

## **Oxfam's real agenda - destroy Australian coal industry**

By Henry Thomas, Quadrant Online, 14 September 2015

The organisation's fundraising literature and ad campaigns focus on helping the starving and wretched. How odd that its deep-green activism would make that poverty even worse by denying reliable power, development and jobs, all in the name of a better world

Are you thinking of an annual donation to Oxfam Australia to help those dirt-poor people in the Third World? Actually, you would be helping to finance Oxfam's dark-green push to destroy the Australian coal and petroleum industry. Oxfam's **latest climate document** gloats that destroying these industries would represent a \$100 billion per annum hit to the federal government's export expectations.

"The shift to a 2degC [warming] pathway would see annual export revenue from coal, gas and iron ore fall to AUD100b less than the Australian government's current projections," **enthuses Oxfam's climate guru, Dr Simon Bradshaw**, who wants a zero-emissions Australia well before 2050. So who is Bradshaw? **He's a "climate leader"** in Al Gore's official team of global warming propagandists, also a former climate campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation and a PhD (in philosophy) from Melbourne University, an institution **which seems to specialise in promoting green zealotry** and anti-growth ideologies (e.g. it now runs 1300 "sustainability" researchers **at a cost of \$218m p.a.**).

Bradshaw did his thesis on **contrasts between Tibetan ecology and "over-consumption** in the modern industrial world". As his thesis puts it:

*On the one hand, our continued desire for growth at a time of ever more dire warnings of ecological collapse can look like collective insanity. However, a brief reflection on the complex and entrapping nature of modern economic systems soon serves to illustrate some of the difficulties in breaking free from the shackles of the past and moving beyond the growth economy ....*

*The result, to use a popular analogy, becomes something akin to thinking we are flying when in fact our aeroplane is plummeting from the skies, the ground rushing up ever more rapidly towards us. Strangely, only the more inquisitive or concerned are aware of what's coming. The majority remain oblivious or choose to ignore the inevitable impending crash...*

*Meanwhile, within the world's most 'advanced' and economically prosperous industrial nations, apparent rises in incidence of psychoses (including particularly depression) coupled with trends in obesity, marital break-up, heart disease, cancer, drug use, prisoner numbers and a variety of other societal ills suggest that 'happiness' is on the decline and give cause to re-evaluate the social success of capitalism...."*

The Bradshaw paper for Oxfam, "**Powering Up Against Poverty**" (July 2015), is yet another spruik for December's Paris climate talks. Bradshaw has high hopes that the attendees will sign

a binding deal to (supposedly) keep warming to only 2C, thereby “giving legal force to the call to leave 80% of fossil fuels in the ground...that will be a legal imperative and there will be no way to get around it.”[1]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDzp-BHtD0M>

### **Climate model lies**

Oxfam, a taxpayer-subsidised charity, **has made its goal to keep more than 90% of Australia’s coal in the ground**. That is, we are to waste 100 years’ worth of potential black coal output and 500 years’ of brown coal output. Bradshaw seems unaware that the so-called “carbon budget” for 2C warming (**Oxfam prefers 1.5degC**) is based on climate models that are running between two and four times hotter than actual climate.[2] Nor has he noticed what is now nearly **a 19-year halt (so far) to global warming**.

Bradshaw loves hyperbole. “Our first responsibility is to phase coal out of our own energy mix...We must have a concrete plan for the managed and equitable transition away from coal towards renewables, including removing billions of dollars in subsidies (note 155) to the coal industry and ramping up support for the renewables sector.”

### **Facts Go Begging in Oxfam’s fundraising**

His footnote 155 for those imaginary billions in coal subsidies is an Australian Conservation Foundation paper. Reality check: **the Productivity Commission puts effective assistance rates** to the mining industry in 2013-14 at 0.1% (i.e. damn-all), compared with, say, the 8.4% for cars and parts.

