



# Ignore scares from all sides and plan with prudence

Peter Steinberg (Letters, August 18) says: "The vast majority of specialists in the field say we have a major [global warming] problem, that it is caused by humans, and it is probably getting worse". This is untrue.

The scientific sub-disciplines relevant to climate change fall into two main groups: those concerned with weather and climate processes (atmospheric sciences, including meteorology), and those concerned with climate history (geological sciences). Most atmospheric scientists may believe global warming is a threat, but most earth scientists believe the threat of natural climate events and change is far greater – witness this year's bushfires and floods.

So, amending Professor Steinberg's analogy, it is as though five doctors (the geologists) are telling you not to be alarmed, but to take prudent and cost-effective steps to deal with problems that will arise; the other five (the atmospheric scientists) are telling you to treat a hypothetical disease as though it required urgent intensive care, no matter the cost or the social and environmental damage, and not to worry about much more likely

health hazards.

Australia does not have a climate policy, but rather a speculative "prevent global warming" policy; you may as well try to stop an earthquake or volcanic eruption. A responsible government, or opposition, would be making plans to deal better with natural climate events, knowing that such planning would also cope with human-caused change, should it eventuate.

**Professor Bob Carter**

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The Australian Food and Grocery Council says the emissions trading scheme would cost some households hundreds of dollars a month in higher grocery bills ("Food prices will rise 5 per cent, council warns", August 18). This is dishonest scaremongering.

Apart from the fact that the model used is questionable, this claim is based on an estimated price rise of 5 per cent. Households would pay \$200 extra each month only if they were already spending a minimum of \$4000 a month (\$1000 a week). Few households would fall into this category, and I would guess that those

that do would not much notice the extra cost.

The trading scheme leaves much to be desired, but Australia must accept that it is living unsustainably, and it will cost money to redress this problem. But the costs are unlikely to reach the stratospheric heights of which the grocery council so helpfully warns us.

**Daniel MacPherson** Enfield

Andrew Studer (Letters, August 17) says pro climate change scientists refuse to engage in debate with "deniers" because of the 20:20 principle. They are apparently frustrated that deniers can say something plausible in a 20-second sound bite, but it takes 20 minutes to explain why it is rubbish.

Could the real reason be that their own 20-second headline grabbers – such as Tim Flannery's claim last year that Adelaide "may run out of water by early 2009" – have turned out to be wild exaggerations or flat wrong?

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