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OPINIONS

# Save the soil to save the Earth: A Ronald Amundson

[Sara Zaske](#) is a journalist whose articles have appeared on ZDNet.com, Time.com and The Times newspaper, among other places. She is also the author of the novel, *The First* (2012). She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area

1,100 words


Edited by [Pam Weintraub](#)

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Will we save the Earth before we are forced to abandon it for fresh new worlds?

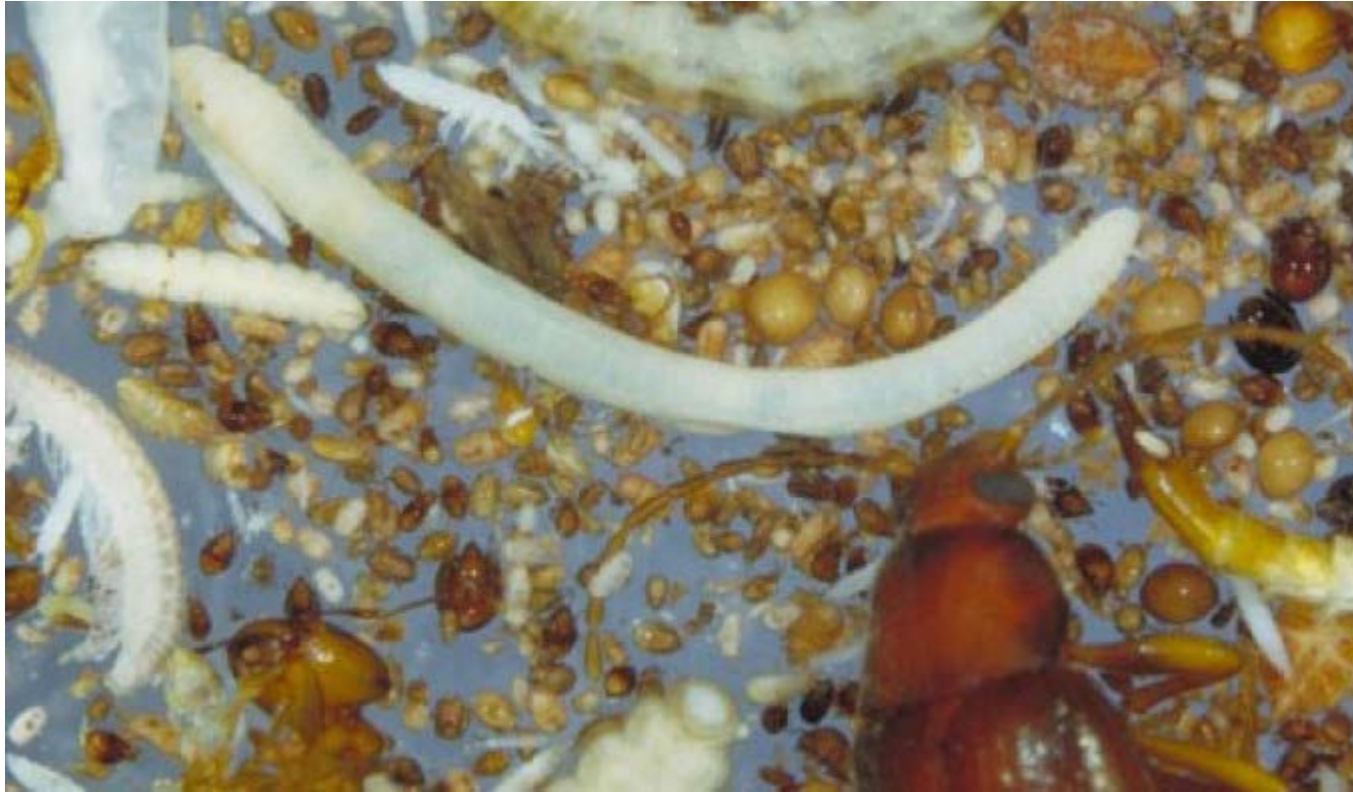
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Ronald Amundson is professor of environmental science at the University of California, Berkeley, and dirt is his life's work. He grew up on a farm in South Dakota and credits a great high-school teacher for inspiring him to look at the more 'intellectual aspects of soil'. Since then, Amundson has gone on to study the desert-like soils on Mars as well as the life-supporting soils on Earth. He was recently the lead author on a paper about the state of the world's soils. (Spoiler alert: it's not good.) Aeon asked Amundson how we can do with our soil – or whether we should start the surface of Mars as our future.

