

RR's submission to formal inquiry into competence and integrity surrounding University of Sydney's *Australian Paradox* research

By Rory Robertson

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On 29 November 2013, I was advised by the head of the Charles Perkins Centre, Professor Stephen Simpson, that the University of Sydney had opened - after nearly two years of encouragement from me – a formal inquiry into the competence and integrity of the extraordinarily faulty *Australian Paradox* research:

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

On 6 March, I was asked by the University of Sydney if I would like to provide any further information to the inquiry. This is my summary of the *Australian Paradox* scandal. After two years, various things have become crystal clear. I have four main concerns, as discussed in the following pages. Cutting to the chase, here's my **proposed Retraction Notice**:

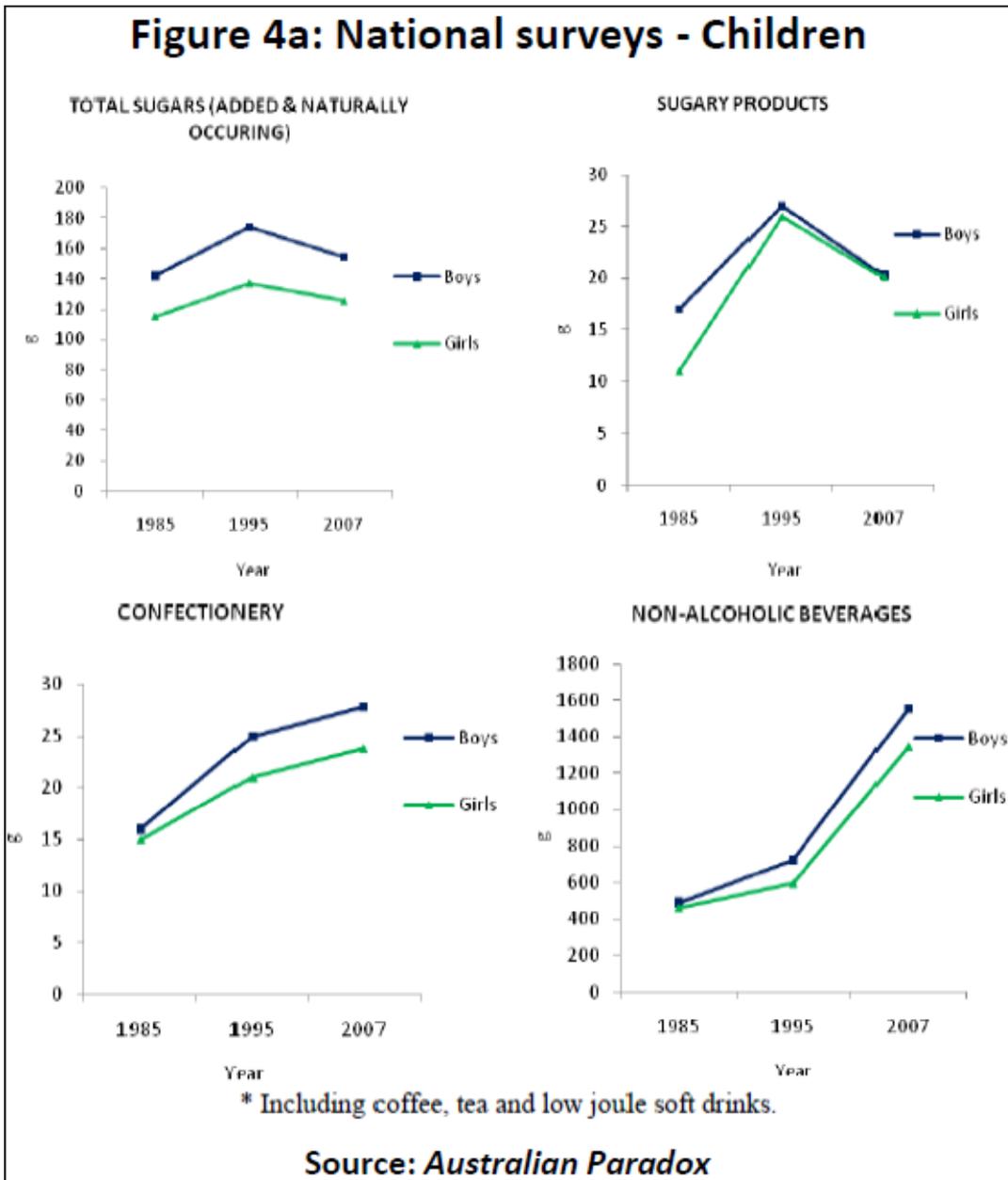
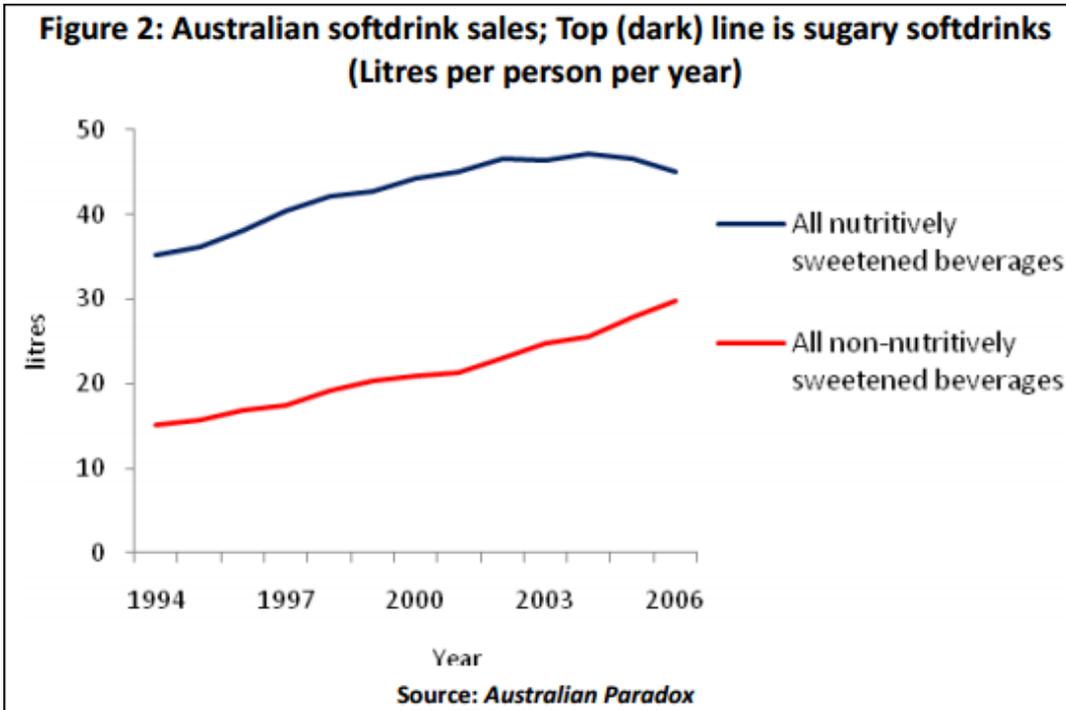
Abstract: *It has been brought to our attention by a reader of Nutrients that the conclusion of “a consistent and substantial decline” in per-capita sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010 in “The Australian Paradox: A Substantial Decline in Sugars Intake over the Same Timeframe that Overweight and Obesity Have Increased” is based on serious misinterpretations and errors that invalidate the finding of “an inverse relationship” between sugar intake and obesity. For example, the uptrend in the authors’ own chart – Figure 5A [Figure 2 overleaf] - suggests strongly that **sugar intake via softdrinks increased as obesity increased between 1980 and 2010.** Indeed, the same is true of Figure 4 [Figure 4a overleaf] which shows **four different indicators of sugar consumption by children all trending up not down over the relevant timeframe.** Unfortunately, those observations **eliminate two central “lines of evidence”** for the authors’ claimed “paradox”. Moreover, the other claimed “line of evidence” is based on a data series that was discontinued as unreliable by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) after 1998-99 and then **falsified for the 2000s** by the Food and Agriculture Organization. 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. Separately, the authors’ business links to the sugar and sugary food/drink industries [<http://www.gisymbol.com/category/products/sweeteners/>] 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 - <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/33/11/2477.full.pdf> ; <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2014/consultation-sugar-guideline/en/> ; and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDaYa0AB8TQ&feature=youtu.be> - 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*, the second faulty piece published in our journal by the same Charles Perkins Centre author and “Guest Editor”; and further, to seek the retraction of another sister piece published last year in *BMC Public Health journal* [<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/898/prepub>]. 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/>]

