

Climate change censorship: Clive Spash

On 25 November 2009, a debate was held in the Australian Senate concerning the alleged involvement of the CSIRO and the Labor government in censorship. The debate was called for by opposition parties after evidence came to light that a paper critical of carbon emissions trading was being suppressed.^[64] At the time, the Labor government was trying to get such a scheme through the Senate. After the debate, the Science Minister, Kim Carr, was forced to release the paper, but when doing so in the Senate he also delivered a letter from the CEO of the CSIRO, [Megan Clark](#), which attacked the report's author and threatened him with unspecified punishment.^[65] The author of the paper, Clive Spash, was cited in the press as having been bullied and harassed,^[66] and later gave a radio interview about this.^[67] In the midst of the affair, CSIRO management had considered releasing the paper with edits that Nature reported would be "tiny".^[68] Spash claimed the changes actually demanded amounted to censorship and resigned. He later posted on his website a document detailing the text that CSIRO management demanded be deleted;^[69] by itself, this document forms a coherent set of statements criticising emissions trading without any additional wording needed. In subsequent Senate Estimates hearings during 2010, Senator Carr and Clark went on record claiming the paper was originally stopped from publication solely due to its low quality not meeting CSIRO standards.^[70] At the time of its attempted suppression, the paper had been accepted for publication in an academic journal, [New Political Economy](#), which in 2010 had been ranked by the Australian Research Council as an 'A class' publication.^[71] In an ABC radio interview, Spash called for a Senate enquiry into the affair and the role played by senior management and the Science Minister.^[72] Since these events, the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) has reported that "Questions are being raised about the closeness of BHP Billiton and the CSIRO under its chief executive, Megan Clark".^[73] After his resignation, an unedited version of the paper was released by Spash as a discussion paper,^[74] and later published as an academic journal article.^[75]