*Why should we be so worried about the*

<https://aeon.co/opinions/save-the-soil-to-save-the-earth-before-we-have-to-leave-it>

# Enhancing our soils' biodiversity can improve human health



23 Nov, 2015 by [Mary Guiden](#)  
[Print this article](#) Font size -16+

*A look at soil biodiversity, or the living organisms found in soil. Photo courtesy of CSU Professor Diana Wall*

Colorado State University's Diana Wall and coauthors make the case to integrate soil biodiversity research into human health studies in a [paper published online](#) in *Nature* November 23.

“If we improve our management of land to enhance the biodiversity in our soils, we’ll improve human health,” said Wall, professor in CSU’s Department of Biology, research scientist in the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory and director, School of Global Environmental Sustainability. Soil biodiversity refers to the variety of life and organisms that exist within a forest, agricultural field, park or even on a dirt road.

<http://source.colostate.edu/enhancing-our-soils-biodiversity-can-improve-human-health/>



## Preserve soil's riches

*Nature Geoscience* **8**, 891 (2015) | doi:10.1038/ngeo2617

Published online 27 November 2015



**The International Year of Soils draws attention to our vital dependence on the fertile crumb beneath our feet. Soil is renewable, but it takes careful stewardship to keep it healthy and plentiful.**

**Subject terms:** [Biogeochemistry](#) · [Climate-change mitigation](#) · [Climate-change policy](#) ·

[Environmental chemistry](#) · [Environmental economics](#) · [Sustainability](#)

Soil is sometimes described as the Earth's skin — a thin living membrane stretching across landscapes. It is, in many ways, one of the vital organs that support life on the planet. Soils contain three times as much carbon as plants, and twice the amount found in the Earth's atmosphere. We rely on it for the vast majority of our agricultural production. It provides nutrients and water for the world's forests, grasslands and deserts. It filters and retains water. It's a locus for the cycling of nutrients and heavy metals, and both a source and sink of greenhouse gases. In short, soil is a physical and biogeochemical wonderland.

<http://www.nature.com/ngeo/journal/v8/n12/full/ngeo2617.html>

## Healthy soils can play a key role in tackling climate change

**Press Release**

**Brussels, 4 December 2016**

While the focus of the climate talks in Paris is on the big picture of decarbonising the global economy, one important way to tackle climate change that has not yet appeared in any headlines is that of looking after our soil. 2015 is the United Nations International Year of Soils [1] and world leaders agreed in September to “progressively improve land and soil quality and “strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world” [2].

*“However, healthy soils in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation are nowhere to be seen in the COP21 discussions in Paris,”* said **Balázs Horváth, EEB Senior Policy Officer Water and Soil.** *“On World Soil Day this Saturday, negotiators in Paris should acknowledge that soil can be one of the world’s greatest allies against climate change.”*

One of the objectives of the EU Seventh Environmental Action Programme (7EAP) is to ensure that land is managed sustainably and that soil is adequately protected in the EU by 2020 [3]. But soils in Europe are under increasing pressure. Citizens are already waking up to this and 150 European organisations, including the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), under the People4Soil initiative, [4] are calling for EU leaders to keep soils healthy by establishing a coherent pan-European soil policy [5].

<http://www.eeb.org/index.cfm/news-events/news/healthy-soils-can-play-a-key-role-in-tackling-climate-change/>

# How understanding microbes can help farmers manage Africa's soil crisis

November 16, 2015 3:16pm AEDT



Tens of millions of smallholder farmers across sub-Saharan Africa have a stake in improving the health of the soil their cattle graze on. Reuters/Goran Tomasevic

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To harness the potential of soil [microbes](#) Africa must move quickly. As soil degrades, so too does microbial life.

