

Watermark.

Record Labor low on carbon fury

Earth near its tipping point



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Policy, the Media and You

PART TWO

Welcome to the final edition of our special two-part Watermark examining the media and its relationship to climate change policy. Following on from our look at Australia's news environment in part one, part two will demonstrate how the imbalance in media ownership in this country has affected public opinion of climate change. If you missed out on part one, it can be easily viewed or downloaded on our website: www.clrinsw.org

WE ALREADY KNOW THAT PRESS OWNERSHIP IN AUSTRALIA IS AMONG THE MOST CONCENTRATED IN THE WORLD,



WITH TWO CORPORATIONS (NEWSCORP & FAIRFAX) DOMINATING THE AUSTRALIAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE...

So what does this have to do with **Climate Change?**

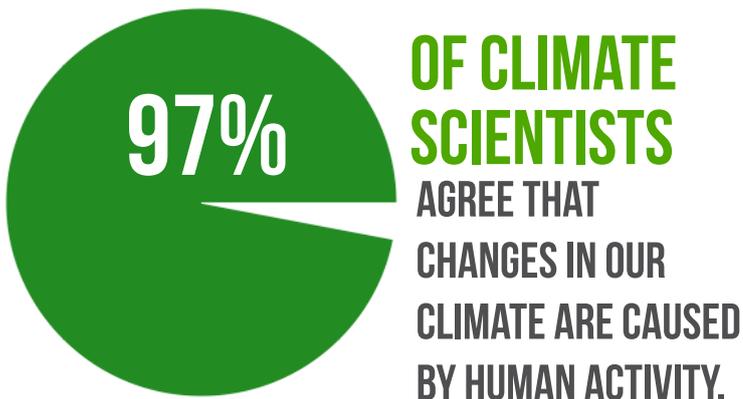
In the words of Tom Morton, Director of the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism:

“

If you believe that the main obligation of journalists is to **the public's right to know**, the results of this study [see next page] are **truly alarming**. Journalism is about reporting contemporary events as accurately as possible. **There could be no better example of the importance of this than the reporting of climate science.**

”

The study to which Mr. Morton is referring is titled ‘**Sceptical Climate**’. Conducted by the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism in 2013, it investigates the effect of our concentrated media ownership on the way that climate change is reported. The results showed that:



...BUT MORE THAN **35%** OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLES IN AUSTRALIA DO NOT ACCEPT THE SCIENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

This is an unusually high level of scepticism, and illustrates the fact that *the opinions and interests of those who own Australia's newspapers is influencing our discourse on climate change*. ‘Sceptical Climate’ also determined that *five publications owned by News Corporation accounted for most of the scepticism* in terms of climate change science, including the Daily Telegraph, the Herald Sun and The Australian. This fact should be alarming to all Australians, because it restricts our access to essential information.

“ READERS OF SCEPTICAL PAPERS RECEIVE ALMOST NO INFORMATION THAT WOULD ENABLE THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITIES OR LIKELY IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE DOMESTICALLY OR INTERNATIONALLY. ”

Case Study: ‘The Carbon Tax’

In 2011, independent online journal the *The Conversation* published a report investigating the ways in which the Gillard government’s carbon pricing policy was reported. Some alarming findings of their report include:

- **31%** of the surveyed articles only used ONE source in their reporting
- **One company - Blue Scope Steel, allegedly a major polluter - was quoted more often than all scientists and NGOs put together**
- The Telegraph and the Melbourne Herald Sun were so biased in their coverage (up to 89% of articles were decidedly negative) it is fair to say they **“campaigned” against the policy** rather than covering it.



The report thus concludes that many Australians **“did not receive fair, accurate and impartial reporting in the public interest in relation to the carbon policy in 2011”**. The actual costs, benefits and long-term effects of the policy were not understood by most Australians, meaning that our ability to make informed decisions as voters was heavily compromised. This represents a crucial failure in the function of our media.

Climate change facts to keep in mind

When it comes to reporting on climate change, some media sources are influenced by corporate interests. You can ensure that you're not by understanding the heart of the issue.



THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF SCIENTISTS (97%) AGREE THAT HUMAN ACTIVITY IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR GLOBAL WARMING.

The jury is not "still out" - there is consensus among scientists that the climate is being changed by human activity, in the same way as there is consensus that the Earth is round.



