

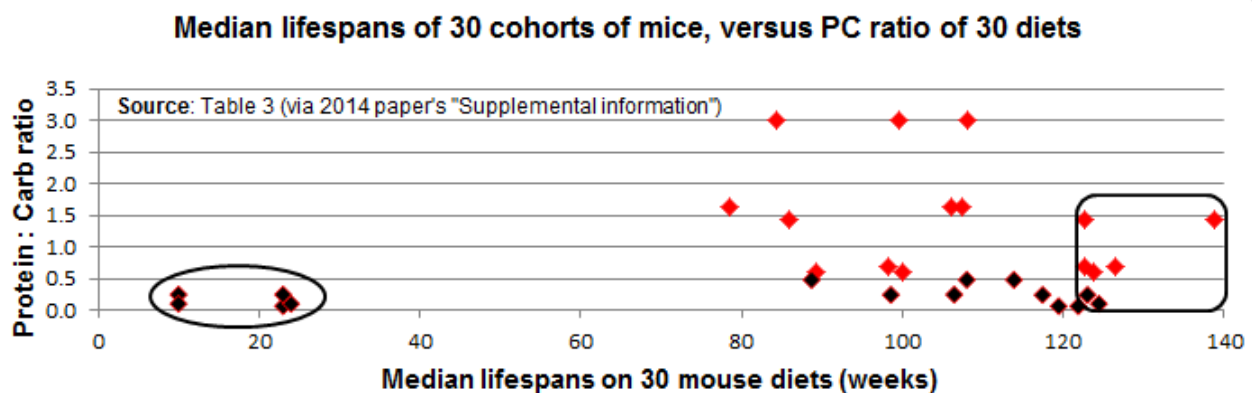
Dear members of University of Sydney Academic Board, General Counsel Richard Fisher and interested observers,

I hope you are well. I am writing to provide the Board and other interested parties with an update on recent developments regarding the University's formal research-misconduct investigation into various aspects of its high-profile mouse-diet experiment involving 1,000 mice on 30 diets over three years.

## 1. Background to the research-misconduct investigation

As I reported in my June [Submission](#), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) – which provided ~\$1m of taxpayers' money over 2009-2013 to fund the 30-diet experiment – has requested the University investigate my concerns about research fraud and harm to public health flowing from the misrepresentation of the experiment's diet-and-lifespan results: p. 11 <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/USyd-Misconduct-June19.pdf>

To recap, the disputed 2014 paper concludes: “**Median lifespan was greatest for animals whose intakes were low in protein and high in carbohydrate**” (LPHC). I have drawn an easy-to-read chart (below) confirming that Professor Stephen Simpson *et al*'s median-lifespan “finding” blatantly misrepresents the *actual* results of the 30-diet experiment. You can see that **five of the seven best diets for median lifespan have high P:C ratios, while the five worst diets have low P:C ratios**. In short, these (hidden) unambiguous results falsify the paper's median-lifespan “finding”.



Notably, the five killer *low*-protein, high-carbohydrate (LPHC) diets in the chart above were discontinued and ~150 mice euthanised because they “would soon have died from malnutrition” (my June *Submission*, p. 24).

As you know, dead and dying animals are gold in any longevity analysis. Unreasonably, the authors quietly excluded those ~150 dead young mice from their formal results, one suspects because all five cohorts of dead mice were **dying young on Simpson's preferred LPHC diets**, diets he mistakenly predicted would produce the longest-lived cohorts.

Importantly, all these crucial facts remain hidden from readers of the 2014 paper: these *actual* lifespan results were neither presented nor discussed in the 13-page paper's main text. These clear, unambiguous, actual results **remain hidden** from all but the most-determined readers, in a separate file called (ironically) “Supplemental information”.

**That's why I have been asking for the Charles Perkins Centre's highly cited 2014 paper to be formally retracted and re-written under competent supervision.**

I'm well aware, of course, that there is a big difference between honest mistakes and research fraud. Unfortunately, back in January, the initial response of Professor Stephen Simpson – the main author, the NHMRC's “Principal investigator”, and the Academic Director of the Charles Perkins Centre – to my formal *Expression of Concern* to his US journal *Cell Metabolism* was to **dishonestly tell his journal's Editor-in-Chief Nikla Emambokus - and local journalist Adam Creighton - that “...Rory's concerns are in every respect unfounded”** (p. 21, June *Submission*).

