

The real threat of climate change

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For over two decades a small coterie of a few dozen climate researchers and UN bureaucrats have led the world by the nose with threats of an imminent climate Armageddon.

Despite claims of indisputable scientific certainty and an overwhelming consensus of experts, all of their predictions about soaring temperatures, rising sea levels, ecological collapses, mass extinctions and increasing storms, floods and droughts have failed to show any evidence of becoming real. Despite billions of dollars in research the only actual evidence of climate change remains an uncertain, barely detectable and very irregular trend in the average near surface air temperature over land of about 0.7°C over the past century.

However, the global temperature record from weather stations is highly variable, noisy and subject to sundry errors and local influences. Even if real, 0.7°C is similar to what happens naturally on many mornings while one is eating breakfast or is experienced in changing elevation by less than a hundred meters. In other words, it is barely noticeable, well within previous natural limits of variability and nothing about which to be alarmed. The only reasonably certain effect attributable to increasing atmospheric CO₂ has been a significant increase in plant productivity and a greening of arid regions.

One might think that anyone genuinely concerned about possible threats from climate change would be pleased at any evidence the danger has been overestimated and that in fact more benefit than harm has actually resulted. To the contrary, the reaction of climate alarmists has been just the opposite. All evidence indicating the threat might be less than feared has been angrily rejected. It seems their concern is only feigned and their real commitment is to the threat itself. Rather than toning down their claims, their response to failed prophecies has only been to ratchet them up to even higher levels.

There is simply too much ego, money, careers, reputations and political commitment now depending upon dangerous anthropogenic climate change for its advocates to even consider that the threat might actually not be so dire.

Although much of the scientific evidence for and against catastrophic climate change is highly technical and largely incomprehensible to all but a few specialists, two critical matters are easily understood by anyone save those already deeply committed to a faith based belief in dangerous climate change. One is that the alarmist predictions are simply not happening in any discernable degree. The other is that the Climategate release of private emails between leading alarmist researchers clearly reveal that the science is not nearly so certain as claimed

and that there has been an ongoing collusion to withhold evidence, suppress dissenting opinion and manipulate results to suit the alarmist agenda.

Aided and abetted by naive and compliant news reportage uncritically regurgitating alarmist propaganda, their message has dominated mainstream news media largely devoid of any debate, doubts or due diligence. On the few occasions when alarmist claims have been allowed to be publically challenged the hard questions that can't be answered have been brushed over by appeal to the precautionary principle as if somehow anything done for that reason is automatically exempt from any cost or risk.

In the absence of any sound evidence for anthropogenic climate change, the focus for alarm is always on dire predictions for the future. Even if nothing bad has happened yet, it is surely going to very soon and we must do something about it immediately before it is too late. Like the proverbial 400 pound gorilla in the room, the costs and results of ill-conceived ineffectual climate control measures, already incurred and growing rapidly, are entirely ignored. These are not small and are already making an increasingly important contributor to the chronic economic malaise now afflicting most developed economies.

For over a decade rising concerns about emissions from fossil fuels and regulatory uncertainty have stifled investment in new electrical power infrastructure. In more and more places peak demands are beginning to exceed maximum capacity resulting in increasing brownouts and blackouts. Massive new investment imposing steep price increases is now going to be required in a time of economic recession.

At the same time over recent years, large investment has gone into far more expensive and unreliable wind and solar power generation for relatively trivial amounts of generating capacity. This has resulted in significant increases in the cost of electricity for no detectable reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. In addition, the environmental cost includes the lives of tens of millions of birds and bats every year not to mention the hundreds of local residents also being driven batty by the incessant noise pollution from wind turbines.

