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Wednesday, 3 March 2010

Crikey's unbalanced climate change judgement

Climate change and the ABC:

Tamas Calderwood writes: Re. "[Balance without judgement: mainstream climate science under attack at your ABC](http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/balance-without-judgement-your-abc/) (<http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/balance-without-judgement-your-abc/>)" (yesterday, item 1). Just two points about Bernard Keane's error riddled article yesterday (there are many more that space won't permit). First, Bernard says that Singapore is "dealing with a significant rise in dengue fever as temperatures have risen over the last decade and earlier", yet the article he links to states quite explicitly that "Nevertheless, the burden of climate change regarding dengue incidence in Singapore is so far uncertain".

Hmm.. why would that be? Well, a linear regression on the UAH satellite temperature data shows that temperatures in the tropics have risen by just 0.21C in the past 31 years. Sort of puts that paper into context, doesn't it?

Next Bernard asserts that "Peer-reviewed evidence shows no noteworthy impact of factors such as urban warming, and NASA adjusts its data to remove any impact anyway".

But as the great Canadian Steve McIntyre points out "Neither CRU nor NOAA have archived any source code for their (urban warming) calculations, so it is impossible to know for sure exactly what they do".

But don't take McIntyre's word for it. *The Guardian* quoted Phil "hide the decline" Jones (head of the CRU) at the UK Commons enquiry yesterday saying:

...when he tried to repeat the 1990 (Urban Heat Island effect) study in 2008, he came up with radically different findings. Or, as he put it, "a slightly different conclusion". Fully 40% of warming there in the past 60 years was due to urban influences.

"It's something we need to consider," he said.

Whoops.

Funny how these inconsistencies turn up when you have a debate. Bravo to the ABC.

Dr Mark Duffett writes: Please don't overstate the case, Bernard Keane: "...there is no 'evidence' of any scientists avoiding scrutiny..." How else would you characterise the correspondence that clearly demonstrates attempts to avoid or otherwise circumvent FOI requests for data and computer code?

Undoubtedly many of these were indeed from "denialists to waste their time", but some were from serious practitioners attempting to reproduce results — a fundamental scientific process. That FOI requests were even required is an indictment, if not of the CRU scientists themselves, then certainly data and code management practices prevailing in the entire climate field.

While *Crikey* is lecturing the ABC about how to provide balance (ironic to say the least), it could do worse than to examine the olive branch proffered by climate scientist Judith Curry at Steve McIntyre's blog, and her related essay in *Physics Today*.

David Hand writes: Bernard Keane writes a long, verbose item headed "Balance without Judgement". I ploughed determinedly through the item and concluded that my comment about it could be headed "Judgement without Balance".

In this utterly pointless lead article, Bernard adds nothing new. Everything has been said ad nauseum by the climate lobby over and over again. If Bernard actually wrote something related to his heading — the editorial policy of the ABC, it might have added to the debate rather than dishing up yet another name-calling rant better consigned to the climate cage match.

Of course, Bernard has also negated his opening point about balance, in that he has plenty to say about "non scientists" taking the sceptical side of the debate but omits to let us know that Clive Hamilton is not a scientist either.

Maybe Bernard could enlighten us all about his own science qualifications. Bernard, you are as much a closed minded zealot as you accuse those you mock.

Noel Courtis writes: You seem very upset that people who are not scientists have spoken about climate change. Did you make the same complaints about Kevin Rudd and Penny Wong?

Charles Eller writes: May I suggest a week without any reference to climate change. I am getting rather tired of "he said that", "he said this". "I am right, he is wrong".

It adds nothing to the debate and is really really tiresome. A week without Tamas Calderwood and a week without Bernard Keane would be fine by me. I know I can flit past it but it would be better if something else replaced it.

Peter Garrett and the get green home debacle:

Architect Liza Neil writes: Re. Roger Noakes ([yesterday, comments \(http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/garretts-insulation-scheme-good-or-bad/\)](http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/garretts-insulation-scheme-good-or-bad/)). It is so refreshing to see, someone else despairing over the patheticness of politics and reporting! Thanks Roger! it's nice to feel not so alone!

It is a case of "buyer beware"! Why aren't we seeing or hearing about the prosecutions of the insulation installing businesses, who should have known the risks (because the whole industry has known for years), and should have been responsible for their employees. This has got very little to do with the Minister and a lot to do with shonky operators who creep into the market when they see an opportunity.

Consumers should always look for long-standing businesses with good reputations. If there was a problem with any other industry, i.e. the car industry and bad brakes, we would be looking at the company not the government!

We haven't heard about the good news stories that these insulation program, solar hot water and solar PV programs have created — I guess that they aren't good news, when you are looking for muck! But I can personally account for a great number of older locals who got involved in a community bulk-buy and now have all of the above installed.

They not only were 3-4 degrees cooler over summer, but they made money on their power bills. Some who were particularly thrifty are now making over \$120 per quarter on a 1kw Solar PV system, by generating their own power and selling it to the grid. Now where are those stories!

Given that these programs have been so incredibly popular, shouldn't we find a way of assisting householders with badly designed and very ungreen houses to find a way to get them up to scratch? Maybe the whole Green Loans thing didn't actually go far enough!

We desperately need to address Australia's badly designed and inefficient housing stock and try to assist people bring their properties up to a 6 Green Star level to make them marketable in an increasingly demanding industry full of an increasingly aware population!