Understanding the microbial diversity of Africa's soils is important for another reason as well. At least some portion of this diversity is indigenous to particular soils, crops and ecosystems developed over thousands of years of farming.

<http://theconversation.com/how-understanding-microbes-can-help-farmers-manage-africas-soil-crisis-50469>

## Ploughing On Regardless

Almost all other issues are superficial by comparison to soil loss. So why don't we talk about it?

By [George Monbiot](#)

Imagine a wonderful world, a planet on which there was no threat of climate breakdown, no loss of freshwater, no antibiotic resistance, no obesity crisis, no terrorism, no war. Surely, then, we would be out of major danger? Sorry. Even if everything else were miraculously fixed, we're knackered if we don't address an issue considered so marginal and irrelevant that you can go for months without seeing it in a newspaper.



*Photo credit: Alex Proimos on flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)*

It's literally and – it seems – metaphorically, beneath us. To judge by its absence from the media, most journalists consider it unworthy of consideration. But all human life depends on it. We knew this long ago, but somehow it has been forgotten. As a Sanskrit text written in around 1500 BC noted, “Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it and it will grow our food, our fuel, and our shelter and surround us with beauty. Abuse it and the soil will collapse and die, taking humanity with it”. <http://globalsoilweek.org/news-and-opinion/guest-blog-by-george-monbiot-ploughing-on-regardless>

## Opinion: We have neglected our soils for too long

[David Alvis](#)

Thursday 19 November 2015 8:04



Agritechnica. It's a biennial celebration of metal, rubber and glass that draws farmers and machinery dealers from across Europe and beyond to the German city of Hanover every second November, in search of the latest offerings from the world of agricultural mechanisation.

This event has become a Mecca for the progressive, the forward-thinking and the dynamic, looking for the cutting-edge in a competitive world of crop production.

One might expect the highlight of such an event to be something that challenges convention – the application of new technology that offers an alternative to the status quo and, with it, a potential quantum leap forward in productivity

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/farm-life/opinion-we-have-neglected-our-soils-for-too-long.htm>

# Want to save the environment? Let's leave the collapse porn under the mattress

December 9, 2015 6:15am AEDT



Is the "end of the world" the best way to understand our ecological woes? chiotrun/flickr, CC BY-NC

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Collapse porn. Apocalyptic. Eco-rapture.

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These are labels UK science journalist Leigh Phillips has given to a growing genre of environmental writing. Prominent among them are Naomi Klein's [This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate](#) (2014), James Kunstler's [The Long Emergency](#) (2005), Paul Kingsnorth's [Uncivilization](#) (2009), John Zerzan [Against Civilization](#) (2005), and Dereck Jensen's [Endgame: The problem of civilization](#) (2006)

<http://theconversation.com/want-to-save-the-environment-lets-leave-the-collapse-porn-under-the-mattress-51575>

## Witnessing earthquake inspires young engineer to soil research

3 December 2015



According to postgraduate research student Wang Shengzhe from the University of Sydney's School of Civil Engineering, our understanding of soils' behaviour is still minimal

After living through a 6.5 magnitude earthquake in the New Zealand capital Wellington in 2013, 23-year-old Wang left his structural engineering role with a professional consultancy to take up a research degree into soil movement, in the hope of preventing future disasters. <http://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2015/12/03/witnessing-earthquake-inspires-young-engineer-to-soil-research.html>

## Large scale soil restoration for climate change adaptation, mitigation and food security – what's in it for smallholder farmers?

Global Soil Week > News and Opinion > News > [Large scale soil restoration for climate change adaptation, mitigation and food security – what's in it for smallholder farmers?](#)



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### Ockham's Razor

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## Investing in science

Listen now Download audio show transcript

Sunday 29 November 2015 7:45AM (view full episode)

Taking science out of the lab and on to the streets—that's the focus of this week's *Ockham's Razor*. PhD student Diana Zanfirache, believes that in order for Australia to create a strong economy, future investment in science and innovation is paramount. And to achieve this, a broad strategic approach to science needs to be implemented, specially in rural Australia.



