

Spectator

FLAT WHITE

We should be afraid of rising fuel costs, not climate claims



[Alan Moran](#)

27 September 2019

1:18 PM

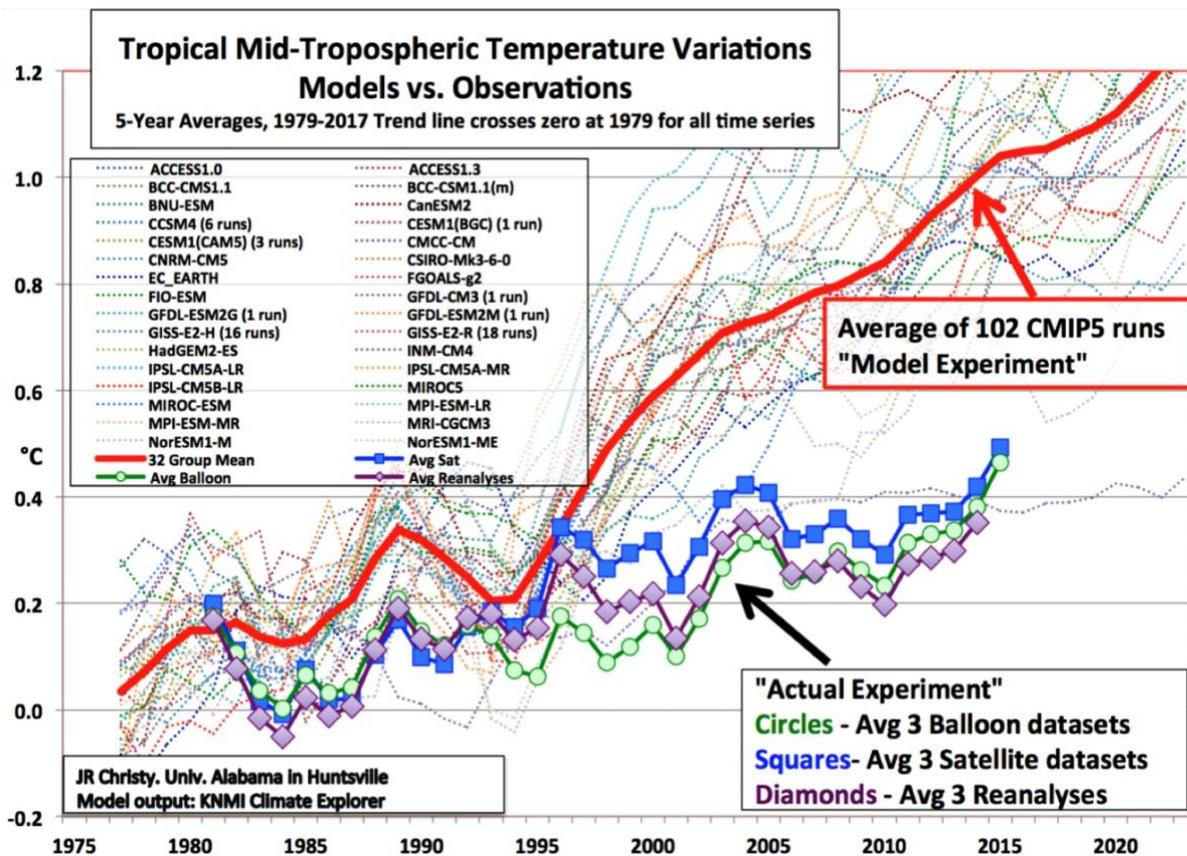
With the children's week-long climate crusade now approaching its end, the United Nations meeting on climate change, accompanied by the normal release of alarmist "[findings](#)", is well underway in New York. The New York meeting has been weaponised by the millions of children incited to take time off from school. President Trump sat through the "we'll be watching you" [rant](#) from the unhappy teenager Greta Thunberg. The UN Secretary-General is requiring countries like

Australia, judged to be too heavily fossil fuel focussed, to listen rather than talk.

Bill Gates is struck by the volume and intensity of interest among the public, which he says is “quite a contrast versus five years ago, where it was hardly discussed at all.” Starting as a scientific backwater, climate change has come to dominate the scientific community and politics in general. Within the former “think tank”, the Tasman Institute, in the early 1990s my colleagues and I wrote a string of books and papers that examined the economics of the issue recognising then the crippling costs that would result from forcing a reduction of emissions. We were joined by scientists, including Arizona State’s Professor of Climatology, Robert Balling and later by Brian Tucker who, having retired as Chief of CSIRO’s Division of Atmospheric Physics, committed the ultimate apostasy of decrying the climate alarmism in which he had participated in the pursuit of grants.

