

UN science is less than conclusive on warming

Is the Garnaut report a fairy story, asks **Des Moore**.

THE recent draft report by economist Ross Garnaut accepts the science endorsed in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports calling for urgent action to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide.

This science claims further emission concentrations in the atmosphere will cause rising temperatures damaging to both humans' capacity to produce and the environment. Accordingly, the story goes, CO₂-emitting fossil fuels such as petrol and coal must be replaced with other forms of energy and any delay would risk much more costly action later.

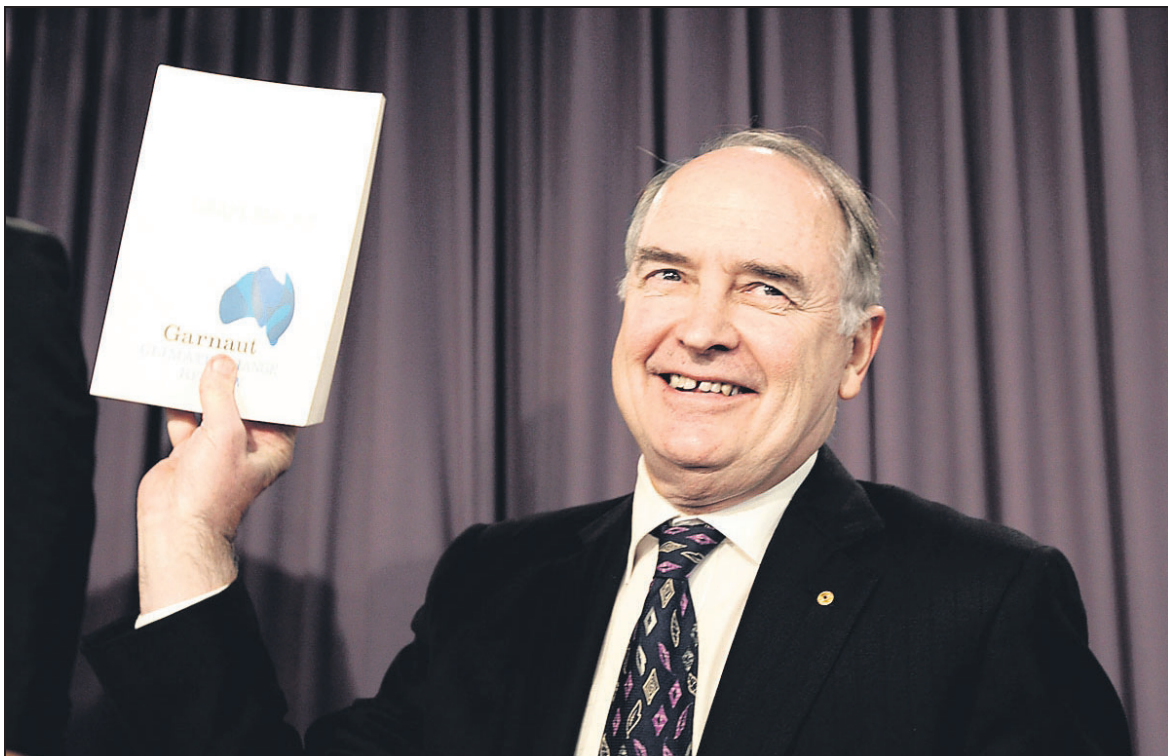
Financial markets often experience confidence tricks where some smart guy promises that by investing your money now through him you will make a fortune. Of course, as IPCC science is supported by distinguished scientists, economists and politicians it cannot be a fairy story – right? Even so, there are very serious doubts about its validity.

Indeed, the analysis in the Garnaut report leaves so many questions unanswered it makes no substantive case for starting an Australian emission reduction scheme, let alone in 2010.

What is wrong with the report and the thesis behind it?

First, while acknowledging "some uncertainty" about the science, Professor Garnaut accepts without any substantive examination the IPCC conclusion that most of the observed increase in average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations. He also spins the same story that unless counter action is taken serious damage will come from various sources, such as from melting ice causing sea levels to rise and flood many low-lying human habitats, more frequent storms, reduced rainfall and food production, and lower domestic production generally.

But there is no scientific consensus and Professor Garnaut is wrong to claim the weight of scientific



UNANSWERED QUESTIONS: Professor Garnaut makes no substantive case for starting an emission reduction scheme.

evidence supports IPCC damage claims. Although the IPCC says it is supported by its 2500 contributors, a very large number of other scientists dispute the basic thesis, including 31,000 who signed a petition of denial in the US and several distinguished Australian scientists.

Astonishingly also, the four IPCC reports themselves contain a scientific analysis showing that CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere have already reached a level at which additions could result in only very small future increases in temperatures.

The main increase in global temperatures occurred over only a brief period from 1975 to 1998; temperatures fell from 1940 to 1975 even though the world then experienced a rapid increase in CO₂ emissions, and there has been no further temperature increase since 1998. Looking back, there are periods when temperatures were higher than recently without destroying Australian environmental icons such as the Great Barrier Reef and the Murray Darling basin and without

producing any significant emissions of CO₂.

Second, Professor Garnaut says that economic modelling indicates that unless emission reduction action is taken Australia's national output in 2100 will be 4.8 per cent lower than it would otherwise be. But as he also estimates that GDP would then be seven-times what it is today, that means incomes in 2100 would average about \$148,000 (in today's prices). As nobody could seriously believe a reduction of about \$7500 per head on that would have significant consequences for the rich of 2100, even on his own terms Professor Garnaut has failed to make the case for action. Yet he acknowledges we will be somewhat poorer from such action.