IMAGE: DIANA ZANFIRACHE WITH STUDENTS IN ROMA, QUEENSLAND DURING THE 'WONDER OF SCIENCE' STUDENT CONFERENCE.



Sundays 7:45am Presented by Robyn Williams

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/investing-in-science/6972288>



## Connecting the dots: the Northern Territory enters the eastern gas market

December 8, 2015 11:34am AEDT

It has been argued that connecting the pipeline to the Moomba gas hub (pictured) would have been more beneficial for the sector. Santos Ltd/AAP

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The Northern Territory (NT) government recently [announced](#) that Jemena, a company that owns and operates major Australian electricity and gas infrastructure and is owned by a combination of Chinese and Singaporean interests, will construct a gas pipeline from Tennant Creek in the NT to Mt Isa in Queensland.

The North East Gas Interconnector will connect NT gas pipelines with the eastern market

<http://theconversation.com/connecting-the-dots-the-northern-territory-enters-the-eastern-gas-market-51463>

## Land Degradation Endangers Livelihoods and Climate

The land on our planet is rapidly degrading, causing a chain reaction of loss of livelihood, hunger, land-use change, higher greenhouse gas emissions, and human migration. A recent scientific study on global land degradation estimates that 23% of global land is already degraded, at the unfathomable rate of 5-10 million hectares per year. Climate change exasperates the chain reaction of land degradation.



<http://globalsoilweek.org/areas-of-work/sustainable-land-management/soil-restoration-climate-change-adaptation-mitigation-food-security>



## Want to build better cities? Get the private sector involved in rail projects

December 11, 2015 3:14pm AEDT

Rail needs to go where it will do the most to reinvigorate cities. Tooykrub / Shutterstock.com

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Our cities are slowing down. Traffic speeds have slowed in the world's cities and [rail transit](#) is now faster than road speeds in most cities.

Rail is needed in all of the world's cities as it can enable travel time saving efficiencies [no longer achievable by car and bus](#). Rail can carry 20 times as much compared to a single lane of freeway and five to 10 times that of a bus way

<http://theconversation.com/want-to-build-better-cities-get-the-private-sector-involved-in-rail-projects-52204>



Can Australians stomach a small, scientifically-sound whale harvest? Whale meat image from [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

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Last week Japan's whaling fleet set sail for Antarctica again under its new scientific whaling program NEWREP-A. In 2014 the International Court of Justice [decided](#) that Japan's previous program was not scientific.

But this year Japan [renounced](#) its recognition of the court's jurisdiction on whales, effectively ruling out [further legal challenges](#).

<http://theconversation.com/a-necessary-harvest-its-time-to-allow-japan-to-kill-whales-51740>

# Paris climate deal: key points at a glance

The goal of 1.5C is a big leap below the 2C agreed six years ago in Copenhagen. Here's what the agreement means for global emissions and the future of the planet



📷 A demonstration in Paris during the UN climate change conference. Photograph: Agung Parameswara/Getty Images

## Keeping temperature rises below 1.5C

Governments have agreed to limit warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels: something that would have seemed unthinkable just a few months ago.

There is a scientific rationale for the number. John Schellhuber, a scientist who advises Germany and the Vatican, says 1.5C marks the point where there is a real danger of serious “tipping points” in the world’s climate.

**Adam Vaughan** is editor of the Guardian's environment site

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/12/paris-climate-deal-key-points>

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## Debunking the 'coal will rescue the world from poverty' lie

BERNARD KEANE | DEC 14, 2015 1:10PM | [EMAIL](#) | [PRINT](#)

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The claim that coal is crucial to rescuing hundreds of millions of people in developing countries from poverty is now a key argument of the coal industry. It's a lie.

