



SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH DROWNING IN A SEA OF ALARMISM

Let's base climate policy on empirical data, not myths

BOB CARTER

LAST week, almost 400 people attended a public meeting in Newcastle to learn about the scientific evidence that underpins sea-level change.

The meeting was prompted by strong public discontent with Lake Macquarie City Council's new coastal planning regulations designed to accommodate a science-fiction prediction of a 91cm rise in sea level in the district by 2100. This prediction comes from the NSW government, which in turn sourced it from a UN political body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As with its unnecessarily alarmist projections of global warming, the IPCC's estimate of future sea-level rise derives from speculative computer models.

Where, then, should the government get its advice about sea-level change instead?

Prior to the advent of global warming alarmism in the late 20th century, governments and councils drew their advice from statutory authorities involved with harbour and tidal management, and from scientific research groups such as the CSIRO.

With the IPCC's formation in 1988, which was tasked to ponder on global warming, the focus of governments shifted from sea-level change as a ports, harbours and beaches issue to it being seen as a more general environmental

issue related to hypothetical, human-caused global warming.

At about the same time, attention shifted from basing public policy on the use of measured tide gauge records to basing it on the theoretical projections of computer models. By the end of the 1990s, Australian governments and councils were basing their sea-level planning almost entirely on IPCC advice, that is, on unvalidated computer predictions that are in no way tied to accurate local sea-level measurement.

The CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology, at official level, have consistently supported the IPCC sea-level projections as valid and accurate, as indeed has the government-appointed Coasts and Climate Change Council. To make matters worse, the IPCC sea-level predictions are for an entirely notional statistic, global average sea-level.

Astonishingly, the predictions have been adopted uncritically as the basis for local planning. This is equivalent to introducing new housing regulations for the heating and cooling of Australian dwellings based upon global average temperature. Well, now that we have learned about the unsuitable nature of its sea-level speculations, what else do we know about the IPCC? Does it have form?

My word it does. As long ago as 1996 a former president of the US National Academy of Sciences, Frederick Seitz, commented on its second assessment report on global warming that "I have never witnessed a more disturbing corruption of the peer-review process than the events that led to this IPCC report".

Subsequently, successive scandals have engulfed the IPCC, and destroyed the credibility of its claimed "gold standard" of science summary and peer-review.

These scandals are well described in several easily accessible publications, and include such things as statistical chicanery related to the global temperature "hockey stick" (a faulty analysis of ancient tree ring measurements used to reconstruct global temperatures), a biased and dysfunctional peer-review process, the Climategate affair (leaked emails from Britain's Climatic Research Unit that contained abundant evidence of scientific malfeasance by leading IPCC scientists), the Glaciergate affair (inaccurate anecdotal evidence about Himalayan glacier melt in an IPCC report) and the infiltration of IPCC advisory panels and authors by environmental activists and partisan researchers.

Public reaction to these scandals has included calls for the IPCC be disbanded or that its chairman, Rajendra Pachauri resign, with former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt even recommending an IPCC audit be undertaken because "some of their researchers have shown themselves to be fraudsters (*betrüger*)". In such circumstances, that Australian governments still use IPCC advice about sea-level change as their guide for coastal planning is hard to understand, when site-specific measurements of actual Australian change are readily available.

Well-qualified independent scientists have repeatedly drawn public attention to the existence





of a body of official agency sea-level measurements (now maintained by the BOM), and peer-reviewed research papers based on these and other empirical data, which demonstrates conclusively the four following facts.

First, that rates of sea-level change vary around the Australian coast. This means any new coastal planning regulations (if and where they are needed) should be based on the appropriate local sea-level measurements rather than a hypothetical global average.

Second, the longest east coast tide-gauge record, from Fort Denison (Sydney), records an average rate of rise over the past 100 years of about 1mm a year (10cm a century).

Third, that other tide gauges, scattered around Australia as part of the national tidal network, mostly record rates of long-term rise between about 0.5mm and 2.5mm a year with no change in behaviour in the late 20th century that might reflect a human (global warming) influence.

And, fourth, that the Sydney tide gauge, as well as other long tidal records from nearby (Fremantle, Auckland) and overseas, exhibits a slowing rate of sea-level rise over the past 40 years.

All of which leads directly to the three following money questions. Why do Australian governments still draw their advice about sea-level change from the

IPCC, a discredited international political agency that is now known to flout conventional scientific and peer-review procedures in favour of promulgating environmental activism?

Why have governments adopted the irrational policy of basing Australian sea-level planning on theoretical computer-generated projections of global sea-level change?

Last, why do Australian authorities ignore the solid base of empirical measurements, and the more than 100 years of peer-reviewed local and international research, that contradicts completely the alarmist views of the IPCC; and that also provides the accurate, site-specific records of local sea-level change that are the necessary basis for achieving sensible coastal policies in Australia?

The good folk who live around Lake Macquarie, and doubtless tens of thousands of other coastal residents upon whom new planning regulations are now impinging, deserve an explanation; and it needs to be a good one.

Bob Carter is an adjunct research fellow at James Cook University and an emeritus fellow of the IPA.

The IPCC predictions have been adopted uncritically