Robert Balling worked in cooperation with science blogger Warwick Hughes to demonstrate that long-established Australian weather stations remote from an urbanisation effect had recorded no increase in temperatures. In 1992 Balling quipped that we should not knock climate alarmism. He noted it was providing him consultancy work that doubled his professorial salary and the satellite data, first established in 1979, in a dozen years would prove the furore to be a hoax and by then he’d be about ready to retire!

He was right about the data, which has failed to substantiate the warming forecast by climate models, as the graphic below demonstrates — and the only model accurately tracking the data does not incorporate an amplification effect of CO₂ from water vapour.



But Professor Balling was sadly wide of the mark in understanding the deceit that scientists, radical leftists and businessmen could muster to extract government funding out of consumers and taxpayers.

Indeed, the lack of corroboration of the forecast global temperature increase has simply spawned other supposed markers of the catastrophic agenda like regional temperatures increases, drought, floods, hurricanes, sea-level rise, polar bear demise and so on. Each of these has also proven to be unfounded but a leftist media, academia and political class remains unmoved.

As evidenced by the censorship by Australian university and taxpayer funded *The Conversation*, the alarmists are entrenched in the education establishment and have become increasingly strident in seeking to suppress the voices and scientific findings of the climate realists.

Business leaders, even when they doubt the alarmists' forebodings, are obliged to do them homage to avoid both direct activist pressures and those representing fearful investors. A group of [500 investment firms](#), said to represent \$35 trillion in global assets, is calling for additional measures to meet the Paris targets. In [Australia](#), some 87 major companies, representing a combined market capitalisation of \$US2.3 trillion, have signed onto a zero emissions pact. Governments' go-to businessman, [Sir Rod Eddington](#), after years of promoting the renewable subsidies that have destroyed industry competitiveness now says, "I believe in markets." But he does so only to oppose government intervention to redress the adverse effects his preferred regulatory measures have caused.

Supposedly to settle the matter, Alan Kohler has called for a Royal Commission on climate change. He is not the first to do so – the late Professor Bob Carter also wanted one. But as cynics have said, "you don't call a Royal Commission unless you're certain about its findings".

In line with his views and business interests, Alan Kohler would see a Royal Commission headed by alarmists like David Karoly, Will Steffan and Tim Flannery and ideally with current Treasury Secretary Steven Kennedy, the author of the hysterical Garnaut Report, heading up the Secretariat. Now that he is seconded to the University of New South Wales, Michael Mann, the creator of the now discredited "hockey stick" climate trend, could also be a candidate.

Bob Carter might have picked former BoM head of research Bill Kininmonth, former Professor of Physics at JCU Peter Ridd, and Professor Ian Plimer, and perhaps the world's most distinguished climate scientist, Richard Lindzen.

There is no middle ground in this debate and one certain outcome is that a Royal Commission report would be rejected by its authors' opponents. Positions and interests are entrenched. Even politicians with the determination and confidence of Donald Trump tread warily. Trump appointed the distinguished climate scientist Will Happer as director of the National Security Council with a view to empanelling a climate science review but senior White House officials stonewalled the proposal fearful that it might prejudice the President's re-election.

As part of the justification for their subsidy claims renewable energy proponents are constantly telling us that the economics of wind/solar will soon mean cheaper electricity. But this is a constantly receding mirage. Last year the leading energy consultancies ACiL and Frontier forecast 2020 electricity prices averaging \$52-55 per MWh. The outcome is contracts selling at \$91 and \$112 for NSW and Victoria respectively. Three years ago, the price was under \$40 per MWh.

Eventually, the inferior economics of renewable energy and realisation that the world climate is in its normal permanent change must bring a collapse of the climate crisis malignancy. Countries showing scant regard for emission suppressing policies – China, India and most developing countries as well as the US – will experience much faster growth forcing others to abandon their own ambitions. But Robert Balling's dozen years is already 25 years and unless the substitution of high-cost renewables brings an (unlikely) collapse of the energy system, Australia's continued excessive energy prices and economic underperformance will persist for many more years.

Alan Moran is with Regulation Economics. His latest book is Climate Change: Treaties and Policies in the Trump Era.