

It's natural climate change, stupid!

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Famously, during the 1992 US election Bill Clinton's staff hung a sign on the wall of his campaign office that read, "It's the economy, stupid!" It was no coincidence that Mr Clinton won the subsequent election, because focusing on real issues is what real leaders do.

In contrast, Australia currently possesses leaders of both its government and opposition who are lost in an imaginary world of virtual reality about one of the most important public issues of the day. They need a new and different sign on their desk, namely: It's natural climate change, stupid!

For, whether it reflects simple ignorance or the sophisticated seeking of political advantage, and it must be one or the other, both our prime minister Mr Rudd and our opposition leader Mr Turnbull have declared themselves in favour of the introduction of carbon dioxide taxation in order to help 'stop' a wholly imaginary human-caused global warming.

Speculative, and wrong, models

Their beliefs are supported only by speculative computer climate models already known to be wrong, and they will implement an emissions trading system (ETS) at their own political peril and to the great detriment of the Australian people. Get this:

- First, there has been no recent global warming in the common meaning of the term, for world average temperature has cooled for the past 10 years. Furthermore, since 1940 the Earth has warmed for 19 years and cooled for 49, the overall result being that global average temperature is now about the same as it was in 1940.
- Second, this lack of overall warming over the past 68 years happened despite an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide of more than 20 per cent – which is actually no surprise, because, notwithstanding that it is a greenhouse gas, the increase in the warming effect of carbon dioxide beyond 1940 levels is diminishingly small.
- Third, by planetary accident, in comparison with most of the Earth's geological history we live today in a world that is in a state of carbon dioxide starvation, especially for optimal plant growth – just ask the commercial tomato grow-



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ers who use enhanced levels of carbon dioxide in their greenhouses to expedite crop growth.

- Fourth, experience in Europe shows emissions trading markets are unstable, and that a carbon dioxide tax is ineffectual as a tool for reducing emissions at any reasonable price level.

Overall, therefore, Mr Rudd's planned emissions trading scheme suffers from the double indignity of being a non-solution to a non-problem.

Confusing science with politics

Against this background, the commentary on 'global warming' in the general press consistently and conspicuously misses the point, not least because most journalists and editors are innocent of knowledge of the workings of science and cling to a naive belief that scientific matters can be determined by authority or consensus – thereby confusing science with politics.

Politics may well be about consensus, as determined by who can shout the loudest, who has the most money to buy media advertising or to pay lobbyists to influence affairs on their behalf, and who can thereby win the most votes – but science is not.

Science is about testing hypotheses, and the hypothesis of the day – that dangerous global warming is being caused by human carbon dioxide emissions – has been tested repeatedly and found to be invalid, *inter alia* by the information presented in the previous paragraphs.

Frightened by science that they do not understand, anxious not to offend the pow-

erful and intimidatory Green lobby, and with a climate eye always open for scare stories that will help sell their product, media commentators therefore concentrate on the politics of the matter.

Natural climate change

"Great," I hear you say, "so now I can just relax and forget about climate change then?" Not so fast. The greatest damage that has been inflicted by those whipping up the imaginary threat of human-caused global warming is that the hysteria has overwhelmed mature consideration of the much greater and proven threat of natural climate change.

There is irony as well as irresponsibility here. It is that the type of cooling (not warming, note) that the globe has experienced since around the turn of the 21st century, which some leading scientists predict will become significantly more intense because of our currently quiet sun, is by its very nature more damaging to human activity and health than an equivalent amount of benign warming would be.

The prescribed remedy for those who might be inclined to doubt this is a study course in the history of the Little Ice Age, which extended from the late 13th century to the mid-19th century.

Weather versus climate

With the arrival in August 2005 of Hurricane Katrina, Americans were given an abrupt reminder of the danger of natural climatic events. For despite acres of newsprint to the contrary, no substantive evidence has emerged that this was other than a natural storm. And now it's Australia's turn.

In February this year, and, given the government's ETS timetable, bang on cue to enlighten our politicians about the difference between real and imaginary climatic events, Mother Nature provided us with a reminder of the awesome power that lurks within her natural furies.

In the north, monsoonal downpours of more than 1.2 metres in seven days caused large parts of tropical Australia to be flooded; rivers rose up to 12 metres above their normal level, and 62 per cent of Queensland (580,000 km²) was designated as a disaster area. At the same time, large areas of Victoria were ravaged by firestorms that razed areas greater than 4500 km², in the process destroying more than 2000 houses, leaving

more than 7000 people homeless and causing more than 170 deaths.

