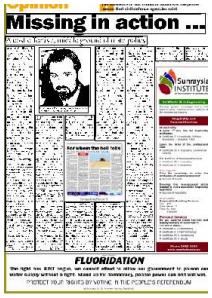
MEDIA MONITORS
INCISIVE INSIGHT



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Missing in action ...

A cost-effective, middle ground climate policy

GRAEME O'Neill's article (*Sunraysia Daily*, February 9) on dangerous global warming carried the subheading "Our planet IS warming and humans ARE responsible".

Following Penny Wong's stellar example of managing to cram seven scientific errors into the first sentence of her recent Green Paper, Mr O'Neill or his sub-editor have here managed to shoehorn two infelicities into the same headline: for our planet is actually currently cooling, and there is no evidence whatsoever that humans are responsible.

What is it about the global warming issue that causes respectable newspapers and magazines, not to mention our ABC, to continually and consistently recycle such egregious nonsense?

The current public "debate" on climate is not so much a debate as it is an incessant and shrill campaign by self-interested persons and organisations to scare Australian 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 in the press as being between morally admirable "believers" and morally challenged "deniers".

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

The prime weapon for those who wish to scare the public in this way, apparently including Mr O'Neill, is the reports of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a political body established from the start with a global warming agenda.

Those independent scientists who express disagreement with the IPCC's political advice are relentlessly attacked by green organisations and their supporters, who are long on ad hominem argument and very short, indeed mostly incompetent, in scientific analysis.

A number of myths are relentlessly recycled in pursuit of global warming alarmism.

Those advanced by Mr O'Neill include the following:

Myth 1 – "3000 of the world's leading climatologists" work for the IPCC, and guide its advice.

In fact, only about 50 scientists shaped the critically important Advice for Policymakers part of the IPCC's 4th Assessment Report, and the final wording was shaped, line by line, by government-appointed bureaucrats.

Myth 2 – independent scientists whose views differ from the IPCC's (derisorily termed "sceptics" or "denialists") are "non-experts".

Rather, many distinguished climatologists, meteorologists, atmospheric physicists, geologists and economists choose not to be involved with a partial organisation like the IPCC, and deliberately maintain their professional independence.

For example, in December 2007, 103 such persons, including 23 emeritus professors, wrote to the Secretary-General of the UN to advise him that IPCC climate advice was scientifically unsustainable.

Myth 3 – the computer climate models used by the IPCC are capable of making predictions of climate 50 or more years ahead.

In fact, and without exception, these models remain unvalidated; their outputs comprise projections (imaginary futures) not predictions.

The particular warming trends favoured by the IPCC represent selected virtual realities out of literally millions of equally likely alternative futures, including cooler ones.

Myth 4 – temperature change over the past three decades has been somehow exceptional, as implied by scientifically juvenile statements such as "the warmest 20 years on record have all occurred since 1983".

In reality, no useful statements about climate change can be made on the basis of comparing the past 25 years to the short 150 year-long instrumental record.

Climate change is a process that takes place over much longer time scales, and judged against the geological record of ancient climate there is absolutely nothing unusual about either the magnitude or rate of the warming pulse that occurred during the late 20th century.

Myth 5 – global warming is still occurring.

In actuality, the late 20th century period of global warming, which was indistinguishable from many earlier periods of natural warming, ended in 1998; since about 2002 both the world's atmosphere and oceans have been cooling, and the presently quiet sun suggests that the cooling will continue.

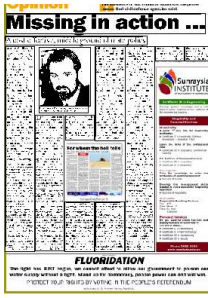
All competent scientists accept (i) that global climate has always changed, and always will; (ii) that human activities (not just carbon dioxide emissions) definitely affect local climate, and have the potential, summed, to measurably affect global climate; and (iii) that carbon dioxide is a mild greenhouse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

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

As recent bushfires in the south and floods in the north of Australia have reminded us, extreme weather events are natural disasters of similar character to earthquakes, tsunami and volcanic eruptions, in that they can neither be predicted far ahead nor prevented once they are under way.

The existence of such natural hazards is the prime reason that civil defence agencies exist.

It is time to move away from stale "he-says, she-says" arguments about whether human car-



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bon dioxide emissions are causing dangerous warming, and on to designing a cost-effective middle ground policy to deal with weather and climatic hazards.

Climate change as a natural hazard is as much a geological as it is a meteorological issue, and the key issue on which all scientists agree is that natural climate change exacts very real human and environmental costs.

The solution is to create a national disaster response agency whose mission encompasses all major environmental hazards, including dealing with climate change reality as it unfolds.

Even were generous funding to be provided for implementation of such a national natural hazard warning and disaster relief scheme – let us call it HazNet – the overall costs would be orders of magnitude less than those caused by an unnecessary and ineffectual carbon dioxide tax.

To boot, contingent damage to the economy, the standard of living and the world food supply would be avoided.

The possibility of future human-caused change is readily managed within a wider adaptive policy that has known natural climate change as its main focus.

For a society that has prepared properly to cope with the changes that Nature herself imposes is, by that very fact, prepared for any human-caused change that might occur as well.

By Professor Bob Carter, Marine Geophysical Laboratory, James Cook University

For whom the bell tolls

Our planet IS warming, and humans ARE responsible

OPINION

State and Federal politicians more at least universally sceptical

WIN · FREE

A picture

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Sunraysia Daily, February 9