

[UPDATE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY'S AUSTRALIAN PARADOX SCANDAL - PRE-CHRISTMAS 2012](#)

By Rory Robertson (Economist and former fattie)

This piece features the sugar industry's failed attempt to rescue the University's "shonky sugar study", a co-author accusing RR of criminality and RR detailing his concerns in this matter regarding public health and scientific fraud

13 December 2012

Good morning,

Once the University of Sydney has fixed the serious problems in its residential colleges, it should turn its attention to the serious problems in its nutrition "science" area.

This note provides a brief update on the *Australian Paradox* scandal. There also is quite a bit of fresh information - and an excellent new chart - in the links.

To recap, the incompetent *Australian Paradox* paper claims to have documented "a consistent and substantial decline in total refined or added sugar consumption by Australians over the past 30 years" (to 2010), and so "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity.

Eat more sugar, get thinner - it's a "peer reviewed" scientific fact, according to the University of Sydney's high-profile food-industry service providers and their senior management (p.10 at <http://www.gisymbol.com/cmsAdmin/uploads/Glycemic-Index-Foundation-Healthy-Choices-Brochure.pdf>).

My concerns about Dr Alan Barclay and Professor Jennie Brand-Miller's serious errors and misrepresentations in the *Australian Paradox* paper are detailed in the material prepared for my participation in the ***Discussion on "The place of sugar in Australia's Dietary Intake Guidelines" at Parliament House, Canberra - 29 October 2012.***

Here's my "Australian Paradox goes to Canberra" chartset: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/22Slideshowaustraliangoestoparadoxcanberrafinal.pdf>

And here's what I wrote for my "Opening Statement": <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/23OpeningStatementinCanberrasugardebate.pdf> .

Ironically, **the sugar industry's recent attempt to rescue** its underperforming University of Sydney business associates and their fraudulent *Australian Paradox* paper backfired badly, by inadvertently confirming that the trend in sugar consumption is flat/up, and so (again) shredding the credibility of the fraudulent claim that consumption has suffered a "consistent and substantial decline over recent

decades: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sugarindustry-uni-sugarstudy25.pdf>

In any case, it's an outrage that the University of Sydney's fraudulent *Australian Paradox* paper has been used – with help from the University's badge of scientific credibility and the full support of its senior management - as an intellectual spearhead in the food-industry's **attempt to kill the National Health and Medical Research Council's Draft plan to toughen official nutrition advice to "limit" the consumption of added sugar, the feature of its once-a-decade upgrade of Australia's official dietary guidelines:** <http://www.australianparadox.com/part-2>

In my opinion, when obesity - alongside diabetes ("diabesity") - is the biggest public-health issue of our times, it's a scandal that this critical upgrade in official nutrition advice has been forced from 2012 into 2013, and perhaps into the never-never.

It's about time the grown-ups at the University of Sydney had a serious look at this clownish episode and started to protect Australian public health – not to mention the University's reputation for research competence and scientific integrity - from its underperforming low-GI advocates and their friends in the sugar and sugary food industries: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/health-science/a-spoonful-of-sugar-is-not-so-bad/story-e6frg8y6-1226090126776> ; <http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/research-causes-stir-over-sugars-role-in-obesity-20120330-1w3e5.html> ; <http://www.smh.com.au/business/pesky-economist-wont-let-big-sugar-lie-20120725-22pru.html> .

Apart from all that - please excuse the rant! - the sugar industry and the University of Sydney's underperforming food-industry service providers - by trying to breathe life into a "new" sugar series (4306.0) that the ABS discontinued as unreliable over a decade before it became the main "evidence" for the fraudulent *Australian Paradox* paper - should be **congratulated for contriving the best Dead Parrot farce since Monty Python's classic back in 1969:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClrBMt4eiRk>

And I still laugh when I recall the University of Sydney's Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research, Professor Jill Trehwella describing the quality control surrounding the publication of *Australian Paradox* as "internationally accepted standard practice", when she must have known that the lead author – who loves

the paper – and the Guest Editor – who oversaw its publication in an obscure pay-as-you-publish E-journal – are the same person! Yes, standard practice indeed. In the history of the Universe, there would have been heaps of times when a pro-sugar low-GI advocate acting as Guest Editor told an influential lead author: "I'm sorry but I cannot publish **my** paper exonerating sugar as a health hazard because it is dominated by a series of serious errors that has resulted in an obviously false conclusion" (<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sept2012-Conversations.pdf>).

Now, whenever I hear the words “standard practice” used to describe anything about the *Australian Paradox* episode, I think of Dr Evil’s childhood – described as “pretty standard really” – in the movie “Austin Powers”. (It’s here on youtube, starting from 32 seconds to 1.24 minutes at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITJj4wbmAhk> . Caution: some bad language is used.)

Yes, it's been quite a hoot getting a close look at the *quality* of the University of Sydney's quality controls in science. But enough is enough. **Last month one of the University's distinguished scientists - a co-author of Australian Paradox - came online - after six months of prodding - not to defend his "shonky sugar study" but to accuse me of criminality**, because he would prefer it if I did not discuss this growing public-health scandal. So I’m a criminal for pursuing this matter? I might get that checked with a defamation lawyer.