'Weather' and 'climate' are conventionally distinguished as daily-to-annual and 30-year-averaged meteorological measurements, respectively, but this is a statistical convenience rather than a scientific truth. In reality climate processes – which are dynamic, non-linear, and a manifestation of heat transfer and distribution throughout two interconnected, turbulent, fluid envelopes (the ocean and the atmosphere) – occur over all time scales from seconds up to millions of years in length.

In this context, the two recent natural disasters in Australia, far from being unusual, represent typical climatological hazards such as planet Earth has ever been heir to.

All competent scientists accept that global climate has always changed, and always will; that human activities (not just carbon dioxide emissions) definitely affect local climate, and have the potential, summed, to measurably affect global climate; and that carbon dioxide is a mild greenhouse gas.

The real debate

The true scientific debate, then, is about none of these issues, but rather about the sign and magnitude of any human global effect, and its likely significance when considered in the context of natural climate change.

Two main groups of facts are relevant:

- The first is the available instrumental measurements of global temperature for the last 60 or so years. Despite quality control problems, especially with data collected by the ground thermometer network, three separate methods of temperature measurement yield the same result. The methods are ground thermometers, weather-balloon-mounted radiosonde sensors, and satellite-mounted microwave sensing units.

And the result that they agree on is that little if any overall warming has occurred since at least 1958 (the starting date for the weather balloon dataset). Furthermore, the minor decadal-scale changes recorded in these datasets fall well within the known previous natural rates and magnitudes of temperature change.

On top of these instrumental measurements, proxy estimates of the temperature of the past 150 and more years from around the world, for example tree ring analyses, do not record evidence of untoward warming in the late 20th century.

- The second important fact relevant to the climate debate is that Earth is a dynamic planet. This is manifest in changes in atmospheric composition,



There is no evidence that recent natural disasters are anything other than a natural venting of Mother Nature's fury.

atmospheric aerosol load, global and regional ice volume, the frequency and intensity of storms, patterns of precipitation and drought, sea level and the ranges or abundances of individual organisms and their ecological habitats.

The press, faithfully repeating what is fed to them by Green lobbyists, assert that these changes are controlled by, or linked to, human-caused global warming.

These matters are, of course, proper topics for concern, and all are being subjected to intensive research. But no empirical study has yet established a certain link between changes in any of these things and human-caused global warming.

Instead, the changes simply reflect that Earth's systems are constantly evolving. Consequently, changes occur in all aspects of local climate, all the time and all over the world, and geological records show that climate also changes continually through deep time.

Change is what climate naturally does, and the ecologies of the natural world change in parallel.

To summarise, the indirect evidence advanced for human-caused climate change is all equally consistent with a natural origin. Since the establishment of the IPCC in 1988 several thousand scientists have spent more than US\$50 billion looking for evidence of human-caused warming without avail. No direct evidence exists for a worrisome magnitude or rate for human-caused global climate change over the past 50 years.

Emissions trading

In such circumstances, it is surely remarkable that the Minister for Climate Change, Penny Wong, on behalf of the current Labor government, and at a time when the globe is cooling, remains so determined to implement an ETS in Australia. Equally remarkable is that the mainstream Australian media continue to evangelise on behalf of the global warming industry and, by and

large, ignore the advice of scientists who are independent of the main climate lobby groups.

The main issue now is surely not about whether a tax or trading system is the superior economic instrument, as endlessly discussed, but about why there is any need for a carbon dioxide levy in the first place.

The problem that confronts us still is the powerful influence of the guilt-based misinformation that compliant media reporters have remorselessly fed the public about global warming, to the point that public opinion is said to demand government action to "stop climate change".

It is entirely unsurprising that politicians have thereafter gravitated towards regulatory schemes that will yield them more tax income, with business interests swinging in behind with their own various 'solutions' that will make them money too.

More generally, the carbon dioxide taxation ambitions of our politicians have been egged on by the many self-interested groups who, one way or another, see themselves as benefiting from emissions trading legislation. The most powerful are the large environmental NGOs, whose political generals nightly display their ignorance of science, unchallenged, on our television screens.

But close behind come various industry groups, especially the alternative energy providers and the financial services industry (think Enron and Lehman Brothers), whose members so skilfully masterminded the economic disaster that presently surrounds us. Just think of the fast money that is going to be made by ticket-clippers manipulating a carbon dioxide derivatives scheme based upon trading in a commodity that is odourless, tasteless, colourless, for most practical purposes unable to be measured, and never changes hands.