Third, Professor Garnaut says that if carbon capture and storage can be developed on a commercial basis, coalmining regions will become regions of expansion and exceptional prosperity.

But if the commercial cost of this technology turns out to be too high to sustain coalmining (and it is far from being commercial now), regional

adjustments may have to occur, that is, he foreshadows a possible wind-down of Hunter and Latrobe valley coal and employment from an early emission reduction program. So why not wait for a global agreement, which he acknowledges is the only way of reducing emissions to acceptable levels?

Other major faults include the absurd notion that starting an Australian emission reduction scheme would persuade others including China to follow suit (it will act in its own interests); and that rainfall will decline as temperatures rise (there is no correlation between variations in global temperature and Australian rainfall and the long Federation drought occurred in below average temperatures).

These and many other important faults surely need to be addressed before a scheme of reducing emissions is adopted.

Des Moore, a former deputy treasury secretary, is director of the Institute for Private Enterprise.

Big bite was on after first trip to dentist

THIS man is a dentist.

We can't show you his face, because we don't want to get involved in a slanging match. But without supplying his name I'm going to tell you about him.

My three kids were due for a dental check so my wife phoned a dentist and made an appointment for all three kids.

She asked how much it was going to cost and was quoted \$65 each for the eldest and \$42 for the youngest.

The day came for the appointment. Kid number one took 10 minutes and got a clean bill of health. Kid number two took five minutes with all OK until the dentist said there was a little staining. Was that a big deal, my wife asked.

No, he said, but he would do a quick clean. And he did.

Ten minutes all up.

He also suggested an X-ray to check on an apparent tooth



development concern, with a bit of a plan mapped out for future visits.

Kid number three struck trouble. Whoa, looks like we need four or five fillings in here, was the word from the dentist, with future appointments certainly indicated.

Time to pay at the desk. Here comes the invoice: \$314 in total.

Ummm, how does that compute, my wife wondered. Well, said the receptionist, there's the three checkups plus a clean at \$112 and \$35 for the fluoride.

My wife pointed out that she didn't ask for the clean and would have said no if she'd known the extra five minutes fiddling would cost \$147. Receptionist goes to see dentist.

Comes back saying there was a mistake. The kid was accidentally charged for an adult clean.

Result? \$72 off the price.

If the dentist was the sort of bloke who would employ such business practices, my wife told me, she was going for a second opinion on the fillings and development issues. After all, there was a lot of money potentially at stake and this guy seemed to be way too hot to trot for the folding stuff.

Weeks later she took the kids for a checkup with a different dentist. She didn't announce that she was after a second opinion, of course.

The kid who allegedly needed fillings got passed as perfect.

My wife asked if the dentist was certain, because a while ago another dentist had thought there might have been some holes. Another look, even more thorough. Nope, no sign of any problems.

What about the other kid's developmental issue? Just watch and wait: shouldn't be a drama.

It seems dentist number one was willing to drill holes in my child's healthy teeth for fillings that now seem unnecessary.

How can this be explained? Is it greed on the part of dentist number one? An honest mistake, perhaps? Or was dentist number two less capable of spotting tooth decay?

Are holes in teeth hard to diagnose? Do some holes repair themselves without outside help?

It's the second time this has happened to a member of my family.

Last time it was me with the mouthful of holes in need of filling that vanished at second opinion and never returned.

I'm rapidly losing faith in dentists.

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Topics today



Today's fact

Columbus thought the Earth was pear-shaped.

Today's word

Detritus (di-trahy-tuhs): Waste or debris of any kind. 2. gravel, sand, silt or other matter produced by erosion. 3. organic matter created by the decomposition of organisms.

It happened today

From our files – 1958: Newcastle Bring Out a Briton Committee decided to adopt 17 unsponsored British migrants who will arrive in Sydney on August 2. Newcastle will be the first provincial city to adopt such a large group.

Today in history

1533: Pope Clement VII excommunicates England's King Henry VIII.

1975: China's great Terracotta Army uncovered near the ancient capital Xian.

1979: The abandoned US space station Skylab makes a spectacular return to earth, burning up in the atmosphere and showering debris over the Indian Ocean and Australia.

1987: United Nations proclaims newborn boy Matej Gaspar in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, (now in Croatia) as world's five-billionth inhabitant.

1992: Six people drown after falling into the Kiama blowhole.

2003: India and Pakistan reopen a cross-border bus route between Lahore and New Delhi, a year after they came close to war and renewing hopes of an end to decades of enmity.

Born today

Robert I the Bruce, Scottish king (1274-1329); **Thomas Bowdler**, English editor of Shakespearean works (1754-1825); **Gough Whitlam**, Australian prime minister (1916-);

Yul Brynner, pictured, Russian-born actor (1920-1985);

Giorgio Armani, Italian fashion designer (1934-);

Richie Sambora, rock guitarist of Bon Jovi fame (1959-); **Suzanne Vega**, US singer (1959-).



Odd Spot

Romanians have a right to doom and gloom, the country's constitutional court says in a ruling that blocks a government move obliging radio and television stations to broadcast good and bad news in equal proportions.

Today's text

Jesus said "How happy are those who believe without seeing me". **John 20:29b**