A report **for the Minerals Council of Australia** elaborates: “In aggregate, subsidies for electricity generation from renewable sources amounted to almost \$2.8 billion in 2013-14, more than 19 times the subsidies paid to generation from fossil fuels (\$145 million).” Of the renewables’ total, solar photo-voltaic (PV ) power was gifted with more than \$2 billion in subsidies, and wind \$388m.

The report’s zinger is that subsidies for gas-fired electricity were less than 1 cent per megawatt hour (MWh), and for coal-fired electricity less than \$1 per MWh. Meanwhile, wind was subsidised to the tune of \$42 per MWh, while solar bagged a gigantic \$412 per MWh. In Europe, **Germany alone has subsidized its renewables by 90 billion Euros** (\$A1.35 trillion) over the past six years.

Bradshaw trustingly quotes physics Nobel winner and ardent warmist **Brian Schmidt, who opines that our coal won’t be needed**, insisting we have more advantages in renewable energy than fossil energy. Why? “We have arguably the best renewable energy sources in the world, in the form of large expanses of land that can feed wind, solar, geothermal and nuclear energy

if we felt that was the right thing to do,” says Schmidt. Talented as he is in astronomy, the Nobel winner’s economics nous is still at the kindergarten stage.

### **Only in Bradshaw’s dreams**

It is only in Bradshaw’s dreams that solar and wind are racing towards being competitive with fossil-fuel power. Savor the bleating from green-energy providers whenever governments cut back on taxpayer- or consumer-financed subsidies; wind and solar plans collapse like pricked balloons. As **one UK green-energy spokesman put it last month**, after the UK slashed subsidies, “We can expect to see a wholesale collapse in solar take-up by homeowners and businesses.”

In any event, even with eight- and nine-figure subsidies, **solar and wind are negligible as sources of electricity generation**. In the EU last year, where Germany, Italy and Spain have invested billions in panels, solar comprises only 3% of electricity generation. Globally, it’s under 1% and virtually invisible on any bar chart. And as a share of total energy consumption, it’s a mere 0.3%.

Wind is doing better, at 3% of global electricity sourcing, or the equivalent of total combined German and Dutch power generation. But **the 2014 BP Energy Report comments** (emphasis added):

*Government support remains the **single most important factor** behind the fast growth of wind generation. ..The growing share of wind power in the electricity mix also presents **unique operational challenges** to grid operators. Because of the unreliability of wind power (reflected in a low utilization factor of around 25%), adding more wind generation capacity to the grid increases the need to boost the percentage of overall plant capacity set aside to provide ancillary services.*

### **Unsubsidized solar and wind power remain a mirage**

Thus, unsubsidized solar and wind power remain a mirage, however much their advocates claim that break-even is just over the horizon, and however grandiose (or impossible) national renewables targets may be.

Bradshaw’s argument seeks to lay a smokescreen against the self-evident argument that coal-fired electricity raises living standards in poor nations. **Bjorn Lomborg**, to cite but one source, estimates that coal has brought 680 million Chinese people out of energy poverty over the last 30 years. One part of Bradshaw’s counter-claim is, of course, that emissions from coal-fired electricity growth, if unchecked, will turn the world into a global-warming hell in 50 to 100 years. (As if the climate models are not already running, as mentioned earlier, two to four times too hot. As if a peasant with a child dying of pneumonia or malaria cares a hoot about possible climate problems in 2050-99.)

His other argument is that mains-electricity grids won't help the Third World's rural poor, who he supposes will be better off with stand-alone renewables such as solar panels. In niche situations, and with subsidies, perhaps.

I checked with a local charity, Pollinate Energy, that supplies 3-watt solar lights for Third World dwellings (I'm using a 10 watt lamp on my computer desk at the moment). The solar lamps cost \$50-100 each. Pollinate also supplies the **Greenway Smart Stove**, since stoves emitting wood and dung-fumes indoors are a huge killer from respiratory diseases. But these "smart" stoves aren't solar – they just burn biomass (eg wood) more efficiently. A Pollinate spokeswoman explained that a solar stove would need a big panel area and batteries, and would be far too expensive for poor villagers. Solar cooking may be "available technology" in Bradshaw's view, but who pays for it?