In terms of new information, my observation is that Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and Dr Alan Barclay's response to the **ABC's Background Briefing program** was outrageous. Investigator Wendy Carlisle documented profound flaws and highlighted why the Charles Perkins Centre's *Australian Paradox* paper is an academic disgrace and a menace to public health. Yet the overconfident authors responded with a statement pretending that nothing had just happened: “no material impact on the conclusions of our paper” <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/CPCscientistsresponse.pdf>

Accordingly, a key question for the inquiry includes: 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 - morph into scientific fraud?

It is nothing short of outrageous, in my opinion, that the University of Sydney has been defending the indefensible for two years. Importantly, the **World Health Organization** agrees with me that there is a **positive** – not inverse – relationship between sugar consumption and obesity. So much so that it's proposing to fight global obesity via a 50%-plus reduction in global sugar consumption: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2014/consultation-sugar-guideline/en/>



As noted above, after two years, I have four main concerns regarding the *Australian Paradox* scandal.

1. False information

For two years, the University of Sydney has promoted false information in the critical public debate on the origins of obesity. That is my complaint. That is why I am here. Despite repeatedly being informed otherwise, the University of Sydney has insisted that the existence of “an inverse relationship” between sugar consumption and obesity is a reliable “peer reviewed” result. That pro-sugar misinformation has been reckless, in my opinion, given that growing misery from obesity, type 2 diabetes and related maladies together are the greatest public-health challenge of our times.

We should be able to trust taxpayer-funded entities to correct blatantly false information in the critical area of public health. But the authors and the University’s senior management have been determined not to correct their false information. **Notably, it turns out that its high-profile yet completely unreliable *Australian Paradox* “finding” is supportive of the University of Sydney’s Glycemic Index (GI) business that stamps particular brands of sugar and sugary products as Healthy:** <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/quickquizresearch.pdf> ; <http://www.gisymbol.com/category/products/sweeteners/>

In short, there is no Australian Paradox. There is no valid evidence that Australians ate less added sugar (per person per year) as we got fatter between 1980 and 2010. Indeed, it seems likely that we ate more! Specifically, there was no “consistent and substantial decline” in sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010, and so no “inverse relationship” between (added) sugar consumption and obesity.

In my opinion, the *Australian Paradox* paper is profoundly faulty and would never have been published in a real journal with real quality control, where the highly conflicted lead author was not also operating at the “Guest Editor”: http://www.mdpi.com/journal/nutrients/special_issues/carbohydrates

As highlighted in my Retraction Notice (p. 1), the mistaken “finding” – less sugar, more obesity - simply is a function of the authors ignoring the range of indicators of sugar consumption that **trend up not down**, in their own published charts! What paradox? Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 4a in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

In particular, it seems clear that **sugar consumption via sugary softdrinks** increased rather than declined substantially over the relevant 1980 to 2010 period. Most of us born before 1970 actually watched that happen, and some of us were part of the process. Similarly, the authors’ evidence from national nutrition surveys - presented in Figure 4a - suggests that **Australian children** consumed more sugar as they got fatter over the relevant 1980 to 2010 timeframe (Sections 2 and 4 in *GraphicEvidence* link).

With the valid data in their own published charts contradicting their conclusion of “a consistent and substantial decline”, the *Australian Paradox* authors haplessly embraced a sugar series that was **discontinued as unreliable** by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) after 1998-99 (as confirmed by the ABC’s Wendy Carlisle), and then **falsified** by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations: Slides 21 and 22 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/22Slideshowaustraliangoestoparadoxcanberrafinal.pdf>

Notably, my analysis of this matter has been “peer reviewed” by hundreds, even thousands of scientists and others globally. (I’ve had 30,000+ unique visitors to my <http://www.australianparadox.com/> website over the past 15 months.) Over the past two years, no-one has put a dent in my correct critique of the paper. The worst that has been said is that I’m unnecessarily long-winded. Fair enough. I’ll cop that. Importantly, no-one has come within cooee of collecting the cash offered in my **\$40,000 Australian Paradox Challenge** to University of Sydney Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence in June 2012: Chart 6 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/22Slideshowaustraliangoestoparadoxcanberrafinal.pdf>

While no-one competent disputes the fact that the clear uptrends in the authors’ softdrink and children’s intake charts on the previous page completely contradict the “substantial decline” finding, those defending the unreliable authors may choose to argue against my use of the word “**falsified**” to describe the conspicuous flat line in the unreliable authors’ preferred sugar series (in previous link). Nothing much swings on the words used - choose whatever words you like: “falsified”, “not based in reality”, “made up on the basis of nothing”, “completely unreliable” or “simply invalid”.

Amusingly, the authors have chosen time and time again not to comment on the conspicuous dud flat line smack in the middle of their “paradox”. To me, what is genuinely paradoxical is how the authors must have observed that dud

flat line in their preferred chart yet didn't ask: Why? So much for indefatigable scientists searching night and day to uncover the "the truth" about their sugar and obesity "paradox": they simply downloaded the data, pasted in their charts, and rushed to do what they wanted to do in the first place - exonerate sugar!

In any case, the underlying facts are as follows. The ABS stopped even pretending to count apparent consumption of sugar after 1998-99. Then, extraordinarily, instead of writing "Not available" in its global spreadsheets, the FAO recklessly began pretending that the Australian sugar series for the 2000s is a flat line. That is, the FAO series for the 2000s has no basis in reality; no-one is actually doing any real counting; there are no underlying data beyond 1998-99. The conspicuous flat line in the authors' preferred chart was a big **red flag** hinting strongly that their key series for the 2000s is invalid/falsified/made up (see pp. 12-13 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>).

