

ITER Forum Website – News Log April 2009

News.com.au Top stories. Antarctic ice is growing, not melting away

By Greg RobertsThe Australian. April 18, 2009 11:52am

<http://www.news.com.au/story/0,,25348657-2,00.html>

ICE is expanding in much of Antarctica, contrary to the widespread public belief that global warming is melting the continental ice cap. The results of ice-core drilling and sea ice monitoring indicate there is no large-scale melting of ice over most of Antarctica, although experts are concerned at ice losses on the continent's western coast.

Antarctica has 90 per cent of the Earth's ice and 80 per cent of its fresh water, The Australian reports. Extensive melting of Antarctic ice sheets would be required to raise sea levels substantially, and ice is melting in parts of west Antarctica. The destabilisation of the Wilkins ice shelf generated international headlines this month.

However, the picture is very different in east Antarctica, which includes the territory claimed by Australia.

East Antarctica is four times the size of west Antarctica and parts of it are cooling. The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research report prepared for last week's meeting of Antarctic Treaty nations in Washington noted the South Pole had shown "significant cooling in recent decades".

Australian Antarctic Division glaciology program head Ian Allison said sea ice losses in west Antarctica over the past 30 years had been more than offset by increases in the Ross Sea region, just one sector of east Antarctica.

"Sea ice conditions have remained stable in Antarctica generally," Dr Allison said.

The melting of sea ice - fast ice and pack ice - does not cause sea levels to rise because the ice is in the water. Sea levels may rise with losses from freshwater ice sheets on the polar caps. In Antarctica, these losses are in the form of icebergs calved from ice shelves formed by glacial movements on the mainland.

Last week, federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett said experts predicted sea level rises of up to 6m from Antarctic melting by 2100, but the worst case scenario foreshadowed by the SCAR report was a 1.25m rise.

Mr Garrett insisted global warming was causing ice losses throughout Antarctica. "I don't think there's any doubt it is contributing to what we've seen both on the Wilkins shelf and more generally in Antarctica," he said.

Dr Allison said there was not any evidence of significant change in the mass of ice shelves in east Antarctica nor any indication that its ice cap was melting. "The only significant calvings in Antarctica have been in the west," he said. And he cautioned that calvings of the magnitude seen recently in west Antarctica might not be unusual.

"Ice shelves in general have episodic carvings and there can be large icebergs breaking off - I'm talking 100km or 200km long - every 10 or 20 or 50 years."

Ice core drilling in the fast ice off Australia's Davis Station in East Antarctica by the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Co-Operative Research Centre shows that last year, the ice had a maximum thickness of 1.89m, its densest in 10 years. The average thickness of the ice at Davis since the 1950s is 1.67m.

A paper to be published soon by the British Antarctic Survey in the journal Geophysical Research Letters is expected to confirm that over the past 30 years, the area of sea ice around the continent has expanded.

Hole in ozone layer stopping Antarctica from melting.

Article from: News.com.au. April 23, 2009 12:50pm

<http://www.news.com.au/perthnow/story/0,,25375046-5005369,00.html>

REMEMBER that environmental villain, the hole in the ozone layer'

It may be giving us skin cancer, but scientists are now singing its praises for a redeeming quality - it's stopping Antarctica from melting.

Fresh research from Britain shows Antarctica is getting bigger as the ice around it increases.

|Antarctica's icy resilience has provided a quirky front in the war of words over climate change.

The boffins at the British Antarctic Survey say Antarctica's increasing ice girth is not inconsistent with global warming - it's the ozone hole that is responsible.

The hole is causing more storms and more fierce winds around the South Pole, and that's cooling down much of Antarctica.

``In the Antarctic human influence through the ozone hole has ... resulted in more ice," said John Turner, the lead author of the British research.

``The ozone hole is in many ways holding back the effects of greenhouse gas increases in the Antarctic."

Humans now face a dilemma - to repair the ozone hole or leave it be.

The ozone hole was caused by chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which have a long life in the atmosphere.

World leaders agreed to ban CFCs back in 1987. Scientists say the hole will close over the next 50 years.

Prof Turner said Antarctic sea ice would be reduced by about one-third when that happened.

Australian Climate Change Minister Penny Wong said the research was not proof that global warming was a myth.

