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## Censorship at CSIRO

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**The C-S-I-R-O has been accused of trying to censor the work of an economist who's criticised the policy at the centre of the Federal Government's response to climate change.**

The researcher Dr Clive Spash, has been told not to publish a journal article that questions the economic underpinnings of carbon trading versus other means of cutting greenhouse emissions. The organisation says the Chief Executive Dr Megan Clark is reviewing the question of whether Dr Spash's paper can be published.

Shane McLeod

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**Topics:** research-organisations, censorship, research, australia

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TONY EASTLEY: The CSIRO has been accused of trying to censor the work of an economist who's criticised the policy at the centre of the Federal Government's response to climate change.

The researcher, Dr Clive Spash, has been told not to publish a journal article that questions the economic underpinnings of carbon trading versus other means of cutting greenhouse emissions.

He's told AM, that he was headhunted to join the CSIRO but wonders if he has a future there if he can't talk about the subject of his research.

Shane McLeod reports.

SHANE MCLEOD: The CSIRO says it's had a long-standing policy that its scientists and researchers don't talk about policy and Dr Clive Spash says that's a policy he was well aware of.

An ecological economist with the Sustainable Ecosystems Division at the organisation, he wrote a paper looking at the effectiveness of carbon emissions trading as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

CLIVE SPASH: The big concern here for economists has been about efficiency, taking an emissions trading scheme approach is known to be the most efficient approach. My paper is criticising that.

SHANE MCLEOD: Dr Spash says at first he was told by his supervisors he should try to have the paper published in an international journal to boost its academic credibility. He did that and the article was accepted for publication by the UK journal, *New Political Economy*.

(to Clive Spash) When did you find out there was a problem?

CLIVE SPASH: After the article had been accepted for publication and I had informed the acting chief of the division, two weeks later he informed me that the article could not be published.

SHANE MCLEOD: Dr Spash offered to publish the paper under his own name, disclaiming his CSIRO affiliation but later he was told that wasn't an option. The controversy surrounding his paper seems to be in part behind efforts within the organisation to clarify its policies for scientists speaking out.

The CSIRO's chief executive Megan Clark explained the philosophy in an interview with ABC radio last month.

MEGAN CLARK: If one of our scientists is talking about their discipline area there's no division between an individual and the organisation.

SHANE MCLEOD: But that leaves researchers and scientists like Dr Clive Spash wondering what they're supposed to do. He was recruited to the CSIRO in 2006 from Scotland. He says he was headhunted and told that the organisation wanted him based in Canberra so he would be close to policymakers.

CLIVE SPASH: I'm aware of the statements of policy. The problem is the interpretation that's being given to them right now. They're not particularly clear. There's real issue here about people working in the socio-economic area, there's also economists, anthropologists, you know a range of different people in the social sciences working within CSIRO.

It's not at all clear to me how these people are supposed to work and do their job while trying to meet these general guidance principles that have been interpreted at present to say that we're not allowed to comment on any government policy at any level of government, anywhere in the world.

TONY EASTLEY: CSIRO economist Dr Clive Spash, and the organisation says the chief executive, Dr Megan Clark, is reviewing the question of whether Dr Spash's paper can be published.