

## **2015, the year of speaking twaddle**

By Professor Judith Sloan, *The Australian*, 29 December 2015

The best thing about peak oil — that highly dubious concept invented by the green-Left to scare the pants off us (have you checked out the price of oil lately?) — is the rapid spread of the use of the word peak.

Once upon a time we used to think about peak as the top of a mountain.

Today, peak is mostly used to describe a veritable excess of anything unpleasant. And I'm calling it here: 2015 was Peak Twaddle. (I just hope I'm right because I don't think I can take any more.)

The only argument I expect to encounter is whether twaddle is the right word. Other possibilities include: drivel, waffle, bollocks, claptrap, blather, mumbo jumbo, tosh, baloney, gobbledygook and codswallop. I would probably accept any of these.

But for the sake of my argument, I will stick with twaddle because it incorporates the twin themes of nonsense and guff.

Of course, from time to time it is not clear what the speaker or author of the sentences actually means but that itself deserves the title twaddle.

### **Contenders for Twaddle of the Year**

An early contender for Twaddle of the Year was uttered by Bill Shorten. When asked what the Labor Party stood for, the Opposition Leader's reply was that "everybody is somebody". It's right up there with "we are us", a contender from an earlier time uttered by none other than prime minister Julia Gillard

But when it comes to earning a twaddle medal, longer is probably better than shorter. So I'm disqualifying Shorten at this early stage: meaningless, tick; brief, cross. (Maybe I should have another competition for puerile, three -word slogans.)

Of course, the insertion of Malcolm Turnbull was always going to make the competition for best twaddle of the year much more intense. The Prime Minister is not known as Lord Waffleworth for nothing.

And the release of the innovation and science statement early this month was the perfect vehicle for a late entry for Twaddle of the Year.

### **It is the nature of the twaddle beast**

I need to apologise for the length of the following quote but, as you can understand, it is the nature of the twaddle beast.

"We want to be a culture, a national culture of innovation, of risk-taking, because as we do that, we grow the whole ecosystem of innovation right across the economy.

“We become more experienced, more innovative, more agile, more prepared to take on risk and become a culture of ideas because it is the ideas boom that will secure our prosperity in the future.

“It is believing in our human capital and remembering that the best assets we have, the most important assets we have in this country are not to be found under the ground, but walking around on top of it is the 24 million Australians, the men and women of Australia, these and their ideas are what secures our future.

“And, this package will incentivise, dynamise, energise that enormous opportunity.”

It’s just a pity that I can’t have violin music playing in the background. (Note to editor: can you organise this for the digital version next year — we may be able to get an innovation grant.)

### **The ideas boom replaces the resources boom**

But don’t you just love it? The ideas boom replaces the resources boom. I’m not sure he learned the verbs incentivise and dynamise at Sydney Grammar, but what the heck. And the whole ecosystem of innovation is a new one on me. I’m just fearful that the taxpayer has been billed for it.

My favourite part of the innovation statement is the bit about government as exemplar, an example of twaddle-speak itself. But let me turn to the master: “Right across the board you will see there are measures to ensure that government is digitally transformed, so that it is nimble, so that you can deal with government as easily as you can with eBay or with one of the big financial institutions.”

And just to give substance to this government as exemplar gig, you will be pleased to know that “Prime Minister Turnbull has committed the Australian government to membership of the Open Government Partnership and public consultation was launched to develop the National Action Plan for open government. The Open Government Partnership is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder international initiative created to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.”

And here’s a further heads-up: “the Prime Minister’s aim is for the first Australian National Action Plan to include ambitious actions that support the OGP grand challenges of improving public services and better managing public resources. If we want this to happen, Australia needs your suggestions and input!”

### **We always need to look global when considering Peak Twaddle**

Of course, we always need to look global (we can’t afford to be inward-looking isolationists, can we?) when considering Peak Twaddle. After all, we live in an increasingly globalised world. (Did I learn that at school?)

In twaddle terms it’s impossible to go past the comments made by UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon at the recently concluded Paris climate conference, or COP21.

Take this set of modest tweets from one of the maestros of the twaddle set.

- “The Paris Agreement is a monumental triumph for people and our planet.”

- “It sets the stage for progress in ending poverty, strengthening peace and ensuring a life of dignity and opportunity for all.”

Gosh, I thought this was the sort of drivel that only Miss World contestants spouted. But, no, a non-binding climate agreement can do all these things.

Of course, Ban’s twaddle didn’t end there: “In the face of an unprecedented challenge, you have demonstrated unprecedented leadership. You have worked collaboratively to achieve something that no one nation could achieve alone. This is a resounding success for multilateralism.”

Evidently, Ban has listened to people — the young, the poor and the vulnerable, including indigenous people, from every corner of the globe. (Let’s just forget about Ban’s carbon footprint, shall we?)

“They seek protection from the perils of a warming planet, and the opportunity to live in a safer, more bountiful world. They have demanded that world leaders act to safeguard their wellbeing and that of generations to come.”

In terms of the agreement, there are “solid results on all key points, with an agreement that demonstrates solidarity and is ambitious, flexible, credible and durable”.

“All countries have agreed to hold global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius. And recognising the risk of grave consequences, you have further agreed to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5 degrees.”

### **My prize goes to Ban for Twaddle of the Year**

So my prize goes to Ban for Twaddle of the Year for his comments, which are deceptive, delusional and hilarious all at the same time — complete twaddle, in fact.