

THE ABC AND GROUPTHINK

“The ABC does have a duty to all Australians to broadcast honestly the best available evidence on both sides of the argument so that we can make up our own minds. This is not happening.”

Maurice Newman, former chairman of the ABC, discussing the national broadcaster bias when reporting on climate change.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) is a billion dollar a year publicly funded media organisation that is meant to serve all Australians by providing accurate, balanced and unbiased reporting. Unfortunately, when it is reporting on global warming it fails on all three requirements.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a United Nations (UN) organisation that reviews all the science about global warming and presents reports on the issue to all the countries in the World. This organisation has been criticised for having a strong alarmist bias in its reports. However, when compared with the ABC's bias, it fades into the background.

In the late 1980s, the Green scientists of the IPCC made two predictions based on their modified greenhouse gas theory. First, that by the year 2000, average global temperatures would rise by 3-5 degrees and not the expected 0.3 degree rise. Second, the expected multi-decade cooling periods would no longer occur, and global temperatures would continue to rise if CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere continued to rise.

By the year 2000, reality had come home to roost. Global temperatures had only risen by 0.3°C and not the predicted 3-5°C, and global warming had stopped while CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere continued to rise. This was a great disappointment for the Green scientists, and, consequently, this was hidden from the World for eight years in the hope that it might not be true.

Eventually, both the IPCC and the Green scientists acknowledged this reality and set about trying to establish why their theory had been so wrong. As the 'Grandfather of Global Warming', Dr James Lovelock said *“We should have been half way to frying and dying right now. It is just not happening. Our theory must be wrong”*.

We should note at this stage that all these facts about reality are being acknowledged by the Green biased IPCC. This organisation never reviewed or discussed the science of any scientist that was considered a “sceptic”. And sceptical scientists' views differed marginally from the reality described by the Green scientists.

The IPCC lacked balance and was heavily biased but at least it attempted to be accurate in recording reality. However, on this topic, the ABC fails to even recognise reality let alone accurately record it. The ABC spends its time finding people with; views, feelings, opinions, motives, agendas and ideas that differ from reality and reports on this. You could not get your head buried further in the sand. So much for accuracy, balance, and unbiased reporting.

Consequently, the ABC will not even discuss the implications and possible causes of 25 years without a rise in global temperatures. It will not allow any ideas to be expressed on why rising concentrations of CO₂ are failing to increase global temperatures. They feel much more comfortable pretending the 25 year hiatus in warming has not occurred.

That any group of inquiring minds could be so timid about dealing with reality is troubling enough, but when you consider this cohort is paid by taxpayers for the express purpose of providing balanced, objective and comprehensive communications about relevant facts and opinions, it approaches a national scandal.

The world's most prominent Green climate scientists seem to be capable of discussing how the climate is defying models without abandoning their alarm, retreating from their scientific theories, or being isolated by their peers. But at the ABC, where they perhaps see themselves as a foothold of enlightenment holding back the hordes of capitalist exploitation and scientific denialism, we can only assume that they cannot handle the truth.

Some Examples

Their bias is clearly seen when reporting on energy issues. Their religious views on global warming have them portraying coal as the devil and renewable energy as the saviour. Even if we agreed with that stance, it does not excuse important facts about coal versus renewables, in the here and now, being ignored or misrepresented.

The economic case is abundantly clear thanks to the overwhelming cost advantages of coal in electricity generation and its contribution to GDP. Coal generates 70% of our electricity and more than 40 per cent worldwide. It is a \$120 billion export industry, making us the second largest exporter after Indonesia. And the cost per megawatt hour of coal-fired power is about \$35, whereas wind and solar generation is typically at least three times the cost and available only a third of the time. None of this is mentioned.

The ABC coverage gives three times more favourable coverage to renewable energy over coal, while providing three times more negative reporting on coal over renewables.

Surprisingly the ratios are even worse — less favourable coverage and more negative — for coal-seam gas, even though this is the resource that has revolutionised the energy sector worldwide by producing affordable baseload generation with about half the emissions of coal.

Media monitors iSentia, analysing 2359 ABC reports over six months, found the “language of fear” (See **“The Swamp” discussion on language deceit on this website**) was used in more than 25% of the CSG stories, 20% of coal stories but only about one 5% in renewable reports.

The ABC ignores or discounts the economic benefits of coal and CSG, preferring to focus on perceived environmental benefits of renewables. It ignores

practicalities (e.g. conventional power backup for renewables), tends to ignore costs while exaggerating potential economic gains. The taxpayers deserve a debate on the economic imperatives: costs, benefits, options, and alternatives. Taxpayers can handle it and are suspicious when the ABC refuses to discuss this.



Previously the ABC gave two prominent Australian climate researchers almost carte blanche access to its radio, TV and online networks to spruik a paper they had written that claimed recent temperatures in Australia were the warmest in a 1000 years.

David Karoly and Joelle Gergis paper scored almost blanket coverage on the ABC's AM, Radio National's Breakfast program, Radio Australia, ABC TV news and The Science Show. It was even tweeted by ABC Local Radio and was featured on ABC's online website. None of these articles featured criticism from independent experts.

However, Gergis and Karoly's paper was short-lived. Online climate sceptics led by Steve McIntyre of Climate Audit found methodological problems with the work, and the paper was withdrawn from publication, to the embarrassment of the authors. Its withdrawal was covered by News Limited and Fairfax press but not the ABC. To my knowledge no formal correction was broadcast on ABC radio or TV, only a brief editorial comment was posted at the end of ABC online articles.

For those who agree with the ABC's vision of nightmarish global warming it seems the path to publicity is easy. However, when you publish a paper that does not fit the ABC's position on climate change a different fate awaits.

The Australian recently reported on a new peer-reviewed paper (CFCs "are the real culprit in global warming") that goes against the consensus that global warming is caused mainly by CO2 emissions. The paper, published in the International Journal of Modern Physics B by Canadian physics professor Qing-Bin Lu, suggests interactions between chlorofluorocarbons and cosmic rays are the source of the polar ozone hole and global warming.

This appears to be a paper worthy of media attention.

Oddly, ABC's AM's coverage of the paper by reporter Martin Cuddihy featured not its author Qing-Bin Lu, but Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change author Karoly - yet again, see above. The ABC seems to have thrown out section four of its editorial policies, which deals with impartiality and diversity of perspectives. The ABC:

- Did not interview the author of the paper or provide an opportunity for him to reply to criticism levelled against his work.
- Downplayed Lu's credentials and failed to include an Australian link; he gained his PhD at the University of Newcastle.
- Over-emphasised the qualifications of Karoly, whose base degree is in mathematics, not climate science.
- Commented, curiously, that "the paper has a rather wordy title". How this is relevant is unclear - but typical of the childish criticisms used by the ABC. But even so, this puerile criticism was inaccurate. It is titled "*Cosmic-Ray-Driven Reaction and Greenhouse Effect of Halogenated Molecules: Culprits for Atmospheric Ozone Depletion and Global Climate Change*": **19 words**. Recent papers by Karoly include "*On the Long-Term Context of the 1997-2009 'Big Dry' in South-Eastern Australia: Insights from a 206-Year Multi-Proxy Rainfall Reconstruction*": **24 words**. It is no surprise some science articles have long titles, but it seems Karoly wins the wordiness contest.
- Did not question claims made by Karoly that unfairly misrepresented the content of an international science journal. Karoly states: "It has been published in a journal which appears to not normally publish articles on climate change science." Yet a search of "climate change" in International Journal of Modern Physics B provides 25 results, "global warming" provides 27 results. Contrary to Karoly's claims, it seems articles on climate change are quite normal in this journal.

However, when you are in the ABC, facts don't matter let alone accuracy, balance, and unbiased reporting.