While the climate agreement in Paris is being hailed as the beginning of the end of fossil fuels, the Turnbull government is having none of it. "Coal-fired power generation is here to stay," Foreign Minister Julie Bishop defiantly declared last week. "Fossil fuels will remain critical to promoting prosperity, growing economies, alleviating hunger for years to come." And

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/12/14/debunking-the-coal-will-rescue-the-world-from-poverty-lie/>



Big Ideas

# Climate change: will the Paris talks make a difference?

▶ Listen now    ▶ Download audio

Monday 14 December 2015 8:05PM [\(view full episode\)](#)

Delegates from around the world have been meeting in Paris to agree on how to meaningfully **address climate change**. But what exactly will the UN climate conference achieve? Some say limiting a global temperature rise to 1.5 or - at the most - 2 degrees is the bottom line we should be striving for. Are global agreements and targets the best way to tackle climate change? What more can Australia do to mitigate its effects? What are the barriers to action? Paul Barclay talks Ian Lowe, Liz Minchin and Jane Rawson.



IMAGE: PROTESTERS MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD AT THE COP 21 UN CONFERENCE IN PARIS. (GETTY IMAGES/AFP/DOMINIQUE FAGET)



Monday to Thursday 8pm  
Repeated: Tuesday to Friday 3am,  
and Sundays at 9am

Presented by Paul Barclay

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/climate-change:-will-the-paris-talks-make-a-difference/7018454>



**COP 21: UN climate change conference | Paris**

## Only strong policies can deliver a world free of fossil fuels

### Angus MacNeil

Britain needs a clear and consistent approach to meet its Paris climate pledge - and that means embracing clean energy, says Energy and Climate Change Committee chair, Angus MacNeil

MacNeil is chair of the Energy and Climate Change Committee

Friday 4 December 2015 23.42 AEDT



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French president François Hollande, centre, with other international delegates, including London mayor Boris Johnson, left, at the Paris climate summit. Photograph: Stephane de Sakutin/AFP/Getty Images

Oil tankers take a long time to turn around. The skyscraper-length ships carry so much weight and momentum that turning one 180 degrees takes at least 40 minutes even in calm seas. It is a fitting metaphor for the challenge our leaders face at [the climate summit in Paris](#) as they try to steer a new direction away from fossil fuels.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/04/paris-climate-only-strong-policies-can-deliver-a-world-free-of-fossil-fuels>

## Turnbull and Paris: Who will speak for the sceptics now?

OPINION

By [Annabel Crabb](#)

Posted yesterday at 12:02pm Mon 14 Dec 2015, 12:02pm



**Photo:** [The existence of a global agreement on climate change will alter the dynamics of environmental politics in Canberra. \(AAP: Sam Mooy\)](#)

*The ascension of Malcolm Turnbull and the existence of the new Paris climate agreement raises a fascinating question: which political entity now speaks for the climate sceptics? Watch this space, because it won't be empty for long, writes Annabel Crabb.*

With its customarily exhilarating sense of possibility, the Australian climate policy chocolate wheel has spun again in the last fortnight and tick-tick-ticked to a halt with the needle pointing shakily to: We're back on.

We've tried so many variations over the years.

We've had a conservative government that came home from Kyoto in 1997 ululating with delight over a climate deal that gave Australia much latitude, to be criticised at home by the Labor Party for not going hard enough. That was John Howard's government, from 1997 to about the turn of the century.

[Annabel Crabb](#) is the ABC's chief online political writer. She tweets at [@annabelcrabb](#).

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-14/crabb-turnbull-and-paris:-who-will-speak-for-the-sceptics-now/7025804>

# Are rich countries selling the developing world short on climate change?

Rich countries say they are on track to beating the \$100bn climate fund target, but poorer countries criticise the unfair burden of loans and a stark lack of money for adaptation



📷 The problem of the \$100bn is not whether it will be reached – it almost certainly will – but how. Photograph: Patrick Aventurier/Getty Images

Poor countries at climate talks in Paris have railed against an attempt to water down assistance promised to help them overcome the climate crisis they did not cause.

