

Scientific audit of a report from the Climate Commission

"The Critical Decade - Climate science, risks and responses"

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PART I – INTRODUCTION, DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The Key Messages¹ summary of *The Critical Decade*² opens with a ringing statement of hyperbole:

Over many decades thousands of scientists have painted an unambiguous picture: the global climate is changing and humanity is almost surely the primary cause. The risks have never been clearer and the case for action has never been more urgent.

This declaration establishes two things. The first sentence signals that the report is committed to repeating the conclusions of the 4th Assessment Report of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC)³, conclusions that are essentially reliant on computer modelling and lack empirical support. And the second signals that the report is long on opinionated analysis and political advocacy but devoid of objective risk analysis.

These same characteristics apply to the scientific basis of four earlier Australian global warming documents, in order the Garnaut review⁴, two reports by the Department of Climate Change Change^{5 6}, a report by the Academy of Science⁷, and finally a science briefing⁸ that Professor Steffen provided to the Multi-party Committee on Climate Change in November, 2010, prior to that committee entering policy-setting mode.

DISCUSSION

The global warming debate first became politicised at a UN-convened conference in Villach, Austria in October 1985, at which invited participants reviewed the greenhouse effect, climate change and their effects on ecosystems⁹. The ensuing Conference Statement declared that past climate data, without modification, were no longer to be viewed as a reliable guide to the future; rather, computer modelling (rudimentary though it was at the time) was to be relied upon, and indicated that increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases would warm the global climate significantly during the 21st century. The Villach statement was followed by a series of national and international public awareness raising conferences and events sponsored by government and non-government organisations. In culmination, in 1988 the UN established the IPCC to provide advice to governments on the enhanced greenhouse effect and its impact on climate change.

IPCC advice has been known to be politically motivated since publication of the 1995 2nd Assessment Report, in which the wording of the Summary for Policymakers was tampered with after the scientists had signed off on it. In 2001, the 3rd IPCC Assessment Report took as its *leit motifa* deeply flawed paper by Michael Mann and co-authors that falsely depicted Northern Hemisphere

temperature over the last 800-1000 years as having the shape of a horizontal hockey-stick in which the upturned blade represented alleged dramatic warming in the 20th century; this graphic was later exposed as false, and the result of statistical incompetence. Most recently, the 4th Assessment Report, published in 2007, has been subjected to a blizzard of criticism subsequent to the revelations of the Climategate affair¹⁰.

The overall weaknesses of the IPCC have been well documented by Melbourne researcher John McLean¹¹, and they reflect that the IPCC represents a political advocacy organisation more than it does an impartial scientific advisory body. Relying on IPCC recommendations (as interpreted by Professor Steffen and the Department of Climate Change) as the sole source of advice for setting Australian climate policy is therefore clearly unwise. In no other major financial or medical context would such dramatic policy prescriptions be adopted without exposing the expert advice to contestability by seeking a thorough second opinion and audit.

Disturbed by the fact that alarmist IPCC advice about dangerous global warming was being used in Australia in an uncontested and uncritical fashion, over the last two years we have prepared a number of due diligence reports and audit examinations of the scientific arguments pursued by Professor Will Steffen on behalf of the IPCC and the Australian government. Our critical analyses, which are listed here¹², contain much detailed scientific discussion and argument. They lead to the conclusion, first, that the IPCC has failed to provide empirical evidence which shows that dangerous global warming is occurring, or is likely to occur. And, second, that IPCC speculations about the baleful influence of atmospheric carbon dioxide rest almost exclusively on unvalidated computer modelling that rests on unsubstantiated assumptions about the amplification effects of water vapour, clouds and other unverifiable factors¹³

The faith displayed in global climate models (GCM) by senior IPCC advisers is evidenced by the astonishing comment made at a recent meeting in Cambridge by Professor John Mitchell (Principal Research Scientist, U.K. Meteorological Office), who is reported as saying that *"People underestimate the power of models. Observational evidence is not very useful. Our approach is not entirely empirical"*.

The Critical Decade contains no substantial new science. Rather, the report is a reworked amalgam of many of the IPCC's dated and alarmist assertions, and at the same time it ignores recent independent reports (for example, that of the Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change; NIPCC¹⁴) and also ignores the numerous published papers that are consistent with the null hypothesis that contemporary climate change has largely natural causes¹⁵. As for the IPCC reports on which it is based, *The Critical Decade* cites no empirical data that demonstrates that dangerous warming is occurring, let alone that human-related carbon dioxide emissions were responsible for the late 20th century phase of mild warming. Instead, the case for action to "prevent" dangerous warming put by the IPCC and the Climate Commission rests almost exclusively upon the validity of numerical computer models that are known to be incompatible with decades of detailed observations of the atmosphere.

In this regard, the lack of confidence in the ability of computer modelling to give reliable projections of future climate is dramatically evident in the disclaimer included in *The Critical Decade*.

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and all persons acting for the Commonwealth preparing this report accept no liability for the accuracy of or inferences from the material contained in this publication, or any action as a result of any person's or group's interpretation, deduction, conclusion or actions in relying on the material.

We have provided detailed critiques of the GCM models, and of many other IPCC techniques and conclusions, in the due diligence papers already referred to. There is no point in repeating that detail here, and therefore we restrict our audit of *The Critical Decade* to succinct commentary on the four Key Messages (and their submessages) that the Climate Commission has advanced. This audit comprises PART II of this paper, and is available here: [SCIENCE AUDIT](#)

CONCLUSIONS

The scientific advice contained within *The Critical Decade* is an inadequate, flawed and misleading basis on which to set national policy. The report is emotive and tendentious throughout, ignores sound scientific criticism of IPCC shibboleths that has been made previously, and is shotgun in its approach and at the same time selective in its use of evidence. The arguments presented depend heavily upon unvalidated computer models the predictions of which have been wrong for the last 23 years, and which are unremittingly and unjustifiably alarmist in nature. Further, in concentrating upon the hypothetical risk of human-caused warming, the Climate Commission has all but ignored the very real and omnipresent risks of dangerous natural climate-related events and change, which are certain to continue to occur in the future.

Notwithstanding the misassertions of the Climate Commissioners, independent scientists are confident overall that there is no evidence of global warming at a rate faster than for the two major 20th century phases of natural warming; no evidence of sea level rise at a rate greater than the 20th century natural rise of ~1.7 mm/yr; no evidence of acceleration in sea-level change in either the tide gauge or satellite records; and nothing unusual about the behaviour of mountain glaciers, Arctic sea ice or the Greenland or West Antarctic ice sheets.

Regarding the often remarked need to cut carbon dioxide emissions nonetheless - as a "precautionary principle" approach to perceived dangerous warming - it must be noted that you can't take specific precautions against an unknown future temperature path. The currently quiet sun, and the established lack of warming over the last ten years, may presage enhanced cooling over the next two decades, as indeed is predicted by some solar physicists¹⁶. In such circumstances, it can be argued that precautions currently need to be taken against cooling rather than warming. But in reality, and given our inability to predict even the near-term climate future, the only sensible course of action is to strengthen society's resilience against all climate hazards, and to prepare to cope with warmings, coolings and climatic instantaneous or step events - one and all, and as they come.

In other words, the prudent and most cost-effective national policy is to prepare for all climate events and change, whether they are of certain natural or hypothetical human causation, and to adapt to such events as they occur. Prudence and careful contingency preparation are required in anticipation of both warming and cooling events, for both are certain to occur again in future.

Proceed to PART II – [SCIENCE AUDIT](#)

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