In every respect unfounded! Really? Yet Professor Simpson told Norman Swan's *Health Report* on ABC national radio that “**what we did was design 25 [not 30] diets**”; disturbingly, his co-authors similarly misrepresented the 30-diet results: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/healthreport/high-protein2c-low-carbohydrate-diet/5309616> ; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-05/low-carb-diet-may-shorten-your-life-study-finds/5299284> ; and <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/healthreport/increasing-lifespan-healthspan-through-diet/6511294>

## 2. Highly motivated to misrepresent the long-anticipated mouse-lifespan results

Readers, in my [Supplementary Submission](#) to the research-misconduct investigation – officially accepted by the University on 1 August - I documented that Professor Simpson was highly motivated to misrepresent the *actual* longevity results of his 30-diet experiment in exactly the way the median-lifespan data have been misrepresented.

The false conclusion - “**Median lifespan was greatest for animals whose intakes were low in protein and high in carbohydrate**” – looks to have been contrived to provide the finding that Simpson wanted and *needed* to find. In more detail, Simpson's preferred “finding” for the 30-diet experiment was published in his 2012 book and, before that, in a 2009 paper: pp. 2-6 and p. 11 <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/SupplementarySubmissionUSydInquiry2019.pdf>

Alas, Professor Simpson's career-defining 30-diet experiment – seeking to unify “the science” from locusts and flies, to mice and (thus!) humans – did **not** turn out how he wanted and *needed*. That is, his mouse results are nothing like the “protein restriction [LPHC] extends lifespan” results he predicted in his high-profile 2012 book, ***The Nature of Nutrition: A unifying framework from animal adaptation to human obesity*** (Princeton University Press).

Again, Professor Simpson's “protein restriction [LPHC] extends lifespan” conclusion for mice is falsified by the *actual* results illustrated in my chart above and in my Table 3 (p. 11). Did Simpson fake his preferred median-lifespan “finding” in a misguided attempt to boost his career? That's what it looks like: here he is at a grand event (alongside co-author David Sinclair) promoting his influential false claim that “longevity in the mice was also, just like the fly, greatest on low-protein, high-carbohydrate diets”: minute 28:20 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0-Jt7az-54>.

### 3. Evidence of University of Sydney research misconduct continues to accumulate

Unfortunately, the University of Sydney's research misconduct – the flow of false, dishonest information - continues. Importantly, journalist Adam Creighton reported in *The Australian* on 8 August the simple matter of fact that the NHMRC has requested a research-misconduct investigation into the serious concerns I've highlighted since January.

Disturbingly, within a fortnight, University management – was it Professor Simpson and/or Vice-Chancellor Michael Spence? - had forced *The Australian* to publish online – attached to the original article – the Charles Perkins Centre's latest dishonest false rebuttal. (The article and the “rebuttal” are reproduced on pp. 4-5, below.)

I say the rebuttal is “dishonest” because “the Charles Perkins Centre” now is dishonestly pretending that “**The [2014 paper's] conclusions derive, as they must, from analysis of the entire dataset**”. From our earlier discussion, readers know that statement is a blatant falsehood. So too, Simpson *et al* know full well that they quietly deleted the five worst diets for median lifespan from their paper (“The data we present derive from 858 mice fed one of 25 diets”).

Again, those five “killer” low-protein diets – the five *low* P:C ratio diets that maximised early death in the chart above - are excluded from the published analysis. Yet here we have Simpson *et al* – while under the scrutiny of a research-misconduct investigation - pretending that “The conclusions derive, as they must, from analysis of the entire dataset”.

Further, Simpson *et al* insist - in the misinformation forced upon *The Australian* – “nothing can be concluded” from “the median lifespans [sic] for any one diet”. Simpson simply refuses to confront **the profound fact that five of his seven best diets** for median lifespan are HPLC, while his five shortest median lifespans are all via low-protein diets. The fact that one HPLC diet has a median lifespan 10% longer - an amazing decade in human terms! - than any of the other 29 diets remains suppressed by Simpson *et al* unreasonably insisting that this massive 10% outperformance is irrelevant.

All up, it remains false and dishonest for Professor Stephen Simpson *et al* to continue to insist that their 2014 paper's main longevity “finding” - “Median lifespan was greatest for animals whose intakes were low in protein and high in carbohydrate” - is correct and that everything is fine. Everything is not fine. The false information should be retracted.