``It is clear from the consensus science ... that climate change is happening and that human activity is contributing to it," Senator Wong told reporters in Adelaide.

Senator Wong said there had been plenty of debate around the science and it was time for action.

More research was needed into the Antarctic ice question, she said.

The British research was published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters.

Chernobyl fallout continues. Article from: Sunday Mail.

David Murray. April 26, 2009 12:00am

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,25379620-5007191,00.html>

THE charity flights arrive at London's Gatwick Airport twice a week. On board are sick, disadvantaged or dying children from areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

More than two decades after the world's worst nuclear accident, thousands of youngsters are still being brought to the UK each year.

Born up to 15 years after the event, they spend a month recuperating with volunteer families from the Chernobyl Children Life Line.

Experts argue in landmark studies that, apart from the small contaminated zone around ground zero, the region today is safe.

But for charity founder Victor Mizzi, who personally greets almost every flight, there is no question that Chernobyl is an ongoing tragedy.

"The situation is just as bad now with cancer and leukemia as it was in 1986," claims Mizzi, who has brought more than 46,000 children from affected areas to Britain.

The mass of support for Mizzi's charity, and others like it, says much about public perception of Chernobyl.

All these years later the memory of the disaster has not dimmed, not even now as the world turns back to nuclear energy as part of efforts to tackle climate change.

It was exactly 23 years ago today that an explosion ripped through reactor No.4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, when it was a member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Operators had allowed power levels to drop as part of a safety experiment, disabling key mechanisms that would have shut the plant down if anything went wrong.

The reactor became unstable and exploded, blowing the roof off the building.

In other countries, a reinforced concrete shell around the reactor would have contained the blast.

But in Chernobyl there was no such shell – just one of numerous design flaws identified in the aftermath of the incident.

A toxic cloud spread across Europe, but deposited mostly in neighbouring Belarus, Ukraine and what is now the Russian Federation.

The first the rest of the world knew about the danger was when radioactive fallout was detected in Sweden three days later.

Soviet authorities refused to admit there had been an accident until Swedish diplomats warned that they were about to raise the alarm internationally.

More than 340,000 people were evacuated from the surrounding area over the following years, never to return to their contaminated homes.

Today, the area around Chernobyl remains a wasteland, with habitation banned in a 30km "zone of alienation".

In the abandoned city of Prypiat, once bustling with a population of 50,000, decaying shells of buildings are all that is left.

Purpose-built 2km from Chernobyl as a base for power-plant workers, the city was not evacuated until 36 hours after the explosion.

Like a scene from an apocalyptic Hollywood movie, nature is now taking over in the city in the absence of human life.

Birch trees randomly sprout up in cracks in the concrete. Wild boars roam the streets at night.

Adventure-loving tourists are allowed brief visits to the city, and watch in fear as radiation meters crackle with activity.

Photos from visitors show schoolbooks open mid-way on classroom desks. Clothes are in tatters on washing lines. Dolls and other toys lie on the ground, covered in dust.

Given the magnitude of what occurred at Chernobyl, consensus might have been expected by now on the effects of the disaster.

But division remains on how many people suffered, and whether there is a continuing danger to those living in contaminated areas today.

To try to end the uncertainty, an international team of more than 100 scientists convened under the banner of the Chernobyl Forum in the lead-up to the explosion's 20th anniversary in 2006.

The experts – from seven United Nations organisations, including the World Health Organisation – concluded that 4000 people could eventually die of radiation exposure relating to the Chernobyl accident.

However, while catastrophic, the figure was much less than previously predicted and came in for heavy criticism.

Greenpeace, for one, has estimated more than 90,000 people will die from cancer and that other illnesses will send the toll soaring into the hundreds of thousands.

The Chernobyl Forum report found that as of mid-2005, only 50 deaths could be attributed to the accident.

Most at risk were the 200,000 emergency and recovery workers and reactor staff heavily exposed to radiation on the first day, the report said.

The report went on to play down the risk to the five million people currently living in contaminated areas of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

Numerous other studies provide a contrasting view, finding a dramatic increase in a range of cancers, birth defects and general ill-health.

As the debate continues about the extent of the health impact on the region, nuclear energy suddenly finds itself gaining popularity again.