Rich countries are committed to provide \$100bn (£66bn) to developing countries by 2020. More than any other, this figure will decide the fate of the talks billed to stop climate change.

Karl Mathiesen is an environmental journalist. He writes the Guardian's Eco Audit.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/04/are-rich-countries-selling-the-developing-world-short-on-climate-change>



## The oceans are coming for us: how should we plan for dire sea level forecasts?

December 14, 2015 6:27am AEDT

Damage to the New Jersey coast caused by Hurricane Sandy. EPA/MASTER SGT. MARK OLSEN / US AIR FORCE

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You may have seen [recent maps](#) showing how sea level rise may effect wide, including Australian cities. These maps have been produced by [Climate Central](#).

For instance the video below shows what they forecast sea level rise w Melbourne with 4°C and 2°C of warming. This is not necessarily sea level over the coming century, but the eventual sea level locked in under p scenarios. It could take under 200 years or up to 2,000 for sea levels t

The picture isn't pretty.

<http://theconversation.com/the-oceans-are-coming-for-us-how-should-we-plan-for-dire-sea-level-forecasts-51254>



Global  
Soil Week

## Bridging Knowledge. Empowering Transformation.

### IASS and Partners launch Policy Brief with Proposals for the Review and Follow-up of the SDGs for Soils and Land

The protection of soils and land will contribute to the achievement of at least nine of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is therefore necessary to develop appropriate strategies to monitor the use of these resources. At the same time, the success of the post-2015 agenda will largely depend on its effective implementation and trickling-down to the regional and national level which is why issues, such as how financing for development can be effectively organized, how to monitor implementation and how to ensure ownership, are taking centre stage.

<http://globalsoilweek.org/news-and-opinion/news/iass-and-partners-launch-policy-brief-with-proposals-for-the-review-and-follow-up-of-the-sdgs-for-soils-and-land>

## For the sake of our health, let's hope for an ambitious climate agreement

OPINION

By [Richard Di Natale](#)

Posted Fri at 3:44pm Fri 11 Dec 2015, 3:44pm



**Photo:** [The link between climate change and health has not been adequately addressed at the Paris climate conference. \(Center for Disease Control\)](#)

*The current negotiations in Paris around climate change are just as much about people's health as they are about the health of the planet. It's time we recognised this, writes Richard Di Natale.*

There has been a lot of discussion about what will be left in or out of the climate agreement being thrashed out in Paris this week.

Emissions targets, climate financing and long-term decarbonisation are all points of contention. But one issue that hasn't received much publicity is the debate about an

explicit reference to the health impacts of climate change being included in the text. Apart from a mention in the preamble it now looks like this critical issue will end up on the cutting room floor.





It's particularly disappointing given the World Health Organization says the outcome of current negotiations in Paris may be the most important health agreement of the century. This claim isn't referring to the health of the climate or the environment; it is referring to the health of everyone on the planet.

*[Richard Di Natale](#) is the Leader of the Australian Greens.*

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-11/di-natale-paris-climate-conference-overlooks-health-impacts/7021510>



While low emissions technology might help coal, there are plenty of other energy sources competing in the post-Paris climate race. Coal image from [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

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The ink is barely dry on the [Paris climate agreement](#) and the debate has already started on how the deal will affect the future of fossil fuels, particularly coal.

Following the deal on Sunday, the mining industry has [responded](#) that Australian coal will remain an important provider of affordable energy to developing countries. The industry argues new low emissions technologies will keep coal in business as the world cuts carbon.

<http://theconversation.com/after-paris-the-future-of-australian-coal-is-downhill-51391>

## Wind storm of green energy is a flat calm

By [Mark S. Lawson](#) - posted Monday, 14 December 2015

Renewable energy was a major topic at the Paris climate conference but in Australia, despite all the green energy hype and discussion over the Renewable Energy Target, investment in green energy projects has tailed off to almost nothing.