In neither scientific nor economic studies of human behaviour is it valid to **assume a straight line** and then pretend it represents genuine information. I have documented that the FAO is pretending to do something that, clearly, it is not: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/FAOfalsifiedsugar.pdf>

So, again, "falsified" - not "estimated", "extrapolated" or "interpolated" - is indeed the appropriate description. Readers, it is unreasonable to insist that a made-up series with no basis in reality trumps signals from a range of valid indicators. Moreover, any credible study investigating trends in added or refined sugar consumption would discuss **the particular difficulties faced by statisticians in measuring modern sugar consumption**. That is, the worldwide trend over recent decades towards the consumption of highly processed foods and drinks meant that **statisticians' sugar-counting exercises morphed from counting bags of sugar to counting grains of added sugar in many thousands of kinds of processed foods and drinks**: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/New-nonsense-based-sugarreport.pdf> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4CZ81EmAsw>

This glaring omission of any such discussion tells us a great deal about the authors' lack of competence in this matter. They now have steered well clear of this **basic data-reliability issue**, in one, then two, and now three published papers.

My bottom line remains that in the absence of reliable sugar consumption data it is unreasonable to claim anything much. In particular, it is wrong to claim "a consistent and substantial decline" in per-capita sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010 - and so sugary softdrinks have nothing to do with obesity - especially while operating a pro-sugar Glycemic Index business that partnered with sugar producer CSR and gets paid up to \$6,000 a pop for putting Healthy stamps on particular brands of sugar and sugary products:
<http://www.gisymbol.com/category/products/sweeteners/> ; <http://www.gisymbol.com/pom-wonderful/>

As you may know, it has been documented that **published "findings" from "peer reviewed" studies on the link between sugary softdrinks and obesity** tend to be influenced by their authors' **financial conflicts of interest**:
<http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001578>

Amusingly, the flat/up trend in the sugar industry's also-shonky "**Green Pool**" **sugar series** – designed to rescue its underperforming business partners – also **contradicts** the University of Sydney's claim of a "consistent and substantial decline" between 1980 and 2010! <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/JBM-AWB-AustralianParadox.pdf>

Importantly, that there is no Australian Paradox – no "inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity - was confirmed way back in 2012, by unconflicted scientists including **widely respected Dr Rosemary Stanton**:

"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" (Slide 18 in Canberra link above).

So too, the complete absence of any genuine "paradox" – as opposed to the authors' profound confusion - was confirmed again by ABC investigator Wendy Carlisle in her **recent Background Briefing report**:
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2014-02-09/5239418>

In summary, the "peer reviewed" claim of "a consistent and substantial decline" in Australians' (added) sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010 is nonsense. "Peer review" in this case clearly was non-existent, incompetent

or ignored. Again, the paper and the authors' two subsequent sister papers are full of obvious problems, small and large. For a laundry list, see pages 14-21 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

That the authors formally corrected several obvious arithmetic errors in February – in a disingenuous response to the ABC's *Background Briefing* investigation – some three years after their (self) publication merely draws attention to the conspicuous lack of competent "peer review" that I have repeatedly - and correctly - highlighted over the past two years: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/CPCscientistsresponse.pdf>

Disturbingly, University of Sydney Vice-Chancellor, Dr Michael Spence, mistakenly claimed in 2012 that the *Australian Paradox* paper had been "**independently and objectively peer reviewed prior to its publication**", while Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Jill Trehwella, berated me for highlighting the fact that the profoundly faulty paper is dominated by serious errors, in the process falsely insisting that it had been subject to quality control according to "**internationally accepted standard practice**": <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sept2012-Conversations.pdf>

All of the above remains a serious problem for the Charles Perkins Centre's influential Professor Jennie Brand-Miller, given her dual roles as the lead author of the dud paper and "Guest Editor" of its publishing journal; for co-author and head of research at the Australian Diabetes Council, Dr Alan Barclay; for the University of Sydney and its fledgling Charles Perkins Centre; and for the dodgy pay-as-you-publish e-journal *Nutrients* and its ham-fisted Editor-in-Chief Professor Peter Howe: <http://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/4/4/258>

2. Retraction required

In my opinion, the profoundly faulty *Australian Paradox* paper should be retracted: <http://retractionwatch.com/> This should not be controversial. After all, retraction is the standard way that the scientific record is cleansed of false information and faulty scientific "findings". **Here is Retraction Watch's top-10 list from over 500 retractions globally in 2013:** <http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/38743/title/Top-10-Retractions-of-2013/>

In contrast to my long-winded efforts, David Gillespie makes the case for retraction of the *Australian Paradox* paper quite succinctly: <http://www.raisin-hell.com/2014/02/why-wont-sydney-university-retract.html>

On the retraction of *Australian Paradox*, Mr Dietrich Rordorf - the CEO of the MDPI stable of journals that publishes *Nutrients* – has said that MDPI will retract the faulty paper as soon as he is instructed to do so by the University of Sydney: "**If the Publisher receives an official note from either the university or the academic editor to retract the paper, the paper will be taken down**" (see discussion in Responses) <http://retractionwatch.com/2013/08/22/journal-to-feature-special-issue-on-scientific-misconduct-seeks-submissions/>