### **The cost and required subsidies blow out too**

The same cost problem applies with solar refrigeration. As soon as you scale-up solar power for heavy duties — for food storage, say, or to keep medicines refrigerated in a clinic — the cost and required subsidies blow out too. Plus you're still going to need back-up from diesel or the mains grid.

Bradshaw, for all his green credentials, has no answer to the need for vastly increased – and hence fossil-fuel, hydro or nuclear-powered electricity — in the cities of the Third World. The cities must have reliable, cheap electricity to bring light, power, heating and cooling to homes; enable food storage and pumped water and sewerage; enable industry and infrastructure jobs; and run the IT and communications revolutions. The very engines of global economic growth, as in China and India, involves myriad rural under-employed moving into more productive urban work requiring reliable energy. Amanda Hodge in *The Australian*, September 5, **drew an horrific picture of a dense Delhi slum** where people pool their meager funds (\$4 per household per month) to get a diesel generator going for two hours a night, just to get one 20W light going in each household so kids can do their homework. The chance of this slum affording renewable power would be zero. She quotes an Indian energy leader, Arunabha Ghosh: "For India to manage its energy system over the next 10 to 15 years is not a binary choice of coal or no coal. It's got to be about cleaner coal combined with nuclear and hydro power."

Further, Bradshaw tries to argue that even in cities, coal-fired power is bad because of particulates and noxious gases. His non-solution is renewables-derived electricity (at what cost?) rather than straight-forward cleaning-up of the sooty emitters, largely industry and transport rather than power stations. London in 1952 was as smog-laden as a modern Chinese city; London solved that by regulating sooty emissions.

### **It takes special green madness to want to forfeit such wealth**

Bradshaw makes much of Indian solar plans, but the reality is that solar today **provides a mere 1.4% of Indian power generation**. India's system as a whole is barely coping, with blackouts common and a desperate need to expand mains capacity. Australia's high-grade thermal coal is ideal for fuelling this Indian growth of supercritical (ie clean modern) power stations. India increased its coal consumption last year by a whopping 11%, with consumption more than doubling in the past decade. India is targeting 1.5 billion tonnes of coal production by 2020, some 250% more than the 600 million tonnes this year. Despite huge global coal use in the past 20 years, current world proven reserves are still equivalent to 110 years' consumption. Their value is astronomic: **it takes special green madness to want to forfeit such wealth**.

City populations will increase by about 2.5 billion in the next 35 years, including nearly 1 billion in Africa. Over time, as in China now, rising national wealth enables the coal-based mains grids to extend to more remote areas and bring them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Bradshaw falls back on apocalyptic CO2 scares to make his anti-coal case. The past centuries' warming of under 1C is already, he claims, "creating havoc for many of the world's poorest people, who are already feeling the impacts of climate change through decreased crop yields, increased risk of disasters, and loss of land." It's especially hard to see how the past 18 years of no global warming is doing damage.

The reality — and it doesn't suit Oxfam's playbook — is that the past century's fossil-fuel era has taken human well-being (life-span, living standards, water, health, safety from natural disasters) to record heights, with no sign of any slowing and all this simultaneously having reduced inequality among the global population. This has been accompanied by improvements to the biosphere, **with the planet greening** and conversion of wild land to farmland now plateauing.

Crop yields have improved steadily across the world, along with better food distribution. Between 1961 and 2013, cereal yields increased by 85% in the least-developed countries and 185% worldwide, with no sustained sign of the trend decelerating, let alone reversing.[3]

The converse also applies: hitting fossil-fuel use reverses living standards and augments poverty. This was illustrated when subsidies for biofuels diverted land from food-growing and pushed 30 million people into absolute poverty (and 192,000 premature deaths) in 2010 alone.[4]

Strangely, **Oxfam challenges other the warmists' advocacy of diverting food production to biofuel** while buying-in to the rest of the global-warming policy hysteria. It agrees that filling an average size car with biofuel consumes as much maize as the average African consume in an entire year. Less food for people means more prices go up. "Industrial farming of biofuels also results in large amounts of CO2 into atmosphere, accelerating climate change and reversing the positive effect that cleaner fuels have."