John Kotsopoulos writes: I remind Greg Williams ([yesterday, comments \(http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/garretts-insulation-scheme-good-or-bad/\)](http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/garretts-insulation-scheme-good-or-bad/)) even qualified electricians have been known to die in roof spaces. Of the four deaths one of the insulation installers apparently died of heatstroke, another because of the use of metal staples which Garrett

had banned DESPITE expert advice to the contrary ,while the other two men appeared to have stepped where the should not have. We will not know for sure until the coroners' reports are available. Sad for the families but these things occurred in the context of 1.1 million installations.

There is no guarantee that a similar failure rate would not have occurred if the installations were carried out over a longer period. The installations were carried out by your beloved PRIVATE SECTOR Mr. Williams which FAILED to carry out the work safely and in accordance with appropriate standards and in some cases apparently committed outright fraud on the taxpayer.

As for the 87 fires, ceiling fires have been occurring for years because of the love affair people have with down lights. Fire Brigades have been warning people to check even old insulation to make sure it has not blown onto existing or newly installed down lights. Google "down lights insulation and fires" and get the facts.

The ABS figures indicate that the rate of house fires is actually lower since the insulation scheme was put into operation. To the extent private sector failed to live up to the faith put in it to deliver in the public interest it is disingenuous for rabid free-market de-regulationists to be pointing fingers.

The use of the deaths and the naming of those who died for political purposes on the other hand is utterly contemptible.

Martyn Smith writes: Greg Williams takes umbrage that I think the media and Kerry O'Brien have been a bit rough on Kevin Rudd. That's Greg's prerogative and I was well aware when I said that I wasn't impressed with the media, that four people have died and there have been a number of house fires. Any death or accident is a terrible thing and I'm not making light of it and I hope it's all properly investigated.

I still fail to make the connection that this is the fault of Garrett or Rudd.

The Federal Government didn't go the "socialist" route and run the job itself, instead it gave private enterprise in the shape of small business the money to carry out the task for everyone's benefit. Australia has building codes and rules for just about everything, including installing insulation, but is it fair to blame politicians if we, the community, choose to ignore those rules?

We might as well sue the government over the road toll, drowning at beaches, etc. and be done with it. Nothing would be our fault. I repeat, I'm dismayed at the fatalities and fires but believe the responsibility lies with the installers and the employers of those who died because they have a duty of care to their people and also to their customers.

Telstra smartphone easy to personalise:

Richard Fink, Director, Device Management & Operations, Telstra, writes: Re. "[Why Telstra castrated a great phone \(http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/why-telstra-castrated-a-great-phone/\)](http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/why-telstra-castrated-a-great-phone/)" (yesterday, item 21). Yesterday, John Addis critiqued Telstra's approach to customising smartphone user interfaces, in particular the shortcuts to Telstra services on the HTC HD2.

Our principle is to maximise personalisation options for customers while making the Telstra services they value easy to access, including unmetered BigPond content. Save for the three icons on the home screen of the HTC HD2, all Telstra shortcuts can be either removed, or de-prioritised (switched off or moved to the bottom of menus).

Regardless of John Addis' view, Mobile FOXTEL, Sensis search (powered by Yahoo) and our BigPond mobile portal — the three icons on the phone's home screen — are our most popular shortcuts.

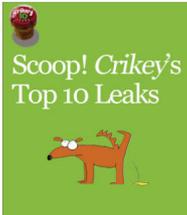
Customers still have the choice of accessing and setting up links to other Telstra and third-party apps and setting their own bookmarks. Customers seem to like the design as it is one of our best-selling smartphones.

The Victorian College of the Arts and Music:

Ziggy Switkowski, Chair of University of Melbourne's Faculty of The Victorian College of the Arts and Music , writes: Re. Scott Dawkins ([yesterday, comments \(http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/garretts-insulation-scheme-good-or-bad/\)](http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/02/garretts-insulation-scheme-good-or-bad/)). I would like to provide an update of the VCAM Review, of which I am chair, and also address some recent criticisms of the review process.

- The committee which was formed in December last year has met twice in regular sessions while continuing to review the more than 350 submissions which have been made so far.
- Upon application, key student groups were offered extensions to the deadlines for submissions and further important material is expected to be received by the end of this week.
- In addition, most of today was scheduled to meet and hear from key stakeholders in the process, including the SaveVCA representatives.
- Notwithstanding that this is a busy week in the arts calendar, thirteen of the fourteen members of the committee were available for parts of the day and all but two groups of invited guests (who will be rescheduled for later in the month) participated.
- The commentary of the SaveVCA group was constructive and well presented. The committee valued their input which did not reflect any unreasonable pressures of deadlines; nor did other presentations from people for whom this issue has been one meriting steady and longstanding consideration and reflection.
- At this stage in the process, early concerns about the composition of the committee, terms of reference etc feel very dated and irrelevant. There is a lot of heavy lifting still ahead but committee members are approaching complex issues honestly and professionally, as one would expect.
- Two further meetings are scheduled in March plus another full day forum. Time has also been set aside for up to five sessions for people who see a reason to address the committee but have not received an invitation. Details of how to participate will be posted on the VCAM website.
- Notwithstanding that the period of the review included Christmas and university vacations, the range and quality of inputs received to date and those expected, together with parallel processes of personal consultations suggest that our deliberations will be properly informed.
- Allegations that this review is a stunt, its output predetermined are uninformed and, frankly, insulting.

The form of VCAM, the needs of its students, its curriculum, staffing, relationships with industry partners including music teachers and so on reflect the diverse components of a complex and important arts organization that merits thoughtful debate and analysis. This review is partway through such a process.



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