Of course, if *Australian Paradox* were just another hopeless paper by incompetent Neville Nobodies in academia, no-one would waste their time seeking its retraction. But Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and Dr Alan Barclay both are highly influential in the Australian nutrition-research and nutrition-advice spaces:

<http://www.livepositively.com.au/Webinar?id=5> ; <http://daa.asn.au/for-the-media/daa-spokespeople/about-daa-spokespeople/> ; <http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/people/academics/publications/jennieb.php>

And *Australian Paradox* is an important paper: after its publication, the University of Sydney's mistaken "peer reviewed" finding of "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity was promoted worldwide with enthusiasm by a range of sellers of sugar and sugary foods and drinks:

<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/WHO'S%20CITING%20OZ%20PARADOX.pdf>

Disturbingly, the University of Sydney's (once) trusted stamp of competence and integrity in science has been used to try to (falsely) exonerate added sugar in general, and sugary softdrinks in particular, as key drivers of obesity and related maladies. That, of course, was the purpose of publishing the *Australian Paradox* paper in the first place: "Conclusions" on page 2 of <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

Notably, the authors' attempt in a scientific journal to exonerate added sugar and sugary softdrinks as key drivers of obesity came after they already had falsely "exonerated" sugar as a key driver of type 2 diabetes, in their range of popsci diet books (three-million-plus copies sold): "**There is absolute consensus that sugar in food does not cause [type 2] diabetes**": <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/diabetes.pdf>

So, here's the problem: We have an influential Charles Perkins Centre scientist and global sugary food/drink industries marketing a scientific "finding" that is: **(i) false; (ii) dangerous to public health; and (iii) carrying the University of Sydney's (once) trusted banner of research credibility and integrity.**

Outrageously, the University of Sydney's nutrition area and its associates in the food/drink industries campaigned against the Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council's plan to toughen dietary advice against sugar, using the University of Sydney's supposedly "peer reviewed" *Australian Paradox* "finding" as an intellectual spearhead to try to kill the move: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/health-science/a-spoonful-of-sugar-is-not-so-bad/story-e6frg8y6-1226090126776> and <http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/research-causes-stir-over-sugars-role-in-obesity-20120330-1w3e5.html>

Professor Amanda Lee – at one point in charge of toughening NHMRC's dietary advice on sugar – described the faulty *Australian Paradox* paper – a paper featured at least twice in debate in Federal Parliament - as "very influential": (see transcript) <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2014-02-09/5239418#transcript>

I use the words "dangerous" and "outrageous" because there is overwhelming evidence that sugar consumption and obesity are positively not inversely related. Indeed, the NHMRC in 2013 and the WHO and 2014 toughened their dietary advice against added sugar, highlighting it as a key driver of local and global obesity, not to mention tooth decay, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and various cancers:

<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2013/s3693188.htm> ;

<http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/33/11/2477.full> ;

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2014/consultation-sugar-guideline/en/> ;

<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/talktoyear3boys.pdf> ; <http://www.rethinksugarydrink.org.au/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDaYa0AB8TQ&feature=youtu.be>

In my opinion, it is a disgrace that the University of Sydney's senior management did nothing at the time to protect public health from the misinformation produced by one of its highest-profile scientists. It is not as if senior management was not advised repeatedly about exactly what was going on: LHS of <http://www.australianparadox.com/>

Separately, the slowly inflating *Australian Paradox* scandal was cited recently by Jeffrey Beall, as he added MDPI to his widely followed list of "predatory" publishers: <http://scholarlyoa.com/2014/02/18/chinese-publisher-mdpi-added-to-list-of-questionable-publishers/>

Ironically, Professor Brand-Miller now finds herself advised to resign from the Editorial Board of *Nutrients* along with everyone else involved with MDPI's 100-plus journals, in part because of her glaring lack of quality control "Guest Editor" of *Nutrients*, while she oversaw the publication of her own dud paper: <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/nutrients/editors>

3. Deliberate exaggeration of strength of scientific evidence that sugar is not a problem

This all matters because, globally, vast sums of taxpayers' money are being devoted to researching causes and cures for obesity, type 2 diabetes and related maladies, together the greatest public-health challenge of our times.

As noted above, the NHMRC and WHO recently toughened dietary advice against sugar, because there is clear evidence of a strong **positive** – not inverse - relationship between sugar consumption and obesity, clear evidence that modern rates of sugar consumption are a major driver of the growing obesity-related disaster in global public health.

Meanwhile, the University of Sydney and its highly conflicted researchers, despite being aware as early as March 2012 - <http://www.smh.com.au/business/economist-v-nutritionists-big-sugar-and-lowgi-brigade-lose-20120307-1uj6u.html> - that their pro-sugar analysis is dominated by serious errors and misinterpretations, have chosen time and time again to claim that their analysis is flawless "peer reviewed" science.