Meaning, of course, that in most cases those oh-so-reliable and incorruptible computer projections will be used rather than

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measurements. Have you ever tried to audit a complex computer model?

Emissions trading legislation, despite its current popularity with governments, including ours, represents an ineffectual response to speculative global warming only.

It does not comprise, and nor is it even a desirable part of, an adequate national climate policy, and neither would be a direct carbon dioxide tax. Rather, policies are needed by all countries that will improve our ability to recognise and adapt to real (that is, natural) climate change irrespective of its causation – circumstances dictate that these strategies be adaptive.

A former New Zealand environment minister, Simon Upton, recently wrote:

“It is pointless to apportion blame. But for the sake of environmental credibility and business certainty, the plea has now surely to be that our legislators try to build some constructive middle ground ... Anyone who has studied the [climate change] issue in good faith knows that there are no certainties and that it is a risk management issue.”

Mr Upton is surely right, yet his message is ignored by our current political masters, who continue to pursue the alarmist agenda of global warming extremists even to the point of inflicting yet more blows (and pointless) damage on an already teetering economy.

Scare campaign

The current public ‘debate’ on climate is not so much a debate as an incessant and shrill campaign to scare citizens into accepting dramatic changes in their way of life in pursuit of the false god of preventing dangerous global warming. Furthermore, this ‘debate’ is consistently misrepresented by the media as being between morally ad-

mirable ‘believers’ and morally challenged ‘deniers’.

Such shallow moralities have nothing to do with science, which derives its considerable moral and practical authority from the objective use of facts, experiments and analytical reasoning to test hypotheses about the natural world.

The global warming issue has become big business indeed for bureaucrats, politicians and business, as well as for scientists and environmental NGOs. It has been estimated that Western countries alone are currently spending at least \$5 billion annually on global warming-related research or policy formulation. This buys a lot of science and influences a lot of adherents.

Doug Hoffman and Allen Simmons (in *The Resilient Earth*, 2008) estimate that currently the United Nations alone funds 60,000 projects that deal with (human-caused) climate change. The ascendancy of President Obama to his Washington throne has been greeted by a more than 300 per cent increase in global warming lobbyists to Washington, with 770 companies and interest groups hiring 2340 lobbyists to influence federal policy on climate change in the past year.

No empirical evidence

All of this activity, and much more besides, is predicated upon the supposition that human carbon dioxide emissions are causing dangerous global warming. Instead, the hard reality is that after 20 years of intensive research effort, and great expenditure, no convincing empirical evidence exists that the human effect on climate (which is undeniable locally) adds up to a measurable global signal.

Rather, it seems that the human global signal is small and lies submerged deeply within the noise and variability of the natural climate system.

IPCC and dead parrots

The IPCC’s Plan A, therefore, is a dead parrot. For “greenhouse gas reduction”, by any means, becomes an irrelevancy when it can only deal with as-yet-unmeasured, human-caused global warming, at a time when the globe has been cooling for 10 years.

But just as the ‘science’ that is cited in favour of dangerous human warming caused by carbon dioxide emissions shows all the hallmarks of orchestrated propaganda, so too the real science shows beyond doubt that the wide array of extreme natural events – which include climatic warming trends, cooling trends, step-events, heat waves, droughts, cyclones, floods and snowstorms – pose great dangers for humanity.

Australia therefore now needs a Plan B, which is the introduction of adaptive policies to deal with natural climate change, in place of the government’s current expensive, inefficient and ineffectual plans to “prevent human-caused global warming”.

The failure of both Mr Rudd and Mr Turnbull to respond to this need by confronting ecosalvationist hysteria about imaginary global warming, and at the same time to deal sensibly with the real threat of natural climate change, now bids fair to undermine their leadership positions.

A national climate policy that improves our ability to recognise, manage and adapt to natural climate change and events, as could be met by the creation of a HazNet organisation, is an urgent necessity, and would cost but a fraction of the mooted ETS. To boot, contingent damage to the economy, energy systems, the standard of living and the world food supply would be avoided.

And, by their very nature, strategies that can cope with the dangers and vagaries of natural climate change will readily cope with human-caused change too, should that ever manifest itself.

Why is it so difficult for Australia’s major political parties to discern this obvious truth?

This article is based on a paper given at the Heartland International Climate Change Conference, New York, in March this year.

Further information relevant to the issues discussed can be found on Bob Carter’s website: <http://members.iinet.net.au/~glrmc/>

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The proposed emissions trading legislation is an ineffectual response to ‘speculative’ global warming.