

Australian science-agency staff announce strike

Frustrations at CSIRO boil over after negotiations on pay and working conditions stall.

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David McClenaghan / CSIRO

CSIRO headquarters in Canberra.

Scientists at Australia's premier science agency will begin a series of half-day strikes next week in protest over stalled pay negotiations.

The staff association at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), which employs thousands of scientists across Australia, [announced](#) the strikes on 11 June.

The protest will be co-ordinated with strikes by other Australian public-sector workers — including researchers from some federally-funded agencies such as the Australian Antarctic Division and the Department of Agriculture — that also relate to a breakdown of negotiations over pay and working conditions, said Anthony Keenan, a spokesman for the CSIRO staff association. Those striking belong to the Community and Public Sector Union, a trade union which has about 40% membership across Australia's public sector, but closer to 50% at CSIRO, Keenan added.

At CSIRO, the protests follow more than a month of less-extreme [industrial action](#), such as refusing to work unpaid overtime, as the staff association sought to prevent CSIRO management from increasing total working hours and cutting redundancy pay.

"CSIRO staff have suffered drastic funding cuts; seen critical research abandoned and experienced a twenty per cent cut to the workforce over a two year period," said Sam Popovski, the secretary of the

CSIRO staff association, in a statement. The agency has seen its [budget slashed by millions of dollars](#) in the past two years.

"The decision to take stop work action is one of last resort and born of deep frustration," Popovski added. "The stoppages and work bans represent the biggest campaign of industrial action in CSIRO's history." (In 2011, CSIRO staff downed tools for two hours during contract negotiations — the organization's first strikes on a national scale).

A [timetable of national strike action](#) has CSIRO staff in seven locations including Sydney, Darwin and Perth downing tools on the afternoon of 18 June, with those in other parts of the country following in later days.

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- Updates

Updated: This article was updated on 12 June to include details on wider strikes by public-sector staff in Australia.