New nuclear power plants are being planned across the world as governments search for ways to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and ensure energy security.

Italy closed its last two nuclear power plants in 1986 as a direct result of Chernobyl.

Now there are plans to construct at least four new plants to end the country's reliance on imported oil and gas, with the first to be operational by 2020.

Sweden banned construction of new nuclear power plants after a 1979 meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in the United States.

In February this year, it announced new plants would be built to replace the ageing set that currently provide half of the country's electricity.

In Finland, contractors are working feverishly on the first new nuclear reactor ordered in Western Europe since Chernobyl, although it is several years behind schedule and billions over budget.

In Britain, the Government this month released a list of 11 sites where new nuclear power stations could be built after a dramatic recent U-turn on opposition to the energy source.

Australia's only nuclear reactor, at Lucas Heights, is used for research purposes rather than power generation.

Opponents such as Greenpeace maintain that nuclear power plants, at \$10 billion each, are expensive, and that there is no effective solution for dealing with the waste produced.

The tide though, is most definitely going the other way, with one recent news report identifying proposals for 400 new plants across the world to add to the 440 currently operating.

"We recognise Chernobyl was a tragedy and it should never happen again," Tris Denton, from the UK's Nuclear Industry Association, told The Sunday Mail last week.

"The reassurances that we can give are that modern reactors have multilayered safety systems in place to prevent such events happening again. The technology is far more advanced."

Australia is one of the world's major suppliers of uranium, alongside Canada, a key selling point of nuclear power as governments look to ensure energy supplies are not cut off.

It's also a key argument from pro-nuclear groups for why it is only a matter of time before Australia goes down the nuclear path.

Meanwhile, charity worker Mizzi's work goes on.

Surprisingly, he is not among the nuclear energy opponents.

"What is the alternative? Global warming? There are very little alternatives at the moment," he said.

"Probably, if controlled properly, it shouldn't be a danger. In the ex-Soviet Union they were short of money and there weren't controls. It should be a warning."

Climate sceptics ready to storm heaven with earth's geological history.

Verity Edwards | April 23, 2009. Article from: The Australian
THERE'S nothing like healthy academic combat. In the corridors of Adelaide University, two respected professors on opposite sides of the climate change debate are pushing their theories on the subject, sparked by a new book that has sceptics rubbing their hands with glee.

Outspoken academic geologist Ian Plimer yesterday launched *Heaven and Earth: Global Warming the Missing Science*, concluding that scientific modelling had placed too much emphasis on the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and global warming should not be blamed on increased human activity.

Speaking after the launch yesterday, Professor Plimer accused high-profile climate change advocates such as former US vice-president Al Gore of "scaring people witless" with theories about the world ending.

He also said 2007 Australian of the Year Tim Flannery pushed a "political line" and had considered only a "small body of evidence" when studying global warming.

Many scientists, he said, had not considered the history of the earth when discussing climate change, or factors including the earth's rotation, changing tides and solar winds.

"When you look at the selective evidence, then there's a chance that you might be frightened about the end of the world," Professor Plimer said.

"When you look at the comprehensive evidence, it just says the planet changes all the time."

Defending climatologists and thousands of other scientists, Barry Brook, who heads Adelaide University's Research Institute for Climate Change and Sustainability, poured cold water on Professor Plimer's book and said his colleague had only used "selective evidence" when quoting more than 200 scientists and from peer-reviewed papers.

Professor Plimer's "stated view of climate science is that a vast number of extremely well respected scientists and a whole range of specialist disciplines have fallen prey to delusional self-interest and become nothing more than unthinking ideologues", he said.

"Plausible to conspiracy theorists, perhaps, but hardly a sane world view, and insulting to all those genuinely committed to real science."

Professor Brook, whose office is literally metres from Professor Plimer's base, said his colleague's research was "confusing" because he failed to argue one specific point, and that it was a case study "in how not to be objective".

With the international debate on climate change raging, Professor Plimer yesterday said people were embracing his book because they were frustrated with the one-sided debate on global warming.

The presses have started printing the third run of 5000 copies, after the first 10,000 sold in two days.

"The average punter out there feels helpless and disenfranchised," he said.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,25372986-11949,00.html>

Cheerleading for zealotry not in the public interest.

