

Accepting climate report would mean self-harm

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There is no doubt that coal exports remain the bedrock fuelling Australia's long-term prosperity. Jettisoning this mother lode on which we depend for our enviable lifestyle, in order to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate global warming prescribed by the recent IPCC report, is tantamount to shooting ourselves in the foot.

Australian governments understandably remain obstinate in advocating for coal. A world that aspires to renewable energy sources threatens the acute loss of earnings from one of Australia's largest earners.

Weaning off the world's dependence on our coal exports risks voters' employment and wages, a sure recipe for governments being ejected at the polls. Australians professing to care about the environment should be tested on the battlefield of convictions. If de-fossilisation jeopardises our way of life, are we still willing to make the sacrifice?

Joseph Ting, Carina Qld

The IPCC report claims that limiting global warming to 1.5C would reduce various alleged adverse effects from higher temperatures caused by humans.

But it overstates the increase in temperatures since its starting point around 1850 and fails to recognise that most of the increase has not been caused by human activity. It also fails to recognise the enormous benefits that have developed from the increase in carbon emissions that has occurred since that period started.

True, there has been a slight increase in sea levels but the IPCC wrongly claims more extreme weather. Any adverse effects from climate changes are similar to what occurred prior to 1850, and we are now much better equipped to handle them.

Des Moore, South Yarra, Vic

I am dismayed at the failures in elementary science reporting in the IPCC's latest effort. It wrongly claims the rate of rise in global temperatures since 1970 are human-driven and far exceed changes of the past 7000 years. If the key graph — as reproduced in *The Australian* (9/10) — had included available historic data from 1850, and if observed and model data had been plotted with comparable smoothing instead of artistic fuzz, it would have been obvious that the largely non-anthropogenic temperature increase in 1910-50 is comparable with the alleged anthropogenic increase in 1975-2000. Second, two decreasing trends in 1880-1910 and 1950-75 would be obvious and demand comment. Third, the slowdown (or pause) post-2000 that has been subject of much discussion in top journals, would be recognisable.

These features, along with the significance of natural cycles of past centuries and millennia, are subject of many peer-reviewed papers of the past five years, and the consensus from such studies is that the anthropogenic contribution to climate change is a fraction (10-50 per cent) of that claimed by the IPCC. This potentially makes huge changes to the slew of alarming predictions.

As scientists, we should be weighing up these contrasting viewpoints; refusal to acknowledge or reference such discussions would rank as a fail in an undergraduate essay.

Michael Asten, professor of geophysics, Hawthorn, Vic

Now that a wind farm chief urges tighter rules (11/10) following confirmation that wind turbine noise may indeed be harmful, perhaps we can turn to the issue of mental health problems associated with these machines — the delusions they create in the minds of otherwise rational people who think we can power the nation with unpredictable bursts of electricity backed up by batteries.

Unlike the noise, this problem afflicts people everywhere, even if they have never heard a turbine swishing its way on to the subsidy gravy train. But the solution is the same in both cases — remove the cause and the problem goes away.

Doug Hurst, Chapman, ACT

It's frustrating that in all the talk about climate change, one significant factor is never mentioned — world population. It's now 7.2 billion. I guess a comfortable maximum is 5 billion. If one accepts that the aspiration of developing countries to improve their lifestyle is legitimate, then surely developing countries have an obligation to the planet to limit their numbers. By the way, the planet is not in danger from climate change, only its existing inhabitants. The planet will happily survive for about another 4 billion years, with or without us.

Geoff Mathews, Glenelg North, SA