My observation is that Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and Dr Alan Barclay - **by refusing to correct their paper to properly represent the underlying sugar data** - have for two years been deliberately exaggerating the strength of their evidence that sugar consumption has "an inverse relationship" with obesity, thus exaggerating the strength of their evidence that sugar consumption is not a problem for public health. For two years, they have claimed falsely that sugar

is innocent – and that I am incompetent - in this straightforward matter involving up versus down and flatlining falsified data.

In more detail, Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and Dr Alan Barclay have put quite a bit of energy into **claiming falsely that my correct critique has no merit: (a)** in the media; **(b)** via links to a University of Sydney website; and **(c)** outrageously, via two further papers published without peer review in two supposedly “peer reviewed” journals.

(a) “Professor Brand-Miller says Mr Robertson is not a nutritionist and does not understand nutrition”: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/research-causes-stir-over-sugars-role-in-obesity-20120330-1w3e5.html#ixzz2w69nxD61>

(b) “Unfortunately, there are factual errors in the economist’s arguments, and misinterpretation of the distinctions between total sugars vs. refined sugars, sugar availability vs. apparent consumption, sugar-sweetened and diet soft drinks, and other nutrition information”: <http://www.theaustralianparadox.com.au/> via <http://www.glycemicindex.com/>

None of that is true. And, to be clear, please note that **my dispute with the University of Sydney at its core is not about science or nutrition**: it’s about simple things like up versus down, valid versus invalid, the use of falsified data in “peer reviewed” science, and the need for publicly funded entities to correct serious errors and misrepresentations in the public debate, in this case on the origins of obesity and related maladies. This issue is much simpler – and much more important – than my earlier high-profile dispute with a university professor on the outlook for home prices:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aBGpZWYKLiWE>

(c) Two more faulty defences of the *Australian Paradox* nonsense, in “peer reviewed” journals: (March 2012) <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/nutrients-03-00491-s003.pdf> ; (September 2013): <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/898/prepub>

Most recently, the credibility of the authors’ research was comprehensively shredded, again, by the ABC Background Briefing investigation. And the authors responded by pretending, again, that the core of their analysis is flawless: "no material impact on the conclusions of our paper" <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/CPCscientistsresponse.pdf>

One simple definition of fraud is the misrepresentation of matters of fact for personal gain and/or to unfairly damage another individual. Importantly, the *Australian Paradox* fraud is not a fraud because the authors (self) published an incompetent pro-sugar assessment of the available information. The problem is their ongoing and determined refusal to acknowledge and correct the serious misrepresentations that I’ve documented, again and again, in great detail, including in Sections 2-5 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/GraphicEvidence.pdf>

Moreover, it’s not just the University of Sydney researchers who have done the wrong thing, in my opinion. It matters a lot that **the University of Sydney’s Glycemic Index business collects substantial revenues (up to \$6,000 a pop) from stamping particular brands of sugar and sugary products as Healthy**: p. 5

[http://www.foodhealthdialogue.gov.au/internet/foodandhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/D59B2C8391006638CA2578E600834BBD/\\$File/Resources%20and%20support%20for%20reformulation%20activities.pdf](http://www.foodhealthdialogue.gov.au/internet/foodandhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/D59B2C8391006638CA2578E600834BBD/$File/Resources%20and%20support%20for%20reformulation%20activities.pdf) ;

The University of Sydney itself, by failing for two years to correct false public-health information - false information marketed under its (once) trusted banner of competence and integrity - has been exaggerating its evidence that the consumption of sugar and sugary products has nothing to do with obesity, while its pro-sugar Glycemic Index business has collected revenues from promoting sugar and sugary products as Healthy. Whether or not you call that fraud, it’s a serious problem: <http://www.gisymbol.com/category/products/sweeteners/> ; <http://www.gisymbol.com/pom-wonderful/> ; <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sydney-Uni-conflict-interest-030712.pdf>

If all of the above were not enough to alert the world to research misconduct, perhaps telling a spectacular untruth on ABC national radio might be sufficient? In particular, lead author Professor Jennie Brand-Miller insisted, falsely: "Yes, I'll just correct you there. My paper has not been criticised by any scientist", despite having published a formal response to a peer-reviewed paper critical of her paradox claim by five University of Western Australia scientists, who had observed pointedly, "This finding calls into question the existence of an Australian paradox as reported by Barclay and Brand-Miller" (p. 9 of 11) <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2458-13-668.pdf> - <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2014-02-09/5239418#transcript>

There may be a pattern here. In 2012, when the authors were briefly subject to serious media scrutiny, they falsely - clownishly - claimed that cars not humans had been consuming a big chunk of the available sugar via sugar's (non-existent) use as a foodstock in Australian ethanol production: <http://www.smh.com.au/business/pesky-economist-wont-let-big-sugar-lie-20120725-22pru.html>

In summary, the authors for the past two years have recklessly claimed that their profoundly flawed pro-sugar analysis is flawless. The authors continue to claim that I am incompetent on this matter, despite my two-year-old critique having been vindicated at every turn, including in the ABC's *Background Briefing* investigation. Notably, my **\$40,000 Australian Paradox Challenge** cash remains uncollected (as it would be). Even the University of Sydney's student newspaper makes it clear that I am in the right on this matter: <http://honisoit.com/2014/03/sweet-research-goes-sour/>