Robert Manne | April 25, 200. Article from The Australian

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,25380219-17803,00.html>

LAST week, The Weekend Australian published three pieces enthusiastically welcoming the publication of Ian Plimer's new anti-climate science book, Heaven and Earth - Global Warming: The Missing Science: an overwhelmingly favourable editorial, a lengthy interview with the author and a column by Christopher Pearson of gushing praise. In these three pieces not one word of criticism of Plimer was to be found.

It might have been supposed that the editors of this newspaper would wonder about the capacity for fair-mindedness of a geologist who describes the entire climate science community as "the forces of darkness"; who recently told Adelaide's The Advertiser that his book would singlehandedly "knock out" not one or several but "every argument we hear about climate change"; and who, in earlier work, had spent considerable energy trying to prove that Noah's Ark was a myth, the intellectual equivalent of a zoologist seeking to dispose of the belief that the serpent in the Garden of Eden could really have spoken to Eve.

Yet apparently, despite such obvious signs of zealotry, the editors at this newspaper experienced no doubts.

For The Weekend Australian to welcome the publication of a book as self-evidently extreme as this, on a topic of such significance, in a manner so comprehensively uncritical, raises serious

questions about the responsibility of newspapers. I am genuinely grateful for the opportunity to discuss them here.

On the question of human causation of climate change, the central point that Plimer challenges, there are among the scientists two broad camps.

In one camp are the tens of thousands of climate scientists in many discrete disciplines who, despite differences of emphasis and interpretation on many questions, regard it as now beyond doubt that, through the release into the atmosphere of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, human beings have been responsible for post-industrial global warming. The work of these scientists has been summarised in four cautious reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In the most recent, the IPCC argued that the evidence for human causation of climate change was unequivocal.

In the other camp are a few dozen scientists who are best described as global warming pseudo-sceptics. Most do not publish in the refereed climate science academic journals. Some have been financed by greenhouse gas-emitting industries and provided with moral support by anti-global warming lobby groups.

Many regard the work of the tens of thousands of climate change scientists as fraudulent and the IPCC as a sinister and vast international conspiracy. Plimer is a typical member of this camp.

Over climate change, citizens face an apparently acute dilemma. The question of the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the Earth's future is by far the most important issue our generation faces. Yet those of us who are not trained scientists are in no position to make independent judgments on the fundamental scientific issues for ourselves.

This dilemma is relatively easy to resolve. In regard to the science of climate change, as Clive Hamilton has put it, the only decision citizens have to make is not what to believe but who. We can place our trust either in the tens of thousands of climate scientists whose work has been published in the relevant scientific journals and summarised by the IPCC, or in the few dozen pseudo-sceptics who dismiss mainstream climate science as a politically correct, rent-seeking hoax.

Precisely the same logic applies to the editors of newspapers. They are not climate scientists. It is incumbent on them, or so it seems to me, to accept that just as citizens cannot evaluate independently the scientific arguments and rationally choose to believe the conclusions of a handful of scientific pseudo-sceptics rather than those of the tens of thousands of the scientists researching and publishing in this field, nor can they.

To avoid misunderstanding, one additional point needs, however, to be made. The consensual views of the climate scientists are our only reliable guide to the causes of global warming or what the impact of greenhouse gas emissions is likely to be. However, they cannot tell us what, given this knowledge, we must do. This is a decision that citizens must make within the framework of the democratic political process.

If the scientists are right, humanity is at present marching, with eyes wide open, towards disaster. The future of the planet now depends on whether human beings are capable of rising to the challenge of global warming.

Many industries that rely on fossil fuel emissions are working hard to safeguard their interests by convincing citizens of nations such as Australia to delay the tough decisions that must now be made.

Pseudo-sceptical scientists such as Plimer, who falsely help to convince citizens that the scientific knowledge in this field is fiercely disputed and basically unsettled, are among their most valuable assets.

It goes without saying that Plimer has every right to publish whatever it is he believes. However, for the editors of this newspaper to give books such as his the kind of enthusiastic welcome hundreds of others published in this country every year cannot dream of receiving and, even more, to treat their publication as important events, seems to me a grave intellectual, political and moral mistake.

