

This is the text of a letter from Bob Thomas, published in the local press after Professor Robert Carter gave his talk on 19 Feb 2009, and after Professor Robert Carter had replied to Dr David Tranter's letter.

### **Titles don't mean greater knowledge**

I was recently reminded how wary one has to be of titles.

“Professor” conveys the impression of great academic acumen, but one is wise to remember that, while this is true in regard to a particular field of study, a professor can be as ignorant as anyone else in areas outside his or her area of expertise.

It would be wise for the [newspaper] to [be] equally wary.

In Prof Bob Carter's letter, he criticised the official views of the Royal Society of London by saying that most of the members “have no more knowledge of climate science than any other variegated group of scientists, and ... their prime concern is with ... safeguarding its funding sources.”

He neglected to mention that neither is he a climate scientist, nor does he mention his funding sources or his other motivations for taking a contrarian view to the widespread scientific consensus on climate change.

His suggestion that the views of the Royal Society are motivated by money doesn't say much for his hosts here, either.

He then seems to contradict his criticism of the Royal Society by saying that “in any case, you do not need [an] advanced science degree ... to understand the simple commonsensical facts that are relevant ...”.

I have gleaned the following from a very brief research foray:

The *Sydney Morning Herald* ran an article in March 2007 which noted that “Professor Carter, whose background is in marine geology, appears to have little, if any, standing in the Australian climate science community.”

Prof Carter is on the research committee of an organisation called the “Institute for Public Affairs” (IPA).

The IPA is an Australian-based organisation (some would call it a right-wing think tank) that has received funding from the fossil fuel industry.

In reference to his involvement with the IPA, Carter stated in a March 15, 2007 *Sydney Morning Herald* article, that “I don't think it is the point whether you are paid by the coal or petroleum industry.”

In response to claims by Carter that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change uncovered no evidence that global warming was caused by human activity, a former CSIRO climate scientist stated that Carter was not a credible source on climate change, and that “if he [Carter] has any evidence that [global warming over the past 100 years] is a natural variability, he should publish through the peer review process”.

Perhaps Prof Carter shows his true colours in the last paragraph of his letter:

“That introducing carbon dioxide taxation legislation ... is an expensive exercise.”

This is just what one would expect from a friend of the fossil fuel industry.

It is good and proper that science is an arena in which scientists challenge one another on the basis of the science, but this debate [is more] properly done in scientific journals, universities and conferences, rather than criticising other scientists in the public arena to people who are ill-equipped to discern between a scientist and a snake-oil salesman.

This is particularly so on an issue so vital to the well-being of people and their environment as is climate change, in which there has already been potentially destructive delays in taking meaningful action to ameliorate the problem.

**BOB THOMAS**

Bundanoon