

25 January 2013

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

RECENT TRENDS IN AND PREPAREDNESS FOR EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Dear Committee Secretary,

The following pages contain my submission to your Inquiry.

The submission is not confidential.

I would be happy to provide any further information that the Committee might require.

Yours faithfully,
Philip S. Clark

RECENT TRENDS IN AND PREPAREDNESS FOR EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS SUBMISSION BY P. S. CLARK

The author of this submission has been studying climate science with particular emphasis on the potential causes and impacts of El Niño and La Niña episodes since 2006.

The submission is not confidential and addresses your Inquiry's Term of Reference (b) and (b)(i).

(b) based on global warming scenarios outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation of 1 to 5 degrees by 2070:

(i) projections on the frequency of extreme weather events, including but not limited to drought, bushfires, heatwaves, floods and storm surges,

THE IPCC MANDATE

As the Committee's Terms of Reference require adoption of information provided by the IPCC and CSIRO, it is essential to understand that the IPCC mandate explicitly limits its information to human induced climate change. The IPCC mandate states that "The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1988 to assess scientific, technical, and socioeconomic information that is relevant in understanding human-induced climate change, its potential impacts, and options for mitigation and adaptation."

The associated political apparatus established in 1992 by the UN is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system." The UNFCCC defines "climate change" as a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

IS THIS THE WHOLE STORY?

Those mandates limit IPCC reports and activities to human-induced greenhouse gas scientific information, a limitation which is conveniently and inappropriately overlooked in subsequent studies, publications and government actions. IPCC reports and information are unprofessionally misrepresented as the "Gold Standard" of contemporary climate science and information without identifying their relevant "single issue" scope limitations. Australia's CSIRO and Australian academic institutions have adopted the same approach, albeit with "escape clause" waivers claiming they are relying on the advice of others. A typical example is "The role of forest management in greenhouse gas mitigation: a contextual framework for Australia" from CRC for Forestry and Forestry Tasmania where the note that "The function of the IPCC was to authoritatively review climate science and provide guidance to policy makers and governments" is assumed to justify the remainder of the document.

EMPHASIS ON POTENTIAL FOR NEGATIVE EPISODES

Periodic IPCC Assessment Reports include Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) documents which are specifically aimed at influencing political policy makers' views and actions rather than being accurate summaries of contemporary scientific evidence on the issues within the limited IPCC/UNFCCC mandate or of the more comprehensive scope of available published climate science. IPCC reports and subsequent academic and media publications have unprofessionally focused without significant exception on a farrago of hypothetical catastrophic negative outcomes, such as enhanced probabilities of future extreme weather and climatic episodes, adverse impacts on global food production and availability, wider spread of disease-carrying insects and predictions of significant adverse human mortality and morbidity outcomes. The authors ignore contrary factual evidence such as declining incidence of extreme weather events, enhanced agricultural productivity and the recorded history of endemic malaria deaths in northern Russia a century ago.

Speculative statements about potential future climatic conditions, supposed regional impacts and particular weather events by academic and media commentators appear to be unprofessional marketing of second-hand ideological beliefs rather than scientific conclusions developed from the authors' personal investigations.

SENSATIONAL OR SCIENTIFIC?

In the present "extreme weather Inquiry" context, it is relevant to recognise that many vested interests rely on creating perceived threats, disasters and related problems with scary scenarios to achieve their objectives, which could include political influence, public attention, enhanced funding, academic preferment and media profits among others. The vested interests include all levels of government and government agencies, academics, media companies including the ABC, climate activists and some members of the public. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation regularly broadcasts graphic catastrophic climate change films and commentaries as educational and scientific television which tend to follow the script of the 2006 Al Gore "An inconvenient truth" film, which was identified as political polemic by the UK High Court. Media competition for public attention and profit creates a powerful bias in favour of sensationalism rather than professional journalism.

IPCC and CSIRO reports and information suppress or minimise contrary alternatives, implicit assumptions for and uncertainty information. As CSIRO and Australian academic institutions are heavily dependent on government funding, overt employee and academic dissent from prevailing government policy objectives tends to be career suicide. Despite massive government funding for all manner of climate change-related research over many years, the goal of conclusively proving a scientific link between greenhouse gases, whether man-made or not, and climate has not been achieved. Indeed, research not constrained by the IPCC mandate limitations has demonstrated that greenhouse gases have no significant climate role.

DO GREENHOUSE GASES CAUSE EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

My incomplete and not yet published studies on potential causal factors and resultant climate-related outcomes associated with El Nino, La Niña episodes and other associated global Oscillation Indices confirm the conclusions in contemporary peer-reviewed publications that carbon dioxide and similar ‘greenhouse gases’ have not and cannot be demonstrated to significantly influence global climate or more specifically, extreme weather events.

In consequence, it is totally inappropriate for the present Inquiry Terms of Reference to be limited to the IPCC and CSIRO global warming scenarios which explicitly assume that man-made greenhouse gases control global climate, a limitation that has no demonstrated or even potential scientific validity. While the downstream “frequency of extreme weather events” and regional climate and weather projections Term of Reference is associated with much CSIRO modelling and publications as well as media speculation, to the extent that this has been based on IPCC reports and modelling rather than empirical evidence, it remains as speculation rather than science.