **Retraction Time**. While we wait, here's “The Boss” at his best: (mind his language at the end) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFx5SaXbfAE>

Comments, criticisms, questions, compliments, whatever welcome at strathburnstation@gmail.com

rory robertson
economist and former-fattie

Want to stop trends in your family and friends towards obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer? Well, it's time to stop eating and drinking sugar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDaYa0AB8TQ&feature=youtu.be>

Here's a time-tested diet to reverse obesity and type 2 diabetes: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/why-we-get-fat.pdf> ; <http://garytaubes.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/WWGF-Readers-Digest-feature-Feb-2011.pdf>

Join the push to give all kids a fairer start in life: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sugary-Drinks-Ban.pdf>

Quick Quiz: Q1 - What if the University of Sydney spent \$500m on Charles Perkins Centre but not five minutes on research integrity? <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/quickquizresearch.pdf>

Outsized rates of sugar consumption – alongside alcohol and tobacco – are a major driver of the unacceptable "gap" in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians: see the bottom row of Box/Table 2 in <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2013/198/7/characteristics-community-level-diet-aboriginal-people-remote-northern-australia>

Isn't it ironic (or worse)? The Charles Perkins Centre's highest-profile obesity and diabetes experts have falsely exonerated as harmless the sugar that's devastating the health of those Australians who Charles Perkins cared most about: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/diabetes.pdf> ; <http://www.rethinksugarydrink.org.au/facts> ; <http://www.smh.com.au/national/university-sets-up-500m-centre-for-obesity-research-20130724-2qjq8.html>

Globally, bogus scientific results are common when university-based researchers have close links to sugary food/drink industries: <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001578> ; (scroll down) <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Howdevious.pdf>

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