Robert Manne is professor of politics at LaTrobe University in Melbourne.

Kevin Rudd backflip on carbon plan as ETS put on ice for a year

Lenore Taylor, National correspondent | May 05, 2009

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25430234-11949,00.html>

KEVIN Rudd has reneged on his election pledge to introduce emissions trading next year, winning broad business and environmental support for a delayed scheme with a softer economic impact during the recession but possibly tougher reduction targets in the longer term.

While peak business groups lined up to back the Prime Minister's revamp, the Greens immediately rejected the package for giving an extra \$2.2 billion to "big polluters", saying it was no better than the policy John Howard took to the last election and was dishonest for suggesting a tougher target only under impossible-to-meet conditions.

Mr Rudd's announcement yesterday of the delay came after he said as recently as last September: "To delay any longer, to stay in denial as the climate change sceptics and some members opposite would have us do, is reckless and irresponsible. For our generation, for our kids and future generations, we must act now."

Yesterday, Mr Rudd said: "The worst global recession since the Great Depression means we must adapt our climate change measures but not abandon them."

The changes announced after secret negotiations with business and green groups over the past few weeks include a one-year delay on the scheme's proposed start-date of July 1, 2010, taking it beyond the next federal election, which must be held before April 16, 2011.

They also include a low \$10 a tonne fixed carbon price for its first year of operation from July 2011 to July 2012, bringing it much closer to the scheme design advocated by the Coalition since before the last federal poll.

Greens leader Bob Brown said: "Rudd's failure to tackle climate change is a seamless follow-on from the Howard years."

"This is exactly the sort of scheme Howard had in mind in 2007. The big polluters win over the wider public good."

The fate of Mr Rudd's revised scheme - which was supported by the Business Council of Australia, the Australian Industry Group, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Climate Institute and the World Wildlife Fund - is now in the hands of Malcolm Turnbull, who had been preparing a broadly similar set of amendments of his own.

The Opposition Leader said yesterday the delay represented a "humiliating backdown" by the Government, and he advocated the Senate defer consideration of the bill until next year after the Productivity Commission had studied alternative carbon market schemes.

But Mr Rudd insisted the scheme be passed this year to deliver business certainty and give the Government a constructive negotiating position in the UN climate change talks in Copenhagen scheduled for December.

He rejected the call for a delay to consideration of the bill.

"It is time for Mr Turnbull and the Liberals to get off the fence. And will the real Mr Turnbull please stand up on the question of climate change?" the Prime Minister said.

The Government has also agreed to emission cuts of 25 per cent of 2000 levels by 2020 - despite arguing just last year that anything tougher than the 5 to 15 per cent range in its emissions trading white paper would impose change too rapid for the Australian economy to cope with.

But it has said the 25 per cent target will be considered only as part of an extremely ambitious international agreement to limit atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ to 450 parts per million.

Heavy polluting industries will also receive extra free permits during the period before competing economies impose a similar carbon price - a 5 per cent increase to the 90 per cent free permits

already on offer to the most trade-exposed concerns and a 10 per cent increase to companies now eligible to get 60 per cent of their permits free.

Under the changes, the Government will pay \$200 million from its proposed climate change action fund before its scheme takes effect to allow businesses that do not qualify for free permit compensation to start work on energy efficiency measures that will reduce the impact of higher prices under the scheme.

And the Government has responded to concerns about the speed with which direct voluntary action could be recognised in national climate change goals by establishing a "pledge fund" to allow individuals to buy and then "tear up" pollution permits - removing them from the market.

It will also establish an "energy efficiency trust" allowing businesses to borrow for efficiency investments and then pay back the capital from the energy savings they enjoy.

Household compensation will be reduced in the first year of the scheme in line with the reduced impact of the lower carbon price.

The Government's climate adviser, Ross Garnaut, who had said that it was "line ball" whether the ETS was better than no scheme at all, yesterday welcomed the decision to put 25 per cent emission reduction targets "on the negotiating table".

Business groups - which had been privately consulted by Mr Rudd's office and Senator Wong over the detail of the changes - supported the changes.

"In the interests of business certainty, the BCA calls on the Senate to pass legislation this year to establish a carbon pollution reduction scheme, including the package of measures announced today," BCA president Greig Gailey said.