This marked lack of activity, despite hopeful stories about how green energy is now cheaper than conventional fuel generators, underlines the point that energy retailers won't bother with alternate projects unless they are forced to do so.

And they are not being forced at the moment. Despite a bipartisan deal on the RET being hammered out in May, a disastrous decision by the Rudd government in 2010 has crippled the market. Investment in renewables collapsed in 2014 and has stayed very low.

**Mark Lawson** has been a journalist for nearly 25 years. He has worked in trade publications (IT, travel, hospitality, printing ect), on suburbans in Melbourne and on regional Victorian newspapers. But the bulk of his career has been on *The Australian Financial Review* as editorial writer for several years, science columnist, Perth bureau chief, companies and business writer.

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17893>

## How does coal fit in with this innovation agenda?

OPINION

By [Ben Oquist](#)

Updated 8 Dec 2015, 11:54am Tue 8 Dec 2015, 11:54am



**Photo:** An old industry reliant on digging up black rocks and burning them is surely an industry ready to be 'disrupted'. (AAP)

*Malcolm Turnbull's innovation statement failed to put the renewable sector front and centre, with innovators and investors in effect being told that this is one area where the ideas boom is not welcome, writes Ben Oquist.*

The Paris climate change discussions are dominated by targets. What percentage of reduction of emissions, off which baseline, is required to reach which temperature target? What pledges would help the world get to a safe climate? Is 2 degrees

warming too much, as a growing body of evidence says 1.5 degrees or 350 parts per million is needed for a safe climate?

*[Ben Oquist](#) is the executive director of *The Australia Institute*.*

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-07/oquist-how-does-coal-fit-in-with-this-'innovation'-agenda/7007536>

## A royal commission into climate alarmism

By [Rod McGarvie](#) - posted Tuesday, 8 December 2015

World leaders have gathered in Paris for the Global Climate Conference, which is strangely similar to the Monty Python 'Dead Parrot' sketch – with salesmen trying hard to convince the world that the extreme global warming narrative is still alive and well.

The climate alarmism marketing campaign must be one of most successful global campaigns ever run. They have been able to consistently roll out a frightening story almost every week. Each story has an element of truth woven through the alarmist narrative, added to by emotional pleas from high profile advocates.

The scare stories back in the 1970's were all about extreme global [cooling](#). The warming agenda got going in the 1980's. Since then the United Nations agency UNEP falsely claimed in 2005 there would be [50 million climate refugees](#) by 2010, and the IPCC claimed that the [Himalayan glaciers](#) could melt by 2035. [Prince Charles](#) has linked climate change to the war in Syria. The 40 year veteran of the ABC science show, Robyn Williams, suggested there could be [100 metre sea level rises](#), other reports claim warming will even cause infertility in men.

**Rod McGarvie** was a Liberal National Party candidate in both the 2010 and 2013 federal elections. Rod is now the lead federal senate candidate for the Family First Party QLD.

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17880>

## Climate for change: Paris accord delivers hope for the future

13 December 2015

The deal provides the impetus and a mechanism for every nation to do far ore to tackle global warming - and they must do significantly more.

**EDITORIAL**





Unlike our 2020 emissions trading reduction target, Australia cannot leave the essential next steps under the Paris process to luck and trickery. *Photo: Jessica Shapiro*

Far better late than never, the climate for change among most individuals and the vast majority of nations has morphed into a historic agreement. Global warming can – and must – be limited for the benefit of future generations. The Paris accord creates the momentum and mechanism to do that. Eventually.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/smh-editorial/climate-for-change-paris-accord-delivers-hope-for-the-future-20151213-glma9r.html#ixzz3uLZjGJMf>

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# Historic agreement or 'bullshit'? What the Paris climate talks really achieved

JOSH TAYLOR | DEC 14, 2015 1:10PM | EMAIL | PRINT

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Not everyone is happy with the new Paris agreement.

Early on Sunday morning Melbourne time, parties at the climate conference in Paris struck a new international deal to prevent the rise of global temperatures by 2 degrees — but pressure is now on for the Australian government to alter climate policy and live up to its promises.