### 4. Is the University of Sydney defrauding taxpayers of \$13m over 2019-2023, and up to ~\$700m per annum?

My suspicion is that the Charles Perkins Centre's dishonest false defence of its 2014 paper (p. 5, below) in part reflects its determination not to risk losing the \$13m worth of new NHMRC mouse-diet funding over the 2019-2023 period, funding that may be withdrawn if it is conceded that the lifespan results of the high-profile 30-diet experiment – funded by the initial NHMRC grant of \$1m – have been misrepresented (p. 7 of my *Supplementary Submission*).

Of course, the false defence of the misrepresented median-lifespan results is not just about squeezing a further \$13m from taxpayers. For all sorts of reasons nothing to do with that extra \$13m, Professor Simpson is refusing to concede that the LPHC “finding” that boosted his career - from locusts and flies (who cares?), to mice, humans and critical matters of public health - is falsified by my chart above and Table 3 in my *Submissions*. The \$13m is a just a bonus.

But is the University of Sydney - by allowing its influential Charles Perkins Centre careerists to dishonestly defend their false median-lifespan “finding” as valid - effectively “defrauding the Commonwealth”? While boosting his career, has Professor Simpson been “Doing anything with the intention of dishonestly obtaining a gain from a Commonwealth entity”? [https://www.publicdefenders.nsw.gov.au/Pages/public\\_defenders\\_research/Sentencing%20Tables/Fraud\\_s-135-1\\_\(Cth\)\\_Code.aspx](https://www.publicdefenders.nsw.gov.au/Pages/public_defenders_research/Sentencing%20Tables/Fraud_s-135-1_(Cth)_Code.aspx)

In any case, with his Charles Perkins Centre's harmful misinformation – the *Australian Paradox* sugar-and-obesity fraud and this sugary low-protein, high-carbohydrate median-lifespan misrepresentation – now carefully documented, Professor Simpson should not receive another cent from taxpayers. In my opinion, he's not “a fit and proper person” to oversee the hundreds of millions of dollars of public monies his Charles Perkins Centre will devour over coming years.

Looking at the big picture, the unethical acquiring of Commonwealth funding is much greater than \$13m. The University of Sydney's 2018 *Annual Report* (overleaf) shows that it is gifted ~\$700m each year by taxpayers, while the Group of Eight (Go8) receives “**two-thirds** of all research funding to Australian Universities”. Those outsized amounts exist because the Go8 has promised taxpayers, politicians and fee-paying students that it is uniquely devoted to “excellence”. Unfortunately, there is no competent quality control when it matters (p.16 *Supplementary Submission*).

### 5. Genuinely independent investigation required

In summary, my concerns include:

- The *actual* median-lifespan results of the 30-diet experiment remain hidden from readers of the 2014 paper.

- The *actual* median-lifespan results have been misrepresented, both in the 2014 paper and in the national media.
- The faulty low-protein, high-carbohydrate longevity advice for mice has been recklessly extrapolated to humans.
- That reckless extrapolation includes the University's full-page advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.
- Most importantly, the problem is that **sugary high-carbohydrate diets** – including LPHC mouse diets promoted by the Charles Perkins Centre – **cause type 2 diabetes, misery and early death in humans** (see in next link).
- Serious research misconduct has continued, with *The Australian* forced to publish a false rebuttal of my claims.
- By continuing to dishonestly pretend that its LPHC median-lifespan "finding" is valid, the Charles Perkins Centre is essentially repeating the unethical behaviour that characterises its **infamous Australian Paradox sugar-and-obesity fraud**: pp. 5-6 <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/USyd-Misconduct-June19.pdf>

For all these reasons, it is critical that there ultimately is an independent investigation into the Charles Perkins Centre's research misconduct and its dishonest misuse of public monies.

I hope a growing number of Academic Board members and others will take the time to understand the detail of the research misconduct, and the harm caused by the high-carbohydrate diets promoted by the Charles Perkins Centre.

It remains a tragic irony that the shiny Charles Perkins Centre's faulty high-carbohydrate diet advice is tending to harm public health across Australia, especially in Indigenous communities and thousands of nursing homes for the elderly.

