

THE STORY SO FAR IN DISPUTE BETWEEN RR AND UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY SCIENTISTS

7 March 2012

Michael Pascoe ran my "Sydney Uni is wrong" story: "Economist v nutritionists: big sugar and low-GI brigade lose"

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/economist-v-nutritionists-big-sugar-and-lowgi-brigade-lose-20120307-1uj6u.html>

7 March 2012

Professor Jennie Brand Miller hit back, claiming: "Michael Pascoe's article is factually incorrect and I will respond in detail shortly".

[Prof Jennie Brand Miller's response...The Australian Paradox - GI Symbol New www.gisymbol.com](http://www.gisymbol.com)

"It is unfortunate that publicity is being focused on whether or not the per capita consumption of sugar is going up or down in Australia [The Australian Paradox]. **Michael Pascoe's article is factually incorrect and I will respond in detail shortly.** I, and many other experts in Australia, do not agr...<http://www.gisymbol.com.au/news.php#6> (This is Google's cache of http://www.facebook.com/GlycemicIndex?sk=app_2309869772. It is a snapshot of the page as it appeared on 9 Mar 2012 12:24:31 GMT.)

Mid March: I'm sorry, nothing further published on that front! Indeed, there is no good comeback: The "Australian Paradox" conclusion is demolished simply by anyone objective taking a good look at the available data (see third chart in my critique and Figure 5A).

19 March 2012

Contacted by Professor Robert Lustig (email snippets below), the guy with two million hits on youtube.com with "Sugar: The Bitter Truth": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBnniua6-oM> (E-mail snippets etc below)

22 March 2012

Wrote a letter to 40 scientists on the Editorial Board of *Nutrients E-journal* (reproduced at 3 in Resources) insisting that the "Australian Paradox" paper be belatedly "peer reviewed" by independent experts (since it seemed to miss out the first-time around), insisting also that the Editorial Board "peer review" its "peer review process", since it seems to be broken!

31 March 2012

"Research causes stir over sugar's role in obesity"

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/research-causes-stir-over-sugars-role-in-obesity-20120330-1w3e5.html#ixzz1qeCU5fea>

2 April

RR's Letter to the Editor at *The Sydney Morning Herald* left unpublished (copy below).

"When will high-profile scientists correct the public record?"

In Saturday's paper (<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/research-causes-stir-over-sugars-role-in-obesity-20120330-1w3e5.html>), Professor Brand Miller reportedly argued that I do not know what I am talking about because I am "not a nutritionist". Yet I do know up from down, and it is now a month since I publicly shredded the credibility of her paper "The Australian Paradox" (sugar down, obesity up) with co-author Dr Alan Barclay.

Moreover, it's 25 days - and counting - since the high-profile Professor claimed publicly that my critique "is factually incorrect and I will respond in detail shortly". Professor, where is your promised rebuttal?

Awkwardly, Professor Brand Miller's problem is that there is no credible evidence that (refined) sugar consumption has fallen "substantially" over "the past 30 years", as she claims. If anything, the evidence suggests rising sugar consumption. Bizarrely, Professor Brand Miller herself presents a chart showing a 30% increase in sales of soft-drinks as evidence of falling sugar consumption!

My summary is that there is no "Australian Paradox", just an idiosyncratic and unreasonable assessment – and avoidance - of the available sugar data by those who coined the phrase. In my opinion, the errors and oversights that dominate "The Australian Paradox" paper make it an embarrassment to the University of Sydney and a menace to Australian public health.

*Accordingly, I insist that the University and the Editorial Board of the E-journal *Nutrients* correct the public record without further delay.*

Yours, etc

(UPDATED below on 15 April)

5 April 2012

Wrote a letter to distinguished members of the University of Sydney's management (at 4 in Resources), providing a copy of my detailed critique of *Australian Paradox* (at 1 in Resources), a copy of my 22 March letter to *Nutrients* (at 3 in Resources) and asking questions about quality control at the University.

10 April 2012

Wrote a second letter to the distinguished members of the University of Sydney's management - and simultaneously to the Editorial Board of *Nutrients* (at 4 in Resources) - providing a copy of the authors' initial rebuttal of my critique (at 2 in Resources). The letter expressed my opinion that the rebuttal had not put a dent in my critique. It also observed that the authors' extraordinary made-up "fact" - that our cars are eating nearly one-fifth of Australia's available sugar - highlighted an unacceptable approach to key facts that contradict the authors' long-time pet story.

10 April 2012

The Editor in Chief of *Nutrients* published an Editorial to discuss the growing controversy about *Australian Paradox*. He bemoaned an "unprecedented internet campaign by an individual" (me), before claiming, curiously, that the journal has not "received any formal correspondence" on the disputed paper (despite the formal two-page letter sent to all 40 or so members of the Editorial Board on 22 March - at 3 in Resources). Instead of showing editorial leadership and forcing his authors to concede the now-obvious problems in AP - which invalidate both its conclusion and its title - he allowed them to take a free swing at me. Unsurprisingly, they took the opportunity - given the ongoing (but now rather surprising) lack of any genuine *expert* peer-review - to concede nothing, except that perhaps their original title had one "s" too many. The authors boldly claimed I'd made "factual errors" in my critique but then notably failed to identify any. The authors went through the motions of wandering around the dominating problems I had highlighted, saying that all is well with their *Australian Paradox*. After all, it's peer-reviewed! Awkwardly for an Editor confirming that everything is ship-shape, the publication date of the rebuttal is put as 25 March, when in fact it appeared on the web around 10 April, within a day or so of the Editorial itself. Similarly, it mistakenly linked to the original AP paper, rather than to *Australian Paradox Revisited*. In any case, the Editorial – though perhaps still not the correct link to the published rebuttal - can be found at <http://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/4/4/258/>.

