

Time to Put Warmists Under Oath

By Walter Starck, Quadrant Online, 3 April 2015

(This article was originally published on 26 October 2014)

They have built careers, lined pockets and plundered the public purse on the strength of prophecies that have failed conspicuously to match real world trends. Worse, they have suborned and debased science. It's time those who insist consensus trumps evidence were made to answer for their damage

Alarmists have often ridiculed suggestions of scientific misconduct in climate science as wild conspiracy theories while simultaneously accusing their critics of being in the pay of fossil fuel interests. In the absence of evidence for their own defence they have relied heavily upon claims of support by an overwhelming consensus of climate “experts”, with a fabled majority of 97% frequently cited. This is a curious defence for a scientific hypothesis, as it is the antithesis of science’s very essence, which is the primacy of empirical evidence over any claim to authority. Simply put, any appeal to authority in a scientific debate amounts to a tacit admission of weak evidence.

The sole option for right-thinking people

Even apart from matters of science, accusations of conspiracy and the claim of consensus seem a poor tactic, as the ethical associations of the latter are, if anything, even poorer than the former. Conspiracists at least retain some capacity to recognise what they are doing is improper and try to hide what they are up to. Then, too, conspiracies are generally optional — individuals may join or abstain at their own discretion. By contrast, a claim of expert consensus presents itself as the sole option for right-thinking people to embrace. Any dissent is thus implied to be not just mistaken but willfully immoral. The Holocaust, genocide in Rwanda, slavery and the socially entrenched abuse of women in some societies arise from consensus, not conspiracy. Indeed, it is no stretch to say that all mass atrocities stem from the same root. The abandonment of standards and ethics, even of fundamental humanity, in pursuit of some imagined higher purpose is not achieved by a conspiracy. It is arrived at by declaring a consensus.

Evidence is the final arbiter

The norm in science is disagreement and debate, with evidence being the final arbiter. A claim of consensus is only made when supporting evidence is weak. Its primary function is to stifle opposing argument by implying that only fools and knaves could possibly disagree. The claim of a scientific consensus is an oxymoron. A consensus seeks to suppress evidence-based open debate, which should be the very foundation of science. It is a claim to authority which seeks

to dismiss conflicting evidence and denigrate all questioning. The matter is treated as closed to discussion, as in that familiar warmist mantra, “the science is settled.”

Before the threat of catastrophic global warming due to CO₂ from fossil fuels came to public attention, climatology was a small, interdisciplinary niche devoted mainly to the study of long-term changes, especially those associated with the waxing and waning of the glacial periods. Climatology was a descriptive term for an area of study, rather than an advanced science in itself. Researchers came from diverse scientific backgrounds. It was the subject of study, not the researchers, that was specialised. No one described themselves as “climate experts” until the money began to flow. The very idea of being an “expert” in a subject about which little was known would have seemed nonsense.

Then came global warming

The idea struck a chord with many in the news media, the research community and among bureaucrats, resonating especially with politicians eager to demonstrate their moral worth and activists who spied a golden opportunity. In the world of business, some saw the scare as useful to their own purposes and profits. For researchers it soon yielded a mother lode of funding, recognition and personal importance. Any third-rate academic could jump on the bandwagon by suggesting almost any fluctuation in nature was evidence of climate change. A press release dramatising the importance of the claim was guaranteed to assure widespread uncritical publicity, promotion to the status of perceived “expert” and, best of all, a passkey to that increasingly generous research funding.

As the global warming bandwagon took form and academic freeloaders climbed aboard, the dramatic claims of imminent threats swelled to a resounding chorus. For a sense of the galloping absurdity, [follow this link and be appalled](#). When the more honest and competent scientists began to question the most egregious claims they were smeared as “deniers”, that slur clearly intended to invoke the odium of those who dispute that the Holocaust ever happened. If sceptics happened to be researchers, they were dismissed as amateurs by puffed-up, self-proclaimed experts presenting themselves as “climatologists”. Any academic daring to question even the most far-fetched threats attributed to climate change risked near-certain professional ostracism. The blacklisting of their requests for research funding, together with their papers’ rejection by journals through the anonymous defamations of a corrupted peer-review process, were just two of the costs for raising doubts about warmist orthodoxy. Even jobs and financial security were at risk, as institutions were under threat of significant loss of funding if seen to be harbouring climate sceptics. Soon, only retired scientists or the bravest and most secure of the actively employed dared question even the most dubious of climate claims.

Manning the ramparts against the corruption of science

Among the few and bravest manning the ramparts against the corruption of science has been Dr. Jennifer Marohasy. With an academic background in entomology and agriculture, she has been outspoken in defending farmers against ill-founded accusations of environmental harm to the Great Barrier Reef and the Murray-Darling River system. Recently, she has uncovered significant unexplained manipulations of Australia's historical temperature record by the Bureau of Meteorology. These manipulations have generally served to significantly increase the claimed warming over the past century. In some instances, adjustments even changed the cooling trends of original readings into strong warming.

In most cases these adjustments seem to have been introduced as unexplained "step changes" at various points in the record. Initially, Dr. Marohasy made no accusations, simply seeking an explanation. The response from BoM and their alarmist allies has been revealing.

BoM engaged in bluster, techno-waffle and hypothetical arguments

If there were sound scientific reasons for the adjustments the obvious response would have been a straightforward explanation of what had been done and why. Instead, the BoM engaged in bluster, techno-waffle and hypothetical arguments as to why adjustment might be appropriate. But never, not once, did it provide anything resembling a succinct explanation of what its record-tickers had done. As usual, the BoM's alarmist defenders shunned candour in order to focus on the personal denigration of Dr. Marohasy. By their reckoning, not being a card-carrying "climate scientist" makes one an unqualified "amateur" and, therefore, unfit to receive a civil response.

To his credit, *The Australian's* environmental editor, Graham Lloyd, has brought this issue to national attention in a series of articles. Greg Hunt, the minister responsible for the BoM, has yet to break his silence on this matter. To be fair, as a non-scientist he must surely be subject to considerable cognitive dissonance between observed reality and simple logic on the one hand and the advice he receives from his BoM "experts". For more detail on the Marohasy affair [go here](#) and [here](#).

The climate-change gravy train

The climate-change gravy train is powered by a supercharged engine requiring large quantities of hot air to maintain a head of steam. Ongoing warming of the global climate is fundamental to the whole elaborate structure of belief underscoring the alleged dire threat of climate change. Unfortunately for the alarmists, there has been no statistically discernible increase in the average global temperature for nearly two decades. Despite their high level of certainty, expert consensus, computer models and increasingly desperate hopes, the climate has failed to warm as they so confidently predicted. Even more unthinkable, there is now the developing indication of a possible cooling trend. When not denying the absence of warming and adjusting the temperature record to demonstrate on paper an increasing trend not evident in nature, the

alarmists have also devoted considerable effort to trying to explain away what they begrudgingly refer to as “a temporary pause”. This imaginative effort has produced an ever-growing list of rationalisations and excuses. One would suffice were their case credible.

Serious doubts and uncertainties about both the global temperature record and various national ones have been recognised for some time. In all instances these have been swept under the rug by sham in-house investigations which have cursorily dismissed the important questions or, more tellingly, failed to address them at all. The common theme is the avoidance of any and all critical examination or testimony.

The scientific method

Before any purported scientific evidence can be used as a basis for legislation or government policy it should be subjected to adequately resourced critical examination aimed at evaluating its scientific credibility. Part of this process has to be the assessing of uncertainty and conflicting evidence, as the scientific method demands. This might most effectively be conducted in a quasi-legal setting where the hard questions must be answered under oath, testimony cross-examined, opposing expertise presented and evidence challenged.

If poor, misleading or otherwise improper scientific conduct is found, the penalty of disqualification from any further public-sector research funding and/or employment would work wonders in restoring a robust scientific ethos. Maurice Newman speaks eloquently of what needs to happen and **his words are worth remembering**.

Advances now threatened

The objective, analytical, evidence-based approach that we know as the scientific method has proven the most effective tool we have for understanding the world around us. In only a few centuries it has yielded advances in the quality of life unimaginable to previous generations. The ongoing pace of those advances is now threatened by the corruption of half-baked politico-religious notions and naked self-interest parading as a higher purpose.

Dishonest science is more than a spat between academics. It is a matter of critical national importance. It is time for the public to start demanding action and political leaders to see that it happens. A formal mechanism for the critical evaluation of science, with sanctions for malpractice, is long overdue and sorely needed.

Walter Starck is one of Australia's most experienced marine biologists, with a particular interest in coral-reef and marine-fishery ecosystems