The Australian Industry Group welcomed the changes. Chief executive Heather Ridout insisted the scheme should be passed this year.

"AI Group has consistently called for the legislation to be passed this year. This is critical to establish the degree of certainty business requires in assessing medium and longer-term investment decisions," Ms Ridout said.

Despite strict conditions that the tougher 25 per cent target would be considered as only part of an ambitious global agreement, a broad coalition of welfare, union and green groups also called for the passage of the legislation.

"With this significant step forward, we now support passage of the legislation and will continue to urge that further action is taken to increase and support investment in clean energy and other low-carbon jobs and industries," the group said.

But some industry groups remain opposed.

The Minerals Council of Australia said the amendments were "at the margin" and did not address the scheme's real problems and the coal industry was still in negotiations with the Government about an improved compensation deal.

Woodside chief Don Voelte said even with the changes, the scheme put "an unfair burden on the export of natural gas".

Industry groups also hope to negotiate further changes in the scheme's treatment of the electricity industry.

Ian Plimer | May 05, 2009. Article from: The Australian

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25429080-11949,00.html>

IN Heaven and Earth - Global Warming: The Missing Science, I predicted that the critics would play the man and not discuss the science. Initial criticism appeared before the book was released three weeks ago.

Well-known catastrophists criticised the book before they actually received a review copy. Critics, who have everything to gain by frightening us witless with politicised science, have now shown their true colours. No critic has argued science with me. I have just enjoyed a fortnight of being thrashed with a feather.

Despite having four review copies, ABC's Lateline photocopied parts of chapters and sent them to an expert on gravity, a biologist and one who produces computer models. These critics did not read the book in its entirety. The compere of Lateline claimed that he had read the book yet his questions showed the opposite. When uncritical journalists have no science training, then it is little wonder doomsday scenarios can seduce them.

In The Age (Insight, May 2), David Karoly claims that my book "does not support the answers with sources". Considering that the book has 2311 footnotes as sources, Karoly clearly had not read the book. Maybe Karoly just read up to page 21, which showed that his published selective use of data showed warming but, when the complete set of data was used, no such warming was seen.

Robert Manne (The Weekend Australian, Inquirer, April 25-26) claims to be a great democrat yet demonises dissent on a matter of science. He is not a scientist. The gains made in the Enlightenment, the scientific method, history and integrated interdisciplinary science are all ignored in an ideological push to remodel the economy.

Primary producers should be very worried about an emissions trading scheme underpinned by incomplete science. Unions in industrial centres may even make conditional financial support of the ALP because the workforce they represent will be lambs to the slaughter with an ETS.

Capital city ABC and newspaper media outlets have treated the public with disdain. They have used arrogant pompous scientists who talk down to the public and yet these scientists forget that the public employs them. My critics are never asked: Who funds them? What have they to gain by following their party line? Why have they ignored a huge body of contrary science? What are their political associations? What unelected groups support them? Yet I am constantly asked these questions.

The huge number of recent letters tell me that there are winds of change. The average punter has been told for more than two decades that we are all going to fry. He is not stupid and is blessed with a rare commodity missing in many academic circles: common sense.

Life experiences of rural people are very different from those of city folk who have little first-hand experience of nature. My correspondents feel helpless and disenfranchised with the unending negative moralistic cacophony about climate change. They know it smells but they cannot find where the smell comes from. The reason why the book has been a publishing sensation is because the average person knows that they are being conned and finally they have a source reference.

The hypothesis tested in my book was that increased atmospheric CO₂ creates global warming. This was shown to be invalid on all time scales and by a diversity of methods.

In the past, climate change has never been driven by CO₂. Why should it be now driven by CO₂ when the atmospheric CO₂ content is low? The main greenhouse gas has always been water vapour. Once there is natural global warming, then CO₂ in the atmosphere increases. CO₂ is plant food, it is not a pollutant and it is misleading non-scientific spin to talk of carbon pollution. If we had carbon pollution, the skies would be black with fine particles of carbon. We couldn't see or breathe. Climate Change Minister Penny Wong appeals to science yet demonstrates she does not have a primary school understanding of science.

