

**Report of June Meeting  
Royal Society  
Southern Highlands Branch**

**Speaker: Dr Ian Plimer**

**Professor of Geology, University of Adelaide.**

**Emeritus Professor of Earth Sciences, University of  
Melbourne.**

**Topic: Global Warming – The Missing Science:  
Why I am sceptical of human-induced climate change.**

The Southern Highlands Branch meeting of 17 June 2010 was held at 6.30pm in the Drama Theatre, Frensham School, Mittagong. On a crisp Highlands evening, an audience of 86 people assembled to hear Plimer's lecture. Many arrived early with copies of his seventh book, the bestselling *Heaven and Earth – Global Warming: The Missing Science*, taking advantage of the opportunity to have their copies signed by the author. Ian Plimer happily obliged.

Ian Plimer began his lecture by presenting data on the cyclical nature of climate change throughout both the modern industrial age and the pre-industrial period, going back to 600 million years ago. Such a wide time period under consideration allowed comparison between times when man's contribution to global carbon dioxide concentrations was negligible, to more recent times when numerous scientists around the world are attributing observable changes in climate to measurable changes in man's carbon dioxide emissions. Plimer emphasised that climate has always changed and always will, and went on to comprehensively refute the widely held belief that man's contribution to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is the cause of climate change.

Professor Plimer cited evidence from ice core work at the South Pole to demonstrate that there is no relationship between global temperature and carbon dioxide concentrations. Warmings in the industrial age have occurred in 1860-1880, 1910-1940, and 1975-1998. However, carbon dioxide rise correlates only with the most recent warming. Industrial age coolings have occurred in 1880-1910, 1940-1975 and 1998-present. In all of these, carbon dioxide levels increased. In five of the six great ice ages, atmospheric carbon dioxide was up to 1000 times higher than today's levels.

Plimer showed from his data that the warming effect of carbon dioxide on the atmosphere is 1.5 degrees for the first 20 parts per million, but after that, the concentration can be doubled and quadrupled with no further effect. History shows that in times when the

carbon dioxide levels were 100 times the current levels, there was no global warming. Instead, there was glaciation.

The conclusions to be drawn from the presented data are that current changes in climate, sea level and ice are within natural variability. Climate has always been driven by the sun, the earth's orbit and plate tectonics. Throughout it all, humans have thrived in warm times and struggled in cool times. During a previous warm period, the warmth was such that on Greenland, barley and wheat were grown, and the land supported cattle and sheep. The hypothesis that humans can actually change climate is unsupported by evidence from geology, archeology, history and astronomy.

Carbon dioxide is absolutely vital for living on earth. Ian Plimer calls it "plant food", and adds that to demonise it shows a lack of school child science. He likens the present conflicting views on climate change to the situation in recent times when the prevailing belief was that stomach ulcers were the result of an acid stomach and stress. It took the efforts of two Western Australian scientists to prove from scientific evidence that bacteria were the cause. They ingested the bacteria, gave themselves ulcers and proved that the scientific community had been quite wrong. Ian Plimer believes that in time he too will be proven correct in his views on the disconnect between carbon dioxide concentration and climate change. He says that science must work on evidence, not consensus.

At the end of this thought-provoking and very popular lecture, Ian addressed numerous questions from the audience. The vote of thanks was given by Anne Wood.

Anne Wood