Alan Barclay

Dietitian (logged in via email @optusnet.com.au)

Mr Robertson, (sic) is by definition a Troll "someone who posts inflammatory,[1] extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, such as a forum, chat room, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking readers into an emotional response[2] or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troll_(Internet)). I am surprised he is tolerated on this and other websites. I believe trolling is illegal in Australia...For those who are interested, his fallacious arguments have been addressed elsewhere:<http://www.theaustralianparadox.com.au/index.php>

Calling a spade a spade - Definitions of fraud:

- *The deliberate misrepresentation of information to promote a conclusion that is not supported by the underlying facts.* (My simple definition of scientific fraud.)
- *A false representation of a matter of fact - whether by words or by conduct, by false or misleading allegations, or by concealment of what should have been disclosed - that deceives and is intended to deceive...* (<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/fraud>)

- *A fraud is an intentional deception made for personal gain or to damage another individual* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraud>)

Now, it’s absolutely true that I’ve been arguing near and far for the correction or retraction of Dr Alan Barclay and Professor Jennie Brand-Miller’s deeply flawed *Australian Paradox* paper. I will leave it to others to decide if Dr Barclay’s definition of “Troll” and his strong suggestion that I am a criminal are more or less relevant than the basic definitions of scientific fraud (above) and my evidence that the authors are misrepresenting key facts on the origins of obesity in a way that is seriously damaging to Australian public health.

What’s funny is that the authors’ own charts - see Slides 13-23 in my "Australian Paradox goes to Canberra" chartset above - completely contradict their silly claim of a “consistent and substantial decline” in per-capita sugar consumption between 1980 and 2010. **Dr Rosemary Stanton explicitly agrees with me that “we have no evidence” of a decline in sugar consumption** (Slide 18).

On top of that complete lack of evidence, pretty well **all of us who have been walking around with our eyes open over the past 30 years** - as we have visited grocery stores, convenience stores and service stations - immediately sensed that the claim is false.

In my opinion, on the basis of the definitions above, it's fraudulent for someone to persistently misrepresent an obviously faulty paper as a paper with no problems. My concerns about fraud would subside if the authors published **another** formal “Correction” of their paper, this time not just re-jigging tangles in references but alerting readers on the detail of their serious errors and “mix ups” (see bottom of http://www.mdpi.com/journal/nutrients/special_issue_s/carbohydrates).

One amusing recent misrepresentation is the authors’ silly false claim that the sugar-industry-commissioned-funded-and-“framed” Green Pool sugar series is “**independent**” - independent in a dispute about the extent to which sugar is a serious health hazard!

The authors now seem to have one dominating objective: to pretend that nothing I have observed about their clownish *Australian Paradox* papers is valid. And they now operate a website devoted to misrepresenting my correct critique as mistaken: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/JBM-AWB-AustralianParadox.pdf>

Too bad that a chart of that Green Pool sugar series - that the authors on their website claim is

"independent" and reliable - also **completely contradicts** their fraudulent *Australian Paradox* claim (<http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sugarindustry-uni-sugarstudy25.pdf>).

Disturbingly, the authors published a chart with readings for 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 despite no real data existing for those years. One of the many problems in the matter of scientific integrity is the fact that they have not advised - either as an author or the Guest Editor - the journal *Nutrients* that they have seriously misrepresented the evidence that sugar consumption has declined.

The journal, its readers and any independent peer reviewers (if any) have been misinformed by the authors' omission of the critical fact that the *Australian Paradox's* always-silly false conclusion of "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity is based on an ABS series that was discontinued as unreliable after 1998-99.

Awkwardly, the supposedly "peer reviewed" journal - with an influential lead author overseeing publication as Guest Editor - published a chart that includes data for 2000-2003 even though no real data exists for those years.

Again, Vice-Chancellor, Dr Michael Spence, and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research, Professor Jill Trehwella, there are no real data for those years, as the relevant series had been discontinued after 1998-99. **The conspicuous flat green line** in Slides 21 and 22 in my Canberra chartset above screams to competent observers that the ABS had ceased production.

So put up your hand – and shoot me an email, if you like, explaining why I am being unreasonable - if you think it is *not* time for the over-confident University of Sydney scientists and their excessively supportive senior management to come clean on their incompetent "ABS/FAO mix up" that I correctly highlighted back in March (<http://www.smh.com.au/business/economist-v-nutritionists-big-sugar-and-lowgi-brigade-lose-20120307-1uj6u.html>).

Thinking back to March, what about the authors' carefully contrived but spectacularly false "cars are eating the sugar/ethanol mix up" early in the rebuttal process! (<http://www.smh.com.au/business/pesky-economist-wont-let-big-sugar-lie-20120725-22pru.html>)

In any case, let's have no more pretending from the University of Sydney's underperforming scientists - or its underperforming management - that there are no real problems with the clownish and fraudulent *Australian Paradox* paper.