THE DEBATE ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING IS NO LONGER ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT IT IS REAL OR WHETHER HUMANS ARE THE CAUSE, AS WE KNOW THESE THINGS TO BE TRUE.

The questions that politicians, corporations and the media are most often asking are things like, "who is going to pay for it?" and "who will be the financial victims of climate change?"



CLIMATE CHANGE ISN'T JUST A FIGHT BETWEEN "GREENIES" AND BIG BUSINESS.

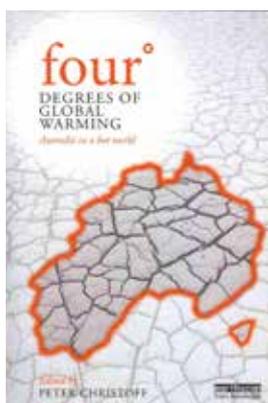
It's in the long-term interest of everyone to mitigate the future effects of global warming and adapt the best we can. The issue is also far more complex, and doesn't just involve the trees and animals but agriculture, health, real estate, food production and even finance.



CLIMATE CHANGE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE A FINANCIAL DISASTER.

By investing in renewable energy and taking a leading role in research and implementation of more sustainable energy options, Australia can make the best of the situation. We will have to transition to clean energy eventually – why not now?

Read: 'Four Degrees of Warming: Australia in a hot world'



Ed. Peter Christoff

This book examines scientific evidence in order to expose the consequences of our current lack of action on climate change.

If our policies and behaviours continue as they are, Australia can expect to experience a **four degree rise in temperature** within 100 years. This means that by the end of the century, the climate in Darwin would be akin to modern-day Sudan, and Alice Springs would be virtually uninhabitable. Try to find this book at your local library or bookstore, to enrich your own understanding of the climate and inform your consumption of the news.

Arm yourself with information!

One of the most important things that you can do to increase demand for reliable, unbiased media is to seek out information from sources that you might not usually read or listen to. The internet is a great place to start, but there is a lot of misinformation out there so it can be hard to find independent and well-informed sources. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

ABC Special Coverage on Climate Change: www.abc.net.au/news/specials/climate-change/

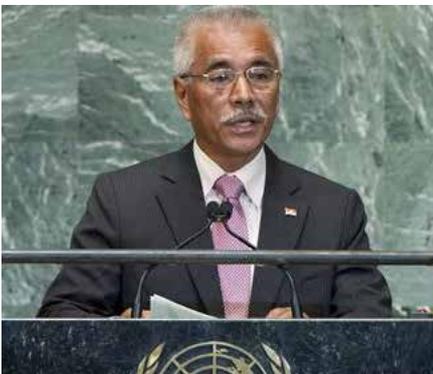
The Climate Council: www.climatecouncil.org.au

Catholic Climate Covenant: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org

The Conversation: www.theconversation.com

The Guardian Australia: www.theguardian.com/environment

Anote Tong for the Nobel Peace Prize



Who? Anote Tong is the President of Kiribati, a group of low-lying islands in the Pacific. Because of its geography and status as a developing nation, Kiribati is one of the nations most vulnerable to climate change.

What? A committee of prominent individuals drawn from the international community - with diverse commitments to social justice, north-south equity and human rights - has come together to promote the candidacy of Anote Tong for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Why? Anote Tong is internationally recognised as an advocate on the effects of climate change on the most vulnerable, and has been instrumental in bringing the concerns of vulnerable nations to the global climate debate. Through this nomination, the committee seeks both to honour President Tong for his on-going work and to draw world attention to the situation of the peoples and cultures most at risk from the effects of climate change.

Show your support and help raise awareness for the campaign. Visit www.tongnpp.info.

REFLECTION

Creator God,

Call us to renewal, to stewardship;

Give us new vision to see Earth's fragile beauty;

Give us new spiritual energy to become active

In loving the world through our daily life;

*Give us new voices to speak out for environmental
solidarity.*

Amen

Watermark is an occasional publication of the Conference of Leaders in Religious Institutes in NSW.

TO-DO LIST

- **Follow** the Social Justice Committee of CLRI (NSW) on Twitter for news and opportunities for action: www.twitter.com/clrinsw
- **Seek out your own information** on climate change to become an active consumer of the media. Start with our suggestions!
- **Write to Greg Hunt or your local member about your concerns for climate policy.** Think about the kind of change possible in your area and on the global stage. For MP contact information, visit www.australia.gov.au/directories/contact-parliament