The University of Sydney's failure to properly correct or retract its "shonky sugar study" - instead pretending that dominating errors and misrepresentations of fact do not exist, and too bad that key data are falsified - has transformed this episode into a scandal featuring "research misconduct" as defined by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), including, amongst other things: (i) "recklessness or gross and persistent negligence"; (ii) "serious consequences, such as false information on the public record"; and (iii) "failure to declare and manage serious conflicts of interest": Sections 1-10 of <http://www.australianparadox.com/>

In my opinion, and as I wrote around 18 months ago, the authors **and their University of Sydney senior management** now are involved in either inadvertent or deliberate scientific fraud, along the lines of the **fictional Dr Sydney Nutrition's "Australian Blue Kangaroo" fiasco**: Slide 44 in <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/AUSTRALIAN-PARADOX-101-SLIDESHOW.pdf>

Since the University of Sydney did nothing to remedy these problems for almost two years – it simply pretended that there was no problem, as its Glycemic Index business collected revenue at a rate of up to \$6,000 a pop from stamping particular brands of sugar and sugary products as Healthy - I feel strongly that the person in charge of overseeing competence and integrity in research at the University of Sydney – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Jill Trewhella - should be removed from her post: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/LettersProfTrewhella.pdf>

4. Charles Perkins Centre off to a bad start: already a shopfront for unhealthy high-carb, pro-sugar diets

In my opinion, the slowly inflating *Australian Paradox* scandal has put a dark cloud over competence and integrity in "science" at the University of Sydney's fledgling \$500 million Charles Perkins Centre: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/university-sets-up-500m-centre-for-obesity-research-20130724-2qjq8.html>

It's been a bad start. For two years, the Centre's highest-profile obesity and diabetes expert has failed to correct her sugar-is-not-a-problem misinformation plonked in the critical public debate on the origins of obesity, no matter that Australia's chief health advisor (NHMRC) toughened dietary advice against added sugar in 2013, nor that the World Health Organization earlier this month suggested at least halving global sugar consumption to combat global obesity.

Compounding that problem, we now have a high-profile Charles Perkins Centre **mouse longevity study** that has been used to help tell the world that protein is "nearly as bad" as tobacco: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/protein-diets-nearly-as-bad-as-smoking/story-fn3dxiwe-1226845436762>

On that mouse study, it is unsettling that what began as an analysis of 30 diets **quietly** became a published analysis of 25 diets. Notably, the published results exclude five diets - all low-protein diets - and 100+ sick/dying mice - all on low-protein diets – before **loudly** concluding that low-protein diets boost longevity! I have published a comment in the journal asking why we should take such a "finding" seriously. In response, surprisingly, the authors disingenuously pretended my critique is mistaken: [http://www.cell.com/cell-metabolism/abstract/S1550-4131\(14\)00065-5#Comments](http://www.cell.com/cell-metabolism/abstract/S1550-4131(14)00065-5#Comments)

Another issue here – beyond the veracity of the published results – is the Charles Perkins Centre's cavalier – indeed, reckless - extrapolation of its mouse "findings" to humans: "A good balance for a mouse is about 20 per cent protein, about 60 per cent carbohydrates and about 20 per cent fat. 'And mice are not that different from humans,' he [Professor Stephen Simpson, the academic head of the Charles Perkins Centre] said": <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/prof-uses-1000-mice-to-expose-food-folly/story-fni0xqi4-1226764591760>

Thus, almost before it has opened its doors, the fledgling Charles Perkins Centre has established itself as a shopfront for promoting unhealthy high-carb pro-sugar diets, and human nutrition advice we cannot trust.

It is ironic – or worse - that the Charles Perkins Centre is promoting processed carbohydrates as healthy (the mice diets deemed most healthy were dominated by processed grains and sugar) and downplaying the importance of protein, when back in the real world **the Australians Charlie Perkins cared most about are dying prematurely on diets that are dominated by unhealthy sugar and processed grains, and are dangerously low in protein?** Box 2

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2013/198/7/characteristics-community-level-diet-aboriginal-people-remote-northern-australia>

We can take a wild guess about what a young Charlie Perkins would have said about the high-profile research – the clownish pro-sugar *Australian Paradox* paper and now the pro-carb, pro-sugar, low-protein mouse paper – that is being promoted under his name. In a world where reversing obesity and type 2 diabetes is the main game in public health, shouldn't the Charles Perkins Centre be telling people to eat fewer processed carbohydrates and especially less sugar? After all, as documented above, sugar – a 100% carbohydrate versus ~17% for potatoes - is perhaps the single-biggest driver of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and related maladies. Those are the chronic disabilities that the Charles Perkins Centre is supposed to be curing, not spreading: <http://sydney.edu.au/perkins/>