In my opinion, the University of Sydney's response so far to the disturbing issues raised in the *Australian Paradox* scandal has left much to be desired. One possibility is that the University is struggling to balance:

- its desire to maintain a high standard of academic and scientific integrity in its research; against
- its desire to maintain and grow the low-GI enterprise to which its *Australian Paradox* authors are devoted.

It's an awkward balance and in the end the University can do one thing or it can do the other. It cannot do both. I say that the University should simply do what is right. I say that the University should correct or retract the fraudulent *Australian Paradox* paper - which now is both a menace to public health and an academic disgrace – without further unreasonable delay.

Scientific integrity doesn't just happen because a University happened to be born into the prestigious Group of Eight. If us plebs are supposed to respect the Group of Eight Universities as a cut above the second-rate universities we begged and scraped to get into, then the leaders of Group of Eight Universities occasionally have to demonstrate to the plebs that they deserve our respect, **show us that their University does value scientific integrity**, and show us that they will not tolerate false information published under the University's trusted name becoming an obvious menace to Australian public health (<http://www.australianparadox.com/part-2>).

Thanks for your time. If you think my concerns above have merit - and are interested in discussing particular aspects of this growing scandal with the University of Sydney's senior leadership - the leadership structure is detailed here:

<http://sydney.edu.au/about/leadership/index.shtml>

Regards,
Rory

rory robertson
economist and former-fattie
now fairly fructose free! 🍌

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Australia's leading provider of quality boarding-school educations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers. Check it out at <http://www.strathburn.com/yalari.php>

THE AUSTRALIAN PARADOX SCANDAL

- In the US, "Big Sugar" set out over half a century ago to scramble and mislead science on the links between modern sugar consumption and chronic diseases: <http://www.motherjones.com/en>

[vironment/2012/10/sugar-industry-lies-campaign](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/special/australianparadox.com/pdf/2012/10/sugar-industry-lies-campaign)

- The head of the Harvard University nutrition department in the 1960s and 1970s - Professor Fred Stare - became America's "most public defender" of "modern sugar consumption" as harmless, his "science" corrupted by heavy funding from the sugar and sugary food industries.
- In Australia, the University of Sydney is home to our highest-profile academic defenders of added sugar in food as harmless: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/health-science/a-spoonful-of-sugar-is-not-so-bad/story-e6frg8y6-1226090126776> ; <http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/research-causes-stir-over-sugars-role-in-obesity-20120330-1w3e5.html>
- The two University of Sydney "low GI" advocates who published the pro-sugar *Australian Paradox* paper - falsely claiming "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity (Eat more sugar, get thinner!) - also operate a "low GI" business that endorses particular brands of (low GI) sugar and sugary products as "healthy": p.10-11 of <http://www.gisymbol.com/cmsAdmin/uploads/Glycemic-Index-Foundation-Healthy-Choices-Brochure.pdf> The University's undisclosed "lowGI"/fructose conflict of interest and all other aspects of the dispute are documented in the "Australian Paradox goes to Canberra" chartset below.
- The authors of *Australian Paradox* and *Australian Paradox Revisited* have since March 2012 refused to correct the obvious errors that dominate their papers. The dispute would end today - and we could be assured that scientific fraud is not an issue - if the scientists simply corrected the basic errors in their supposedly "peer reviewed" published papers, as they should.
- The sugar industry recently funded - and "framed" - the results of a "new" sugar series that took the *Australian Paradox* scandal to another level: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sugarindustry-uni-sugarstudy25.pdf> ; <http://www.australianp>

[aradox.com/pdf/New-nonsense-based-sugarreport.pdf](http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/New-nonsense-based-sugarreport.pdf)

- The University of Sydney enthusiastically but unwisely embraced that bogus "Dead Parrot" series and declared victory in *Australian Paradox* dispute: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/university-sydney-falsely-declares-victory.pdf> ; <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/JBM-AWB-AustralianParadox.pdf>
- RR participates in *Discussion on "The place of sugar in Australia's Dietary Intake Guidelines"* at Parliament House, Canberra - 29 October 2012. Here's my "Opening Statement": <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/23OpeningStatementinCanberra-sugardebate.pdf>
- And here's my "Australian Paradox goes to Canberra" chartset: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/22Slideshowaustraliangoestoparadoxcanberrafinal.pdf>
- Photos from the event can be seen at <http://multimedia.aapnewswire.com.au/search.aspx?search=public+discussion+sugar%26%28importdate%3E20121028%29&gallery=PUBLIC+DISCUSSION+SUGAR> (To be clear, the University of Sydney representative who participated is one of the good guys, a fine scientist.)
- **Yes, I am arguing near and far for the correction or retraction of the deeply flawed *Australian Paradox* papers and their bogus conclusion of "an inverse relationship" between sugar consumption and obesity. Please alert me if you find any factual errors or unreasonable statements in my analysis.**
- The University of Sydney management's disingenuous defence of the shonky sugar study's misrepresentation of key facts is a disturbing part of the scandal, collapsing confidence in the University's credibility and integrity in matters of science: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Sept2012-Conversations.pdf>

strathburnstation@gmail.com - Comments, criticisms, compliments, whatever are welcome

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