



# Climate change poll shows a cooling off

We need a realistic policy not a carbon tax, writes **Bob Carter.**

A NEW Lowy Institute poll published last week shows that the majority of the Australian public no longer considers that dangerous global warming is likely to be caused by human CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The issue ranked only seventh (down from first in 2007) on a list of 10 important foreign policy issues. In addition, almost half those polled (48 per cent) disagreed that global warming was "a critical threat".

This swing in public opinion has been under way in all Western nations for the past two years, and has been driven by two things.

The first is that the global cooling trend that started in 1998 has continued for more than 10 years.

Even the BBC has now caught up with this drift, and last week published an article *Whatever happened to global warming*, by journalist Paul Hudson.

Mr Hudson reported correctly that many scientists now see the past 10 years of cooling as only the start of a probable 20- to 30-year-long solar-influenced trend, a trend that I first commented on in the UK *Sunday Telegraph* in April 2006.

Second, at the same time that over

10 years of cooling has occurred, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels have increased by 5 per cent, which is a direct test of the dangerous, human-caused global warming hypothesis; a test that it fails.

Little wonder that the public is becoming uneasy about whether they have been told the whole truth about climate change, whether it is natural and whether the cost-benefit of implementing CO<sub>2</sub> taxation (emissions trading) is justified.

In various articles, and in many public talks, I have reported estimates that (assuming an initial CO<sub>2</sub> tax of \$30 per tonne) the handed-down cost of implementing Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's emissions trading scheme will be about \$3000 per family of four per year. The theoretical benefit is the prevention of warming in 90 years' time, in 2100, by one-ten-thousandth of a degree Celsius.

I have yet to meet an Australian taxpayer who thinks that \$3000 per year in return for unmeasurable cooling is a good deal.

But the reality that no amount of CO<sub>2</sub> taxation, or human emissions

reduction, will affect future climate must not obscure the fact that climate events and climate change nonetheless provide several of the most deadly natural hazards that Australians confront – including bushfires, cyclones and drought.

It is therefore vital that Australian governments craft a realistic national climate policy, which must be one of hazard mitigation and adaptation to climate events. Instead, both the Government and the current Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Turnbull, are pursuing an Alice in Wonderland policy of stopping speculative, and as-yet-unmeasurable, global warming that is alleged to be caused by human CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Politicians do not try to stop earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. Climate change is the same.

**Professor Bob Carter is a geologist and environmental scientist from James Cook University, Townsville. He will give a public talk today at Souths Leagues Club, Merewether, at 1 pm.**