Speaking of batty ideas, one also shouldn't forget the \$2.5 billion spent on retro-fitting pink batts in Australian attics with the half-baked idea that this was going to cut CO₂ emissions by reducing the power needed for air conditioning and heating. Although no reduction in emissions has been evidenced, the programme was not a total failure. Over a hundred house fires resulted, so some benefit to urban renewal and stimulation of the building industry was achieved. In addition, the Australian population was reduced to the extent of at least four deaths of installers of batts who were electrocuted. Stupid and tragic as that may be, presumably it would have not displeased some of the more misanthropic Greens who preach that the current relatively small population of Australia is already far too large for the fragile ecology to sustain.

Additional billions have gone into subsidies for rooftop solar panels, again with no discernable benefit. These costs too must ultimately be paid for and, either through taxes or increases in our electricity bill, we are all paying them.

Many more billions have gone into subsidised use of bio-fuels most of which require almost as much fossil fuel to produce as they end up replacing. If this was their only detriment their use would just be stupid. Unfortunately, they also take millions of acres of good agricultural land away from food production and that is beyond stupid. It is criminal.

The production of biofuels has resulted in steep price increases for both cereal grains and edible oils. As several Kilos of grain go into animal feed for every kilo of most meats, their costs have risen sharply as well. The huge expansion of palm oil and soy bean production for biodiesel has also entailed the destruction of millions of acres of rainforest not to mention the emission of gigatonnes of CO₂ they had stored. As with solar and wind energy, the net result of mandating and subsidising the use of biofuels has yielded no detectable reduction in atmospheric CO₂ but only massive costs and environmental impacts.

But wait, there's even more. Further billions have been diverted from the productive economy into carbon credits and taxes with most of it vanishing into blatant scams and yet again no detectable reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Here in Australia much of our best grazing land is becoming overtaken by near useless low biodiversity eucalypt scrub because of tree clearing prohibitions imposed to supposedly combat climate change. Further billions of dollars in valuable coastal land has been rendered useless and unsaleable through prohibitions on development based on nonsense predictions about rising sea levels. Although these prophecies come from third rate academics with no real expertise in the matter and have been strongly disputed by genuine experts in sea level studies; nevertheless, ignorant and spineless politicians have kowtowed to environmental correctness and imposed developmental restrictions based on them.

Hundreds of billions of dollars which could have gone into productive investment or real needs of our societies have been utterly wasted for no demonstrable benefit. If all this were now starting to be recognised as a mistake and being rectified it would be bad enough; but, it hasn't and more is being implemented with still more being demanded.

In addition to the financial cost and environmental impacts of ill-conceived climate change measures there has been a major corruption and loss of public credibility in science itself. Coming at a time of increasing dependence on science for critical policy decisions this has increased the risk of failing to discriminate between phony authority based claims and genuine evidence based science.

The wealth and prosperity in developed nations we now assume to be a normal, natural and permanent condition is in fact a quite recent development. It will maintain only so long as our own productivity can sustain it. Throughout history nations and civilisations forever rise and fall. Prosperity seems to bring the seeds of its own destruction. With it government expands and bureaucracy proliferates. A growing population of drones and pseudo-workers occupy positions but produce nothing while a diminishing productive sector is taxed and regulated into penury.

The prosperity we enjoy is not a given. The productive sector which provides it is under siege and struggling. In Australia manufacturing at only 11% of GDP is at the bottom of the scale for developed nations. Farming and grazing are besieged by environmental restrictions and demands, ever increasing costs, a domestic market dominated by a retailer duopoly and overseas sales suffering from an Australian dollar near its all-time high.

Surrounded by ocean and the largest least exploited fishing grounds *per capita* in the world our fishing industry is in terminal decline; but, not from overfishing. It is entirely from massive over regulation and mismanagement. As a result our fishing industry only produces a

total catch one-half that of New Zealand and one-third that of Papua New Guinea with imports supplying 70% of domestic seafood consumption.

In an economy increasingly dependent on mining and selling off non-renewable mineral resources, new carbon and mining taxes are set to rip much of the profit from this last significant remaining area of economic profitability. Since pension funds are major shareholders in these companies, the new imposts might more accurately be termed pensioner taxes. As for the companies themselves, government imposed demands have raised the bar for entry in mining to a level only the big cash rich multinationals can reach and they will simply direct their future investment elsewhere if profits here become un-attractive.

Meanwhile, our schools and universities are experiencing declining enrolments for trade skills, the core sciences and engineering but burgeoning demand for degrees in social studies, law, environmental studies and sundry other such non-productive activities which exist only as creations of government. It appears that many people are quite willing to sell their soul for a cushy job which appears important but doesn't require much actual effort or ability. Most attractive of all are the jobs with government itself wherein there are generous wages and benefits, ironclad job security and no bottom line accountability. The result is a growing portion of the population educated to fill non-productive positions for which there are already a surplus of applicants.

At the same time there is a critical shortage of workers with the skills to do any genuine productive work. Plumbers, carpenters, electricians, mechanics, machinists, equipment operators and the like can now command \$100,000 a year or more in mining and construction where shortages of skilled labour are a worsening problem.

The end result of this social divide between producers and non-producers is a two speed economy comprised of a minority productive sector largely residing in rural areas and regional towns with a majority non-productive sector concentrated in the capital cities. The urban non-producers comprise an electoral majority and always vote for more benefits for themselves which ultimately have to come from the productive sector. In addition to a high degree of isolation from and ignorance of productive activity, the non-producers are heavily imbued with politically correct views inculcated with their education and by the media. Rather than any gratitude or even perhaps a little guilt over their parasitic relation to the producers, they prefer to assume an attitude of superior knowledge and ethics. This is especially apparent in matters relating to the environment, social justice and the economics of production. Here the display of righteous certainty and abysmal ignorance about matters of which they have *nil* experience is truly impressive.

How much ill-founded concerns over climate change have already cost is difficult to estimate; but, in Australia alone a full accounting of direct expenses and benefits forgone would have to already be at least somewhere in the order of \$100 billion over the past decade. Worse yet, the bills for ongoing costs and lost benefits have only begun to come in with new charges being added at an accelerating rate. All the while, government deficits worsen and the global economic situation teeters ever closer to collapse.

Although the climate alarm has suffered a major loss of credibility with the electorate, the true believers are still desperately pushing it and it retains at least *pro forma* political and media support from those too far out on the limb to retreat gracefully. Regardless of all this, the political momentum of climate change is fading and the bedrock reality is that we are not

going to power a modern economy with sunbeams and summer breezes. Neither is a green economy going to enable the productivity necessary to avoid severe economic decline. The very term “green economy” is an oxymoron for any economy above the level of hunter-gathering. The so-called “green” energy solutions are not only unaffordable; but, with a full accounting of the impacts, energy and resources involved in building, maintaining and operating them, they aren’t even “green”. At the bottom line any net reduction in emissions from renewables, other than hydro, is lost in the rounding.

It has been reported that about an hour after hitting the reef and with his ship listing badly the captain of the *Costa Concordia* ordered a dinner from the galley. Why should anyone be surprised? The entire Australian parliament only recently ordered themselves a unanimous increase in their already generous salaries and pensions at a time when their ship of state is sinking into chronic deficit.

The good ship HMAS Australia, and indeed the whole OECD flotilla, is on a collision course with the Great Financial Grief. Although turbulent waters and financial rocks are clearly visible straight ahead, the ship’s officers seem too busy posing, too drunk with power and too busy scrabbling to maintain it to notice where we are headed. Or is that too harsh? Maybe they are just too stupid to recognise this so it really isn’t their fault but rather our own for electing them.

With a declining productive sector increasingly burdened by government demands, an ever growing population of non-producers and deficit spending reaching a level where even the interest on past debt must be paid by further borrowing, a crash appears unavoidable. It seems that as a nation we will finally realise the party is over only when the music stops and the lights go out. Perhaps then we can at last start to sober up, jettison the whole incompetent government crew and start to patch up the damage, refloat ourselves and get serious about setting a more sensible course.