Beyond the idiosyncratic “science” I have documented above, I am concerned about the University of Sydney’s links to the sugary food/drink industries via the pro-sugar Glycemic Index business operated by the Charles Perkins Centre’s influential Professor Jennie Brand-Miller and her sidekick Dr Alan Barclay: Charts 11, 12 and 37 at <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/22Slideshowaustraliangoestoparadoxcanberrafinal.pdf>

For the sugary food/drink industries, sugar is a miracle-like additive. When added to processed products, sugar adds bulk and its preservative nature boosts shelf-life. Being so sweet and somewhat addictive, it makes processed products moreish and (so) promotes (over)consumption. And near 50 cents per kilogram wholesale, added sugar’s extraordinary cheapness massively boosts profit margins. With those three profoundly helpful features found in sugar alone, it is no exaggeration to say that added sugar is responsible for a large chunk of global food and beverage industry profits.

Given that importance of added sugar to global food and drink industry profits, it is perfectly understandable that industry for more than half a century has sought universities' assistance to "prove" that sugar does not cause of obesity, type 2 diabetes or related maladies, in much the same way that the tobacco industry sought to scramble the “science”. Along the way, **Harvard University in the 1960s and 1970s became America’s “most public defender” of “modern sugar consumption” as harmless, its “science” reportedly corrupted by heavy funding from the sugar and sugary food/drink industries:** <http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2012/10/sugar-industry-lies-campaign>

Is the University of Sydney in general and the Charles Perkins Centre in particular alert to these issues? To what extent was the *Australian Paradox* paper inspired by such considerations? I do not know:

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/research-causes-stir-over-sugars-role-in-obesity-20120330-1w3e5.html>

Regardless, the “peer reviewed” *Australian Paradox* “finding” that sugar has nothing to do with obesity is both an academic disgrace and a menace to public health. Again, WHO looks set to toughen its stance added sugar, calling for at least a halving of consumption (from 10% to 5% of our total energy intake) to combat global obesity and related maladies. Disturbingly, those Charlie Perkins cared most about look to have average intakes that are multiples of WHO’s suggested target. In my opinion, the Charles Perkins Centre should devote a chunk of its considerable resources to educating everyday people – especially the information poor – about the problem of excessive sugar consumption.

In conclusion, I want to be clear that I am not much interested in whether or not the University of Sydney declares “research misconduct” or “scientific fraud” in the matter of the clownish *Australian Paradox* research. I have been arguing near and far for the formal retraction of its profoundly false “finding” of “an inverse relationship” between (added) sugar consumption and obesity. That’s my main interest in pursuing this matter. And I’ve been amazed at the University of Sydney’s and its Charles Perkins Centre’s propensity to keep defending the indefensible.

Obviously I am aware that the University of Sydney has little or no appetite for retraction. After all, Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence reportedly told the Academic Board late in 2013 that the university will never “denounce” an academic’s (mistaken) findings if those findings are “lawful”. Huh?

(p.9) http://sydney.edu.au/ab/about/old/2013/draft_AB_Dec13_minutes.pdf

That's fine. But the University of Sydney will soon be forced to choose between: (i) retracting its profoundly faulty *Australian Paradox* paper; and (ii) claiming disingenuously that it is devoted to competence, integrity and "excellence" in research. If it fails to choose the former, it will provide ammunition for those who think that the Group of Eight's claimed devotion to "excellence" in research is a hoax, and that Canberra could cut university research funding in half and lose little or nothing in the way of useful research output. That is, if we cannot trust the research output from our most prestigious (pretentious?) universities - because the Group of Eight has no research quality control when it matters - then taxpayers obviously should be allowed to find better things to do with their money: http://www.go8.edu.au/_documents/go8-policy-analysis/2013/role-importanceofresearchunis.pdf

Please, University of Sydney, please correct the scientific record by retracting your mistaken *Australian Paradox* "finding" of "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity. I'm hoping that you and your food-industry "partners" will do the right thing and stop misleading the critical debate on the origins of obesity, type 2 diabetes and related maladies. Then we can all get on with improving the health of the Australians Charlie Perkins cared most about, as well as improving the health of millions of other information-poor families across our society.

Apologies, readers, if you think this whole piece strikes the wrong "tone" and comes across as a bit of a rant. Perhaps I may be granted that indulgence since it well illustrates my frustration after two years of determined effort to get something important done that should have been done without any input at all from me.

Finally, if you think you found errors of fact in my analysis above, please get in touch immediately and I will correct the online version as soon as possible. More generally, comments, criticisms, questions, compliments, whatever are welcome at strathburnstation@gmail.com

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Want to stop trends in your family and friends towards obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancers? 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> And here's why it works: <http://garytaubes.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/WWGF-Readers-Digest-feature-Feb-2011.pdf> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0GSSSE4I8U> ; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTUspjZG-wc>

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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