TREAD LIGHTLY

So why do we need a

State of Emergency

to deal with Global Warming and Climate Change?

It's a lovely spring day outside. The grass is still green, it's warm but not too hot. The past memories of the 2006 football season and Spring Racing Carnival are still jockeying with the anticipation of next year. So why should we spoil everything with alarmist concerns which may never happen anyway and will just spoil our day?

But no. The cyclone/flood/bushfire warning is out and we KNOW that if we don't get our house in order quick smart we will face the certain consequences of a devastating natural disaster. In 2006 our science and technology is good enough to predict the path of cyclones and floods and hard-learned history tells us how to protect our homes in bushfire seasons.

And of course when these events strike responsible governments and authorities deal with them by calling a State of Emergency. Business as usual stops and all efforts are directed to protecting lives and property and combating the crisis In fact we take a very dim view of organisations which either attempt to profiteer from disaster or impede our efforts to deal with the emergency.

So usually we have no problem seeing a blue sky today but KNOWING we have to deal with a major problem in a couple of days or perhaps a few months and taking the far sighted actions required to address the issue.

Unless, it seems, the potential problem could destroy the habitability of most of the planet and certainly the Australia we live in – then we find governments putting their collective heads in the sand.

This is the core of the climate change issue. Since the early 80's scientists have observed an increase in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere (which we are causing) and pointed out that this increase would cause a Greenhouse effect that would raise temperatures and change the climate.

From the 90's the increase in CO2 levels has been steadily tracked and scientific measurements around the world have show the march of rising temperatures. By the end of the 90's we were seeing climate extremes every year with longer and more severe droughts and storms across the world.

And finally in the last six years the concrete realities of the effect of global warming have reached the most senior business levels (e.g. the Stern Report) which warn that "The scientific evidence is now overwhelming: climate change presents very serious global risks, and it demands an urgent global response. . . what we do in the next 10 or 20 years can have a profound effect on the climate in the second half of this century and in the next" (Stern Report, The Economics of Climate Change, Exec. Summary, 2006, p. vi).

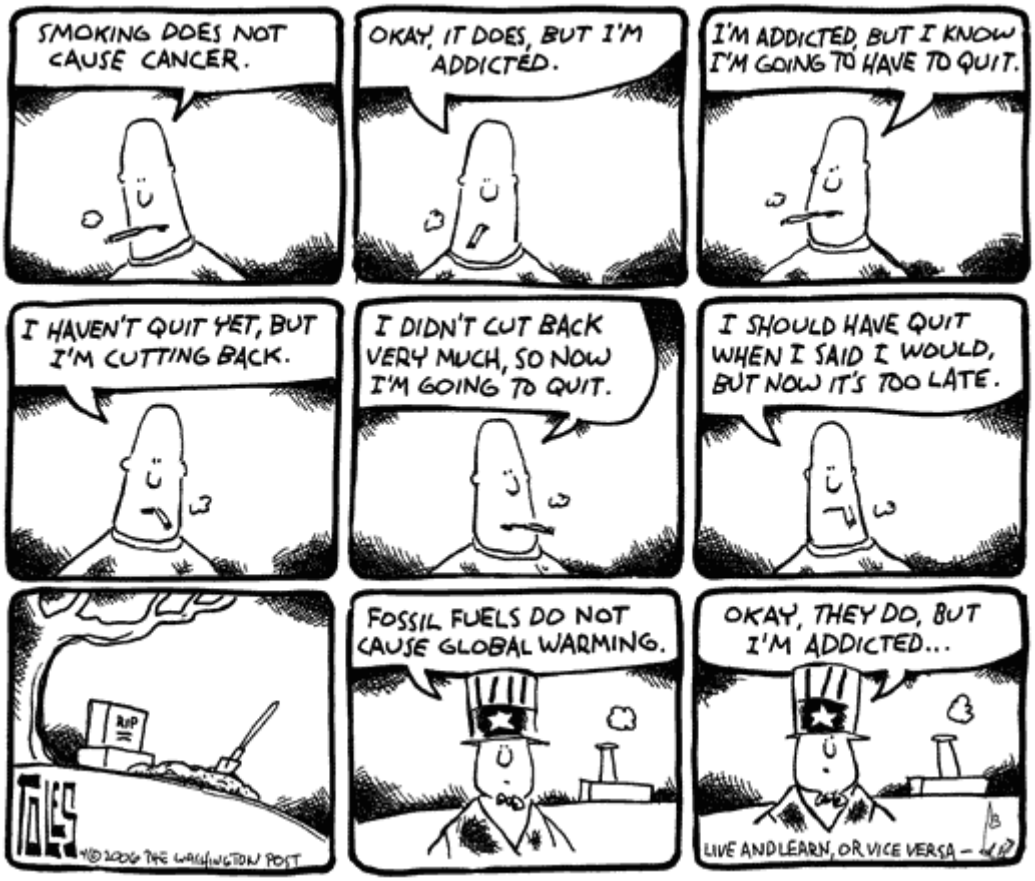
Unfortunately even the Stern Report seems to offer only a 50:50 chance of averting runaway global warming when it advocates a stabilisation of CO_2 at 550 parts per million. The scientific theory, backed by the reality of the melting Artic ice cap, shows that stabilisation of CO_2 at 400 parts per million gives us a 95% chance of holding global warming to less than 2^{o}C and reducing the risk of runaway warming.

To hold CO_2 at 400 parts per million will require immediate massive action – point 1 of our petition. And to achieve that we must declare a State Of Emergency to enable the required national, business and personal focus on re engineering and reorganising our society for minimum carbon emissions.

Of course the first critical issue of global warming – a crisis in our national water supplies is already upon us. That is why we need to manage our water resources with utmost care and a long term perspective. We will have significant global warming. We must act accordingly.

> *"Based on new insights into the uncertainty ranges of climate sensitivity, a stabilisation at 450 ppmv CO_2 equivalent would imply a medium likelihood (~50%) of staying below 2°C warming."* International Symposium on the Stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations, *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change*, Hadley Centre, Met Office, Exeter Uk, 2005, pp. 6-7.

And finally if we are going to face this challenge as a community we believe everyone needs to do their fair share. An equal carbon quota system seems to be the only fair and efficient way. It is also one of the immediate steps that will provide the incentives for quick results.



> *"The current level or stock of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is equivalent to around 430 parts per million (ppm) CO_{2e}, compared with only 280ppm before the Industrial Revolution. These concentrations have already caused the world to warm by more than half a degree Celsius and will lead to at least a further half degree warming over the next few decades, because of the inertia in the climate system .*
>
> *Even if the annual flow of emissions did not increase beyond today's rate, the stock of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would reach double pre-industrial levels by 2050 - that is 550ppm CO2e - and would continue growing thereafter. But the annual flow of emissions is accelerating, as fast-growing economies invest in highcarbon infrastructure and as demand for energy and transport increases around the world. The level of 550ppm CO2e could be reached as early as 2035.* ***At this level there is at least a 77% chance - and perhaps up to a 99% chance, depending on the climate model used - of a global average temperature rise exceeding 2°C".***
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> **Stern Report, *The Economics of Climate Change*, Exec. Summary, 2006, p. iii.**

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Tell others about the emergency and the need for the Government to show real leadership and courage
- Sign the petition
- Organise in your suburb, workplace, school or wherever to pressure the Government to recognise the state of emergency.

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