

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology caught cooking the books yet again

Maurice Newman, The Australian, 19 September 2017

Enough is enough. The Bureau of Meteorology yet again stands charged with fabricating temperature records.

This time, thanks to the diligence of scientist Jennifer Marohasy, the bureau has been caught red-handed regulating temperatures to keep them above a predetermined minimum — at least for two NSW automatic weather stations, one located in Goulburn, the other at Thredbo.

The BOM initially admitted it had set an arbitrary limit of minus 10C for the Goulburn station, but then changed the story to the equipment being “not fit for purpose” — because it got too cold — even though the same instruments are used in the Antarctic. The actual temperature measured was a record July low for Goulburn, at minus 10.4C, so why, if the equipment was faulty, didn't the bureau leave a blank instead of rounding up to minus 10C?

Allowing the bureau to defend itself, Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg called for an internal review.

In 77 pages, it acknowledged that, indeed, Goulburn and Thredbo were governed and, minimum limits were set. This was blamed on a filter being installed into these weather stations 15 and 10 years ago respectively. No limits were imposed on maximum temperatures. Yet implicitly, we are asked to believe that the historical temperature record has not been compromised.

Before filters were installed, Goulburn recorded minus 10.9C in August 1994 and, in that cold winter, Thredbo went down to minus 13.6C and nearby Charlotte Pass to minus 23C on June 29, a record low for Australia. Charlotte Pass weather station was decommissioned in March 2015.

Ironically, the bureau's newest location, near White Cliffs in NSW, home to some of the nation's hottest temperatures, last August recorded minus 62.5C, due to a “hardware fault”.

A BOM-friendly technical forum, part of former minister Greg Hunt's plan to buy time and “kill off” a proposed Abbott government probe, has foreshadowed “the need for a major revision of the dataset”.

Predictably, though, it did not address specific claims by Marohasy and others, and seems satisfied the bureau's dataset is well maintained. Really? This may fool ministers, but for a sceptical public, time has run out.

British author and journalist Christopher Booker says: “When future generations look back on the global warming scare of the past 30 years, nothing will shock them more than the extent to which the official temperature records — on which the entire (global warming) panic ultimately rested — were systematically ‘adjusted’ to show the Earth as having warmed much more than the actual data justified.” He says this practice has been observed by experts around the world and “raises an ever larger question mark over the entire official surface temperature record”.

He is joined by John Theon, retired chief of NASA's Climate Processes Research Program and responsible for all weather and climate research, who testified before congress that “some scientists have manipulated the observed data to justify their model results. In doing so, they neither explain what they have modified in the observations, nor explain how they did it.”

Take the article NASA published in 1999 showing 1934 was the US's warmest year. Across the ensuing decade, by cooling the past and warming the present, 1998 jumped five places to become the warmest. Whistleblower John Bates, recently retired principal scientist at US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, described how his agency manipulated data to manufacture a non-existent increase in global temperatures.

Why should Australia be any different? We remember the Climategate emails from despairing programmer Ian Harris: "Getting seriously fed up with the state of the Australian data, so many new stations have been introduced, so many false references".

Science writer and blogger Joanne Nova has raised scandal after scandal concerning the BOM's record-keeping.

She refers to historic data being destroyed, and the influence of adjustments on Australia's warming trend. She reports private auditors advising the bureau of almost a "thousand days where minimum temperatures were higher than the maxes".

Taxpayers outlaying \$1 million a day for reliable temperature data deserve better than this.

When Australia's bureau transitioned from mercury thermometers to electronic sensors more than 20 years ago, to ensure readings from these devices were comparable with the old thermometers and complied with World Meteorological Organisation guidelines, parallel studies were undertaken at multiple sites.

A key conclusion was that readings from the new electronic sensors needed to be averaged over one to 10 minutes. However, rather than implement practices consistent with their finding, the bureau records one-second extremes (or noise), which can be announced as new record highs.

Inherent inconsistency aside, this calls into question whether Australian data is WMO compliant. Marohasy discovered this as part of her investigation and believes it is more damning than even the imposition of minimum limits, as it affects the recording of temperatures from all 695 automatic stations.

Marohasy is a respected scientist, known for her forensic work. While attempts will be made to dismiss her evidence as an arcane academic skirmish over recording methodology, it is a smoking gun that threatens the integrity of global temperature records.

It affects every Australian. It strikes at the heart of renewable energy policies. Globally, trillions of taxpayer dollars are at stake.

The government has a duty to inform the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, should it have sufficient grounds, that the bureau is not complying with WMO guidelines. Sooner or later, closed eyes must open.

Now, with Marohasy's evidence adding to the credible findings of other experts, there can be no confidence in any future official assurances. Further delay of a proper independent audit, which includes dissidents, can be interpreted only as a cover-up. One way or another, the truth will out.