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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Science still up in the air**

Graham Lloyd, describing a speculative new climate study by computer modellers at the University of NSW, refers to a recent "pause" in global warming.

SCIENCE provides no evidence yet for any pause in global temperature rise, and nor of a hiatus (an equally unsatisfactory term) (”Warming pause due to ‘winds’ “, 10/2). Instead, the facts show that global warming stopped towards the end of the 20th century, since when a 17-year long period of global temperature stasis has elapsed. While it is true that global warming could resume, it is also true that the stasis may continue or be terminated by a temperature cooling.

Only astrologers claim foreknowledge an uncertain future; real scientists, rightly, choose to be more cautious.

**Professor Bob Carter, Townsville, Qld**

[Blue colour indicates text that was omitted by the Letters Editor]

EVAPORATION is a factor in air temperature.

As wind speeds across the Pacific increase, evaporation will also increase. This will transfer more latent energy from the Pacific to the atmosphere and as the water vapour condenses, more latent energy will be released and warm the atmosphere.

Satellite temperature data on sea surface temperatures shows that the Pacific Ocean has been cooling since around 2000. This is just what climate scientists would expect if wind speeds have been increasing. However, the heat has to go somewhere, and it goes up into the atmosphere.

This is not completely inconsistent with the assertion by Matthew England and his team that more warm surface waters have been forced further down in the western Pacific.

**Lawrence Cummings, Gymea Bay, NSW**

VARIATION of Pacific trade wind speeds may well be linked to changing global temperature. Why then did the wind strength vary? The given explanation of “natural variations” is neither scientific nor convincing.

If, as claimed, natural variation has dominated the warming effect of increasing atmospheric CO2 concentration over recent decades, then surely natural variation has also been important in determining the 20th century temperature rise. The science of climate change and the role of carbon dioxide are far from settled.

**William Kininmonth, Kew, Vic**