Some in the conference had called for the world to hold the average global temperature increase

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/12/14/historic-agreement-or-bullshit-what-the-paris-climate-talks-really-achieved/>

## We talk of protecting future generations, but where's the action?

OPINION

By [Mike Steketee](#)

Posted 4 Dec 2015, 10:41am Fri 4 Dec 2015, 10:41am



**Photo:** The failure of the Copenhagen summit in 2009 resulted in sights being lowered for its successor in Paris. (Reuters: Jason Lee)

*The effects of climate change or our superannuation tax system have been known for decades, so it is a sobering reflection on how long it can take for clearly identified problems to be addressed, writes Mike Steketee.*

Robyn Williams recently recalled hosting the first episode of the ABC's Science Show 40 years ago.

One of his guests was Lord Peter Ritchie-Calder, a member of the UK House of Lords and an expert on energy, who warned that the climate was likely to be affected by the burning of fossil fuels. He talked about how much he and others had been concerned about it since 1963 and that "here we are in 1975 and no one has done anything about it yet".

*Mike Steketee is a freelance journalist. He was formerly a columnist and national affairs editor for *The Australian*.*

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-04/steketee-protecting-future-generations/7000352>

## How the historic Paris deal over climate change was finally agreed

The summit had been at risk of stalling before the US and the EU sprung a surprise move. Then, after three all-night sessions, decades of failure were reversed and a historic agreement reached

John Vidal, Suzanne Goldenberg and Lenore Taylor

Sunday 13 December 2015 18.00 AEDT



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Delegates celebrate as historic climate pledge adopted.

“I see no objections,” said the expressionless French foreign minister Laurent Fabius, barely glancing at the rows of country delegates then sharply banging his gavel. There was a moment’s silence as if no one could quite believe it, and then the cheers rang out, the tears of relief flowed and in scenes of high emotion, the anonymous conference hall in a northern suburb of Paris erupted. Thousands of delegates started to applaud each other. They had done it.

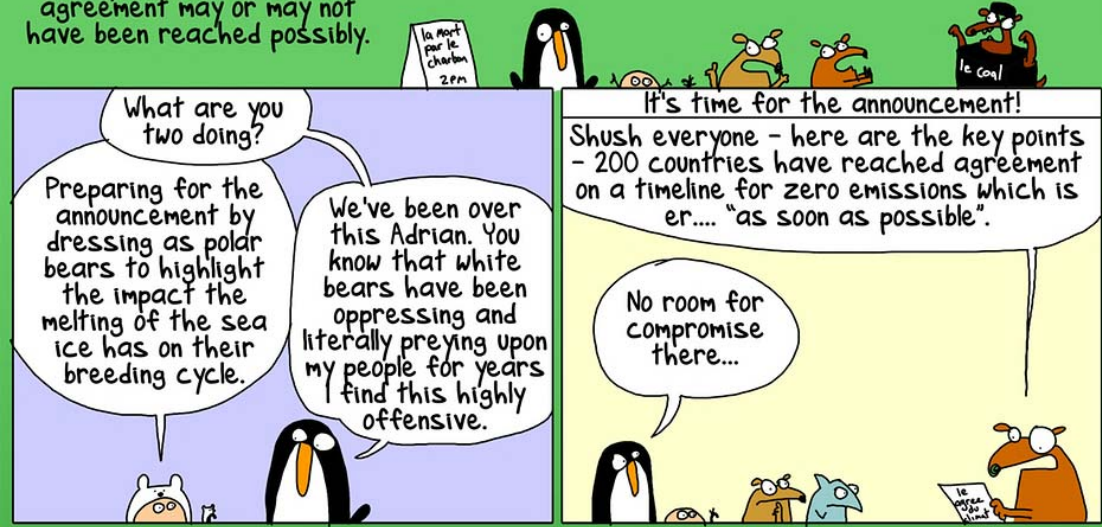
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/climate-change-deal-agreed-paris>