Thanks, readers, for your time and please get in touch if you think that anything I have written is factually incorrect or otherwise unreasonable. **Notice below that the University cites various independent experts saying everything is fine, but it is yet to produce an independent expert with an actual name.** In my corner, I have former RBA Deputy Governor Dr Stephen Grenville (p. 4, below) and, if push comes to shove, a range of other highly credible and widely respected individuals.

Regards,  
Rory

**The University of Sydney  
Income statement  
for the year ended 31 December 2018**

		Economic entity (Consolidated)		Parent entity (University)	
		2018	2017	2018	2017
	Note	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Income from continuing operations</b>					
Australian Government financial assistance					
Australian Government grants	2(a)	710,378	703,421	710,378	703,421
HELP - Australian Government payments	2(b)	256,901	261,040	256,901	261,040
State and local government financial assistance		35,497	32,228	35,497	32,228
Fees and charges	3	1,027,860	890,673	1,027,860	890,673
HECS-HELP - student payments		33,487	34,191	33,487	34,191
Investment revenue	4	96,023	103,205	96,023	103,205
Consultancy and contracts	5	125,593	112,509	125,593	112,509
Royalties, trademarks and licences		8,264	4,698	8,264	4,698
Other revenue	6	166,969	164,582	166,969	164,582
<b>Total revenue from continuing operations</b>		<b>2,460,972</b>	<b>2,306,547</b>	<b>2,460,972</b>	<b>2,306,547</b>

p. 52 <https://sydney.edu.au/content/dam/corporate/documents/about-us/values-and-visions/University%20of%20Sydney%202018%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

**University of Sydney statement**

*The NHMRC has asked us to consider the concerns raised by a single individual. As is standard procedure, we are doing so in accordance with our codes of conduct and are in the initial inquiry stage of the process.*

*We are advised the journal itself had an independent statistical expert review the paper. The independent reviewer did not agree with Mr Robertson's interpretation, and neither did the original statistical reviewer.*

*The authors continue to reject Mr Robertson's claims as profoundly misconceived and unfounded.*

*The paper has been cited hundreds of times by scientists who have been through the data and analyses without any mention of the type of concerns raised by Mr Robertson, and the findings have been confirmed and built upon by other researchers since.*

**Further information:**

*The process for managing alleged breaches are outlined in our [Research Code of Conduct](#), which is consistent with the requirements of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).*

*(Statement supplied by University of Sydney spokesperson to a health journalist, on 16 August 2019)*

## Uni challenged on high-carb research claims

EXCLUSIVE

By ADAM CREIGHTON  
ECONOMICS EDITOR  
Follow @Adam\_Creighton

12:00AM AUGUST 8, 2019

85 COMMENTS



Former Reserve Bank and Macquarie economist Rory Robertson, whose complaints triggered the NHMRC request in May. Picture: Britta Campion/The Australian

It was a breakthrough diet tested on 1000 mice, promoted by the University of Sydney with full-page ads and used to guide selection of Qantas in-flight meals.

Now an economist, backed by a former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank, has queried the diet study paid for with \$1 million of taxpayers' money, prompting the university to investigate.

The National Health and Medical Research Council has requested the university investigate allegations the authors of the highly cited 2014 study into the impact of various diets on 30 groups of mice ignored the mice that died first and last — to conclude high-carbohydrate diets were best.

READ NEXT



Your morning Briefing

JASON GAGLIARDI

"It's a misrepresentation of the 30 diets' median-lifespan results," said former - Reserve Bank and Macquarie economist Rory Robertson, whose complaints triggered the NHMRC request in May.

Stephen Grenville, former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank, said: "The issues Mr Robertson has recently raised on university nutritional studies seem to me to be of importance both for diet advice and university governance, and deserve to be examined objectively by the university authorities at the highest level."

Based on the mouse study's conclusions, the university ran full-page advertisements in *The Sydney Morning Herald* last year claiming its researchers had "discovered that a low-protein, high-carb diet can delay chronic disease and help us live longer".

Qantas signed a "partnership" with the university, which oversaw the research, in 2017. "The research has already influenced what meals and beverages we'll be serving on board," chief executive Alan Joyce said at the time.

The authors, including professors David Sinclair and Stephen Simpson of Harvard and Sydney universities, defended removal of the five groups of mice that died first from the final analysis of the four-year study. The mice had been fed high-carb, low-fat diets.