~10 April 2012

Authors publish a rebuttal of my critique ("Australian Paradox Revisited"). Notably, this published version does *not* include the authors' claim that approximately 14kg of 60 kg of "available sugar" is used to fuel our cars rather than to sweeten our food. So, thankfully, *Nutrients'* underperforming Editorial Board finally looks to have caught one of the authors' obvious errors before publication (of course, major errors still dominate the published version of AP still sitting in on the web). The authors' second rebuttal was as limp as the first, failing to lay a glove on my critique. Happily, the authors felt compelled to publish the key "Sugar availability" chart they avoided like the plague the first time around. Unfortunately, they were not compelled by the

Editorial Board to acknowledge the relevance of the chart. As discussed, the obvious post-1980 uptrend in Sugar availability - alongside rising sugary imports and the lack of any clear surge in real-world "leakages" - invalidates the authors' pet claim of a "substantial" decline in sugar consumption "over the past 30 years".

10 April

Nutrients' publisher belatedly responds to my letter on 22 March with a short and snappy email (at 5 in Resources).

11 April

Wrote a letter in reply to Nutrients' publisher, wondering if he could please respond to my legitimate questions about the quality of quality control at his pay-for-publication E-journal (also at 5 in Resources).

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Robert Lustig <rlustig@peds.ucsf.edu>

Date: Mon, Mar 19, 2012 at 2:12 PM

Subject: stuff about sugar

To: strathburnstation@gmail.com

Mr. Robertson, I am the co-author of the Nature article that started the latest brouha-ha.

.....

Thank you for...your careful painstaking work on the ABS-ABARE controversy.

Please let me know if I can be of service to you in the future.

Sincerely,

Rob Lustig

UCSF

rlustig@peds.ucsf.edu

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Lustig, Robert <RLustig@peds.ucsf.edu>

Date: Mon, Mar 19, 2012 at 4:26 PM

Subject: RE: stuff about sugar

To: rory robertson <strathburnstation@gmail.com>

..... You have made a very important contribution to the debate. Next month, on April 22 at the American Society of Nutrition in San Diego, there will be a debate on sucrose and HFCS; your document will come in very handy.

Best,

Rob

Separately, in a letter to Professor Brand Miller (undated), Prof Lustig has written (and given me permission to reproduce):

"...Anecdotally, after having visited Australia three times in the past 10 years (2000, 2004, and the last time Adelaide in 2008), I would be hard pressed to believe that Australians' consumption of sugar is declining... I cannot specifically say why the FAO data for Australia exhibits the opposite trend versus every other country, but when 163 countries say one thing, and 1 country says the other, you have to wonder about the veracity of the data. An n of 1 is not a thesis. ...So I will continue to take issue, on academic grounds, and irrespective of the Australian consumption data, with your statement about the benignity of sugar consistent with any other carbohydrate. I heard Leigh Dayton's interview by podcast on Australian Radio discounting sugar as an issue, in part because of your statement in The Australian. I remain concerned that Australians do so at their (and your) own risk. "

[Prof. Lustig's colleagues apparently have a substantial cross-country sugar study pending. In any case, the various elements of the story fit together nicely. Our Sydney University scientists just

downloaded the FAO data and told their preferred story - without properly cross-checking it against the original data source or other timely ABARE information (and then completely misinterpreted simple charts) - while someone who had a better sense of the "big picture" simply observed: You might want to double-check the data.]

Finally, check one of the authors' condescending tone (below) as he slams former lawyer David Gillespie, who actually had done AWB and JBM a favour by pointing them to the correct ABARE dataset, in late 2010 *before* they published their mistaken *Australian Paradox* paper. But AWB was so confident he didn't bother to absorb the big picture shown by the ABARE data. After all, he already knew the answer - "Sugar's not the problem".

"Lies, damned lies, and statistics", by Dr Alan Barclay

While David Gillespie is undoubtedly sincere in his own convictions, he has two fundamental flaws: 1) he is a lawyer and not a scientist, and; 2) he has a major conflict of interest – he is promoting sales of his own books. [Dr Barclay also has a best-selling book, but that's different.]

The fact that he is a lawyer and not a scientist is readily apparent to anyone who knows anything about the scientific method. His at the very least naïve interpretation of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) Australian sugar consumption data recently posted on one of his websites proves the point convincingly. He states in his most recent rant that "sugar consumption has more than doubled since the mid-eighties" and he kindly provides the reader with the link to the ABARE data source - a spreadsheet summarising total sugar production and exports in kilotonnes from the years 1962-63 to 2008-09.

By subtracting the amount of sugar exported from Australia each year, a crude population estimate of total consumption can be calculated for each year. For example, in 1962-63 a total of 659 kt of sugar was consumed in Australia and by 2008-09 that had increased to 1390 kt - slightly more than double (2.1 x to be precise). So to the untrained observer, Gillespie appears to be more or less right..."

Dr Barclay wasn't actually conceding anything but David Gillespie was basically spot-on. Dr Barclay's article was once at <http://www.mediafire.com/?ldi3sk6hjiw8953>, yep it seems now to have been removed from the web. A complete copy is available on request. **Importantly, Dr Barclay now been forced to present a Sugar availability chart in his latest rebuttal. That chart is reproduced as Figure 1 on this website.**

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rory robertson

economist and former-fattie 😊

now fairly fructose free!

strathburnstation@gmail.com

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