

## **Act hastily, roo the scare tactics**

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*October 2, 2008*

I don't want to eat kangaroo. Ever. It's dark, chewy, gamey and smelly. But, says Ross Garnaut, the Government's economics guru on climate change, kangaroo is what we will all have to eat in a few years. Beef and lamb will be reserved only for the very wealthy in the brave new future he envisages, in which Australia leads the world on tackling climate change.

If we don't, he said on Tuesday, releasing his 652-page study on the cost of climate change, "the failure of our generation will haunt humanity until the end of time". Cue spooky music.

In Chapter 22, "Reforming Land Use", Professor Garnaut spells out the kangaroo solution, with a plan to push Australian culinary habits back to prehistoric times. "For most of Australia's human history - around 60,000 years - kangaroo was the main source of meat. It could again become important."

The idea is to knock off 7 million beef cattle and 36 million sheep by 2020 and replace them with 240 million kangaroos, which virtuously barely burp or fart the greenhouse gas methane, unlike their bovine and ovine peers.

Then there's the little bit in Garnaut's report about escalating prices of electricity, gas and petrol. He has forecast electricity prices to rise between 21 and 37 per cent - or up to \$450 a year for the average family.

Garnaut's timing was unfortunate; his scheduled press conference with Kevin Rudd had to be delayed while the Prime Minister busied himself with reacting to the latest crisis from Wall Street.

The good news is the global financial meltdown means the Government is unlikely to follow the most extreme urgings of the climate industry to further endanger Australia's economy, not to mention its palates, with reckless promises of leading the world with deep cuts to emissions. The Garnaut report, at least, has described as "delusional" the idea, pushed by many in the climate industry, that Australia can go it alone in the absence of a global consensus.

The maths is simple. Australia was responsible for 1.5 per cent of global emissions in 2005, dropping to 1.1 per cent by 2030, says Garnaut. The world's largest emitter, China, will go from 18.3 per cent in 2005 to 33 per cent in 2030, with the second largest emitter, the United States, dropping to 11.1 per cent.

So even if you believe everything coming out of the monopoly Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and even if all Australians and their farm animals

committed hara-kiri, the long-term impact on global warming of the mass martyrdom would be negligible.

The Prime Minister keeps saying that "the cost of inaction will be far greater than the cost of action".

So if our actions mean nothing and the cost of inaction is greater, then we will have to pay the price of action as well as inaction.

The argument is "similar to advising a man with a gangrenous leg that paying \$50,000 for an aspirin is a good deal because the cost compares favourably to the cost of inaction, which is losing the leg," Danish statistician Bjorn Lomborg, wrote last month. "Of course, the aspirin doesn't prevent that outcome."

Nevertheless, the Government is in the unenviable position of trying to placate the climate industry and green groups, while keeping the economy safe.

The pressure is intense. Last week an open letter to Rudd from Australia's self-described "leading climate scientists" - all 16 of them - warned of dire consequences of not acting now: "Many millions of people from around the world will be at risk from extreme events such as heatwaves, drought, fire, floods and storms, our coasts and cities will be threatened by rising sea levels, vector-borne, water- and food-borne diseases will spread rapidly ..."

They urged the Government to commit as a "minimum" to an emission reduction target for Australia of 25 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.

This represents the most extreme of the three scenarios costed by Garnaut: 5 per cent, 10 per cent or 25 per cent reductions by 2020. And without a global deal, even a 10 per cent target is overly ambitious.

The signatories might do well to heed the words of the eminent New Zealand naturalist, the late Sir Charles Fleming, who said in 1986 that: "Any body of scientists that adopts pressure group tactics is endangering its status as the guardian of principles of scientific philosophy that are worth conserving."

Fleming is quoted in a speech to be delivered at a climate change conference in Canberra next week by Professor Bob Carter, a geologist of James Cook University in Townsville, a climate change "thought criminal", who has been a thorn in the side of the consensus lobby.

Carter pointed out yesterday that Garnaut's economic analysis has been erected on the "faulty ... politically tainted science" of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This means, "that the economics, however elegant, is worthless.

"Before human-caused global warming can become an economic problem, it first has to be identified by scientific study as a dangerous hazard for the planet, distinct from natural climate change."

Carter's address is based on his paper just published in the Journal Of The Economic Society of Australia, "Knock knock: Where is the evidence for dangerous human-caused global warming?"

Climate change is an important subject for research but it has been hijacked by "a combustible combination of poor science, special-interest-group pleading and public hysteria, which together distract from, rather than deal with, the very real risks of natural climate change".

There has never been any question that human-caused climate change is real. But the important question is "what is the sign and magnitude of the net global human effect on climate, and can it be measured?"

Yet, "no summed human effect on global temperature has ever been identified or measured". He says the Kyoto protocol has produced no measurable environmental benefits and "attempting to 'stop climate change', or, in the present state of our knowledge and technology, even to modify it, is an Arcadian fantasy."

But it is a fantasy that suits some, especially those experiencing schadenfreude about the economic meltdown. Take the geniuses at [www.crikey.com.au](http://www.crikey.com.au) who think "the death of Wall Street has saved the polar bear" because consumption will be slashed. It's a greenie's dream: no more plasma TVs, less food, and just the little problem of mass unemployment. Yay!