"According to the independent veterinary office overseeing the study, (they) would soon have died from malnutrition," Professor Simpson said in statement.

(over)

"These diets were not viable for a young, growing mouse."

The results revealed the two groups of mice that ended up having the longest median lifespans, 139 and 127 weeks, were fed high-protein diets.

"Median lifespan was greatest for animals whose intakes were low in protein and high in carbohydrate," the authors concluded in the study published in the journal *Cell Metabolism*, arguing that it was "wrong to pick out one of two diets for special attention".

The journal said it stood by the publication and peer-review process.

"The paper has been cited hundreds of times by scientists who have been through the data and analyses without any mention of the type of concerns raised by Mr Robertson," said a spokeswoman for the University of Sydney.

The university's research integrity and ethics director, Rebecca Halligan, in May said Mr Robertson's claims would be assessed against the university's and government's codes for responsible research conduct.

In 2012, Mr Robertson slammed a nutritionist's 2011 findings that sugar consumption was falling in Australia while obesity rates were rising. "The scandalous mistreatment of millions of people with type 2 diabetes ... is why I remain determined to fix faulty and harmful science at the University of Sydney," he told *The Australian*.

## THE AUSTRALIAN

### Statement by research authors

After the publication of this story, the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney provided a further comment.

The authors of the paper strenuously denied any problem with the study. In a written statement to *The Australian* they said the NHMRC letter was "an automatic response followed for any complaint, irrespective of merit".

The statement also said Qantas' nutrition policy was guided by a broad review of the scientific literature into nutrition and jetlag rather than any single piece of research.

On the substance of Mr Robertson's criticisms, the authors said:

1. The last individual mice to die were low protein high carb-fed, but nothing can be concluded from that observation, nor from the median lifespans for any one diet. The conclusions derive, as they must, from analysis of the entire dataset.

2. The conclusion was not that high-carbohydrate diets were best – rather, diets with a combination of low protein and high carbohydrate supported longest lifespans and best late-middle age health. The same has been observed among human populations, most famously the traditional Okinawa diet which is low in protein and high in healthy carbohydrates. Optimal outcomes at different lifestages in the study (e.g. reproduction) were supported by other nutrient mixtures.

Specifically in relation to the five groups of mice which died first, the authors said:

1. They were very low energy diets – low in concentration of all nutrients including carbs but especially protein, due to high content of indigestible fibre.

2. Additionally, inclusion of these diets in the analysis would have supported our conclusions not weakened them.

They noted that the study is "... tightly integrated with a large and growing body of evidence from humans. Also, the fundamental biological processes (nutrient signalling pathways) that serve to mediate the effects of nutrients on health and ageing are universal - shared by mice, humans, flies, worms and yeast cells."

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**rory robertson**

**economist and former-fattie**

<https://twitter.com/OzParadoxdotcom>

Is the Charles Perkins Centre's blatant misrepresentation of its mouse-study longevity results another example of serious and harmful scientific fraud at Group of Eight universities? <https://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Letters-USyd-Cell-Metabolism.pdf>

Here's me, Emma Alberici and ABC TV's Lateline on the University of Sydney's Australian Paradox: <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2015/s4442720.htm>

Here's the latest on that epic Australian Paradox sugar-and-obesity fraud: <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/ABC-investigation-AustralianParadox.pdf>

Here's Vice-Chancellor Spence's threat to ban me from campus: p. 64 <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Big-5-year-update-Feb-2017.pdf>

During National Diabetes Week 2016, I wrote to the Department of Health about "The scandalous mistreatment of Australians with type 2 diabetes (T2D)": <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/Expanded-Letter-HealthDept-type2diabetes.pdf>

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

Here's the diet advised by Dr Peter Brukner, recently the Australian cricket team's doctor: <http://www.peterbrukner.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/All-you-need-to-know-about-LCHF1.pdf> ; <http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/lowcarb/>

A life in our times: Vale Alexander "Sandy" Robertson (1933-2015): <http://www.australianparadox.com/pdf/AlecRobertson-born2oct33.pdf>

**Comments, criticisms, questions, compliments, whatever welcome at [strathburnstation@gmail.com](mailto:strathburnstation@gmail.com)**

**[www.strathburn.com](http://www.strathburn.com)**

Strathburn Cattle Station is a proud partner of YALARI, 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>