Bradshaw ought to wonder that if his warmist co-travellers could get it so wrong on biofuels, what else is cock & bull?

He likes to quote uplifting case studies, such as Bangladesh. If Bangladeshi politicians can be believed, that country will become the world's first 'solar nation' thanks to massive rooftop and other solar rollouts. The reality, **as the country's Power Ministry puts it**: "Unfortunately, renewable energy cannot compete to achieve grid parity at the moment." Only 60% of the population of 155 million has access to any electricity and **the country is in energy crisis**.

*Problems include corruption in administration, high system losses, delays in completion of new plants, low plant efficiencies, erratic power supply, electricity theft, blackouts, and shortages of funds for power plant maintenance. Overall, the country's generation plants have been unable to meet system demand over the past decade.*

Immediate plans are for solar power for another 6 million homes (total, about 10 million), averaging 39 watts each or **enough for a few light globes**. Anything more **will have to wait on reliable mains power**.

Another case study quoted by Bradshaw is Djibouti. This Horn of-Africa basket-case aims for 100% renewable power by 2020, through geothermal, wind and solar power, plus more purchases from the Ethiopian hydro-power grid (already supplying 60% of the country's power). Djibouti has 60% unemployment; 40% of the population is in absolute poverty; and its legal/financial infrastructure is rudimentary. Its energy plans are grandiose, given it currently has nothing but a few solar installations in some villages, and an equally low number of wind pumps. As a poster child for Third World renewable power, Djibouti doesn't really cut it.

### **George Soros make a killing from Obama's anti-coal vendetta**

Bradshaw claims that coal is yesterday's fuel. He is right only to the extent that President Obama's war on coal, and competition from fracked gas, has shredded US coal companies' share prices. Peabody Coal shares are down from about \$US73 four years ago to barely \$US1 today. Billionaire George Soros, one of Obama's oligarchs, **has been buying coal shares**, sniffing to make a killing from Obama's anti-coal vendetta.

But globally, coal is going gang-busters. Coal provides fuel for more than 40% of global power generation.<sup>[5]</sup> Coal-fired power doubled from 1990 to 2012, bringing 800 million people to electricity for the first time. The IEA projects an extra 750GW of coal-fired electricity globally by 2040, about half of that in China.<sup>[6]</sup> To put those numbers in perspective, Australia's total electricity capacity from all sources is 47GW.

Another Bradshaw and Oxfam specialty is the "drowning Pacific islands" meme. They don't know that so-called drowning islands **like Tuvalu are in fact expanding**, and that atoll erosions are a result of over-population and mismanagement, **not rising seas**. Instead, Bradshaw's

Oxfam report features 30 Pacific “climate warriors” dancing about in grass skirts and blockading Newcastle coal freighters with canoes, for the benefit of [350.org zealots making climate-propaganda videos](#).

### **Cyclone Pam was somehow global- warming related??**

He suggests that Cyclone Pam, which devastated Vanuatu in 2015 (Bradshaw erroneously says 2013), was somehow global- warming related.[7] If he’s talking sea-level rises, latest numbers are that [the rate is a mere 1.8mm a year](#), or 18cm per century, way below the 50cm [promulgated by the IPCC](#).

Bradshaw and Oxfam are big on Australia paying its ‘fair share’ into the proposed \$US100 billion per annum fund for Third World countries to convert to renewable energy (and/or to pad dictators’ Swiss bank accounts). As top-tier climate people frankly admit – [see here](#) and [here](#) the funds transfers from first to third world states are one aspect of what the climate game is really about. Oxfam sees no contradiction in impoverishing Australia by destroying its export base, while also demanding that the government amps up our overseas aid.

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