

## **Ian Plimer Joins Lateline Business**

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### **Transcript**

TICKY FULLERTON, PRESENTER: There's another voice raising alarm at the impact of emissions trading on the resource sector.

Professor Ian Plimer is one of the few scientists roundly pooh poohing the theory of human induced climate change. He is a geologist, not a climatologist who argues that actual events in the earth's history tells us far more than climate models of the future.

As Professor of Mining Geology at the University of Adelaide, Ian Plimer by definition works closely with the mining industry, where he says there's a growing backlash against the current thinking on emissions.

Professor Ian Plimer, welcome to Lateline Business.

PROFESSOR IAN PLIMER MINING GEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE:  
Thank You.

TICKY FULLERTON: You are a greenhouse heretic, if I may say so. How can so many governments and the media have got it wrong?

IAN PLIMER: Well heretic is quite correct. That's a religious word and that's what we're dealing with- a modern political religion.

Governments do not seem to understand that the UN is a political organisation and there were scientists who were seeking fame and fortune, there's not much money around, and if you can get on that bandwagon, then you can have yourself funded and have a great party frightening people witless.

TICKY FULLERTON: So what do you think the science is that proves your case?

IAN PLIMER: The science that defiantly proves my case is history. Looking back at history, looking at archaeology, looking at geology. And it shows us that the planet is dynamic, the planet is always changing, some of these changes are as

cycles.

And what we're seeing today are changes that are far less than anything we've ever seen in the past. I look in my area of expertise, which is geology, and we look at how sea levels rise and fall, and they always have, but they've risen and fallen up to 600 metres.

The sea level changes we've had in the last 12,000 years have been about a centimetre a year. That's what the IPCC are claiming is going to happen in 100 years.

That doesn't really frighten us, that's happened before. In geology we look at changing climates, and we see periods in the past when we had very high carbon dioxide contents yet we had glaciations.

So explain that. They sit under the oceans, provide a lot of heat to the ocean, they put a huge amount of carbon dioxide into ocean water that doesn't have much carbon dioxide in it, and it later is vented out.

TICKY FULLERTON: But Professor, why not back the precautionary principle and accept that perhaps there might be a tipping point looking forward on climate change.

IAN PLIMER: There's no such thing as precautionary principle in science, and if there was in society you'd never get out of bed. The second thing is that we've had plenty of opportunity in the last 4,500 million years when we had high carbon dioxide contents and we had very warm climates in the past.

We had plenty of opportunity for a tipping point.

TICKY FULLERTON: Well we could talk long into the night about this I know, but what I am interested in this is the talk that you gave last week to the Sydney Mining Club.

What sort of response did you get?

IAN PLIMER: Well I had a phenomenal response. It was overbooked, people couldn't come in, I'm getting a couple of hundred emails a day as a result of it.

TICKY FULLERTON: Is the scepticism genuine or is this also about economic self interest.

IAN PLIMER: Well I can't speak for others but scepticism is an integral part of science and when we have sceptical views regarded pejoratively then I think we're abandoning science.

And I would argue that the current campaign is one that has abandoned science and has taken on the place of socialism and a new type of religion.

TICKY FULLERTON: How do you think the mining industry has handled its case lobbying Government?

IAN PLIMER: Well the mining industry doesn't lobby very hard, it's too busy creating wealth in isolated outback areas where people don't have employment.

It is very hard for junior and medium sized mining companies to lobby government. And for the bigger mining companies, they can easily move somewhere else and take their operations elsewhere.

I see that if this goes through to its natural course, we could destroy Australia's greatest wealth generating industry, and that's the mining industry. And we all live off the mining industry.

We do not live off the sheep's back; we live off the mining industry.

TICKY FULLERTON: What do you think the Emissions Trading Scheme is going to do to the mining industry?

IAN PLIMER: It will probably destroy it totally, it'll create massive unemployment and we'll have a change of Government. That's the very clear message...

TICKY FULLERTON: That you're getting that from the industry?

IAN PLIMER: Yes, very much so. It will certainly change Government because a lot of the workers in the mining industry supported the current Government, and they will not support the current Government if it looks as if they're going to lose their jobs.

So I see the Government has to tread very carefully in balancing ideology with pragmatism and the pragmatism is that it is a brave Government that will put people out of work.

TICKY FULLERTON: Do you think the financial meltdown has made a difference to how industry is looking at spending on climate change?

IAN PLIMER: Well I think its forced people to think about their costs in much more detail, and there have been a lot of sceptical views out there and people are saying, "Well let's revisit these, let us really think whether this is a smart thing to do."

Even if Australia does do something about climate it's not going to affect the

globe, it's a very, very big planet. And we're just going to leave ourselves open to lose all our markets.

TICKY FULLERTON: Professor Ian Plimer, thank you for talking to Lateline Business.

IAN PLIMER: It's a pleasure.