The atmosphere contains 800 billion tonnes of carbon in CO₂. Soils and plants contain 2000 billion tonnes, the oceans 39,000 billion tonnes and rocks in the top few kilometres of the crust contain 65,000,000 billion tonnes of carbon in carbon compounds. The atmosphere only contains 0.001 per cent of the total carbon in the top few kilometres of the Earth.

If all the fossil fuel on Earth were burned, the atmospheric CO₂ would double. The Earth has been there before and high atmospheric CO₂ has accelerated plant growth and increased biodiversity. It is the sun, water vapour, rocks and oceans that have stopped a runaway greenhouse or a permanent snowball Earth.

I would like to see some fundamental questions answered by the climate catastrophists. If CO₂ drives temperature, why were there past ice ages when the atmospheric CO₂ content was many times greater than at present? Why has the role of clouds been ignored, especially as a 1per cent change in the amount of cloudiness could account for all the changes measured in the past 150

years' If natural forces drove warmings in Roman and medieval times, how do we know that the same natural forces did not drive the late 20th-century warming' Why didn't Earth have acid oceans and a runaway greenhouse when the atmospheric CO2 was hundreds of times higher than now' Is the present increase in atmospheric CO2 due to the medieval warming'

It is human arrogance to think that we can control climate, a process that transfers huge amounts of energy. Once we control the smaller amount of energy transferred by volcanoes and earthquakes, then we can try to control climate.

Until then, climate politics is just a load of ideological hot air.

To argue that human additions to atmospheric CO2, a trace gas in the atmosphere, changes climate requires an abandonment of all we know about history, archaeology, geology, solar physics, chemistry and astronomy. We ignore history at our peril.

I await the establishment of a Stalinist-type Truth and Retribution Commission to try me for my crimes against the established order and politicised science.

Ian Plimer, a professor at the University of Adelaide, is author of Heaven and Earth - Global Warming: The Missing Science (Connor Court).

Icecap science rattles Craig Emerson

Greg Roberts | April 30, 2009

Article from: The Australian

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25406747-11949,00.html>

FEDERAL Small Business Minister Craig Emerson has split from Kevin Rudd and ministerial colleagues by declaring science is undecided on key aspects of the global warming debate.

Dr Emerson yesterday became the first minister in the Rudd Government to cast doubt on the assertion that scientific evidence was conclusive for a catastrophic meltdown of the polar icecaps if global warming was not curtailed.

He said he would like to see scientists settle the question of what would happen to sea-level rises and the polar icecaps as a result of climate change.

"We have been basing our responses to this issue on the basis of scientific evidence," Dr Emerson told Sky News.

"I suppose what's disappointing around the world is that there is so much disagreement around the edges or even on key issues such as what's happening to Antarctica. Now what I'd like to see is the scientists themselves settle on some of these issues."

Dr Emerson added there was little disagreement that the climate was warming. "We can't wait to see whether the sea level rises by half a metre, one metre, two metres or more, and then act," he said. "We need to act now to get ahead of it, and do everything we can to prevent these sorts of dire predictions from becoming a reality."

Dr Emerson was commenting on a report in The Australian yesterday that a rift had emerged between Climate Change Minister Penny Wong and Environment Minister Peter Garrett over the ice-melting debate.

Senator Wong was concerned about Mr Garrett's claim that the calving of ice from the Wilkins ice shelf indicated the Antarctic icecap was melting, potentially causing sea levels to rise 6m.

Evidence has emerged that while parts of west Antarctica are warming, much of Antarctica is cooling and sea ice around the continent generally is expanding.

The Government has previously insisted the science on global warming is not in dispute.

Kevin Rudd declared in 2007 that there were no scientific doubts surrounding the issues of sea levels and ice melting. "Can I just say, the science is in. The icecaps are melting, the oceans are rising," Mr Rudd said.

Mr Garrett declared last year that the "science is in" on climate change.

Last night, Dr Emerson denied he believed that the science on global warming was inconclusive.

"The science is in that we are experiencing climate change and we need to act to deal with it," Dr Emerson told The Australian.

"There are disagreements about projections on how severe the consequences will be but that must not prevent countries from acting now to deal with climate change."

World's biggest laser unveiled at National Ignition Facility in California

By Andrew Ramadge, Technology ReporterNEWS.com.auApril 03, 2009 11:15am