

Repeat after me: carbon dioxide is good for us



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Ian Plimer, *The Australian*, 12:00AM August 7, 2018

Climate policy is underpinned by two fallacies. The first is that human emissions of carbon dioxide drive global warming. The second is that future climate can be predicted from computer models.

It has yet to be shown that human emissions of carbon dioxide drive climate change. More than 100 climate models over the past 30 years did not predict what actually happened because it was assumed carbon dioxide had the pivotal role in driving climate change and that the effects of clouds, back-radiation and the sun were trivial.

Climate projections also assume that planet Earth is not dynamic and that a temporary terrestrial vertebrate on an evolving planet can change major planetary and extraterrestrial systems.

Unless the past is understood, climate projections can be only highly speculative. Even in our own lifetimes, there is no relationship between temperature and carbon dioxide emissions by humans, yet there is a very close relationship between solar activity and temperature.

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Carbon dioxide is a trace gas in the atmosphere. We are expected to believe that emission of traces of a trace gas into the atmosphere is a major planetary driving force. If the atmosphere comprised 85,000 molecules, the total carbon dioxide emissions added annually would be 33 molecules, of which only one molecule would be from human emissions and the other 32 from natural emissions. Do we really believe that one bellowing fan in a crowd of 85,000 at the MCG can completely change the course of a game?

For the past 4567 million years, the sun and the Earth's orbit have driven climate change cycles. In the past, the atmospheric carbon dioxide content has been orders of magnitude higher than now, yet there were ice ages.

We currently live in an interglacial during an ice age with alternating cycles of glaciations and interglacials. The current interglacial reached a peak about 5000 years ago. Since then, the planet has been cooling on a millennial scale and no amount of hot air, agreements, taxes, environmental wailing or legislation can change the fact that the Earth's orbit is slowly taking us farther from the sun.

Just 1.25 per cent of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere-ocean system has been released by humans in the past 250 years. The atmospheric residency time of carbon dioxide is five years and it is quickly sequestered into plants, marine life, oceans and sediments. If human emissions of carbon dioxide drive global warming, why have there been slight warmings and coolings since the Industrial Revolution? Why is it that human emissions of carbon dioxide drive global warming yet natural emissions do not?

Carbon dioxide is plant food. Horticulturalists pump warm carbon dioxide into glasshouses to stimulate growth. Over the past 30 years, planet Earth has greened due to a slight increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Without carbon dioxide, there would be no complex life on earth. It is neither pollution nor a poison, and in the past the atmospheric carbon dioxide content has varied enormously. When the atmospheric carbon dioxide content was low, plants struggled. When it was high, there was an expansion and increasing diversity of vegetation.

In addition, when it was warm, life expanded, whereas when it was cold, life contracted. Over historical times, when it was cold there was human depopulation. When it was warm, economies thrived.

Biological, geological and planetary systems are extremely robust. Our evolving dynamic planet has survived sea level changes of hundreds of metres, super volcanoes filling the atmosphere with dust, asteroid impacts, mass extinctions, ice ages and global warming. For most of time, Earth has been a warm, wet volcanic planet with no polar ice.

Australia has uranium, coal and gas for generations. Fracking for tight gas and oil could further extend energy resources. We are the envy of the world. Australia once had cheap, reliable electricity and the states competed to provide cheap, long-term, reliable energy to attract industry.

Now the states rely on the weather and compete to reach the bottom. South Australia is winning: it has the most unreliable grid in the world outside Africa and the most expensive electricity. When South Australians buy electricity at \$14,200/MWh, they are paying the equivalent of \$400 a litre for petrol.

As soon as the word emissions entered the language and became part of a religious ideology, electricity prices skyrocketed, electricity supply became more unreliable, subsidies for wind and solar energy went through the roof and employers and consumers had massive cost increases. Never mind that the emissions of carbon dioxide to make and maintain a wind or solar industrial complex are far greater than they will ever save.

The Paris accord is non-binding. This is recognised by the major carbon dioxide emitters such as China, India and the US, which don't comply. No EU state has met its target. Why should Australia be the only country out of step and aim for an impossible, bankrupting reduction of 26 per cent or more of our 2005 carbon dioxide emissions?

Pragmatism and principled inaction is the correct policy to address the non-problem of human-induced climate change promoted by the Paris accord. But do our politicians have the courage to thoughtfully do nothing?

We are in an electricity crisis because we are trying to decrease human emissions of carbon dioxide and have tied climate policy and electricity generation costs to emissions. A reality check is needed. Even if human-induced global warming could be shown, a reduction in Australian emissions,

comprising 1.3 per cent of global annual emissions, is dwarfed by annual increases of 2 per cent globally and 4 per cent by China.

Australia's symbolic suicidal climate policy just makes everybody poorer.

We face further turnover of prime ministers and governments until the costs and reliability of electricity are addressed and until the fundamentalist religious mantra that emissions drive global warming is rejected.

Politicians need to realise that the electorate wants cheap electricity and a reduction of emissions concurrent with subsidies for unreliable weather-dependent electricity can neither reduce costs nor increase reliability.

Meanwhile, employment-generating businesses will close, household costs will become impossibly high, international competitiveness will fall and governments will change.

Emissions must be banned. From the language. Not from coal-fired power stations that have provided cheap, reliable electricity for generations. It is only then that we will have stable government and cheap reliable electricity again.

Emeritus professor Ian Plimer's latest book, *Climate Delusion and the Great Electricity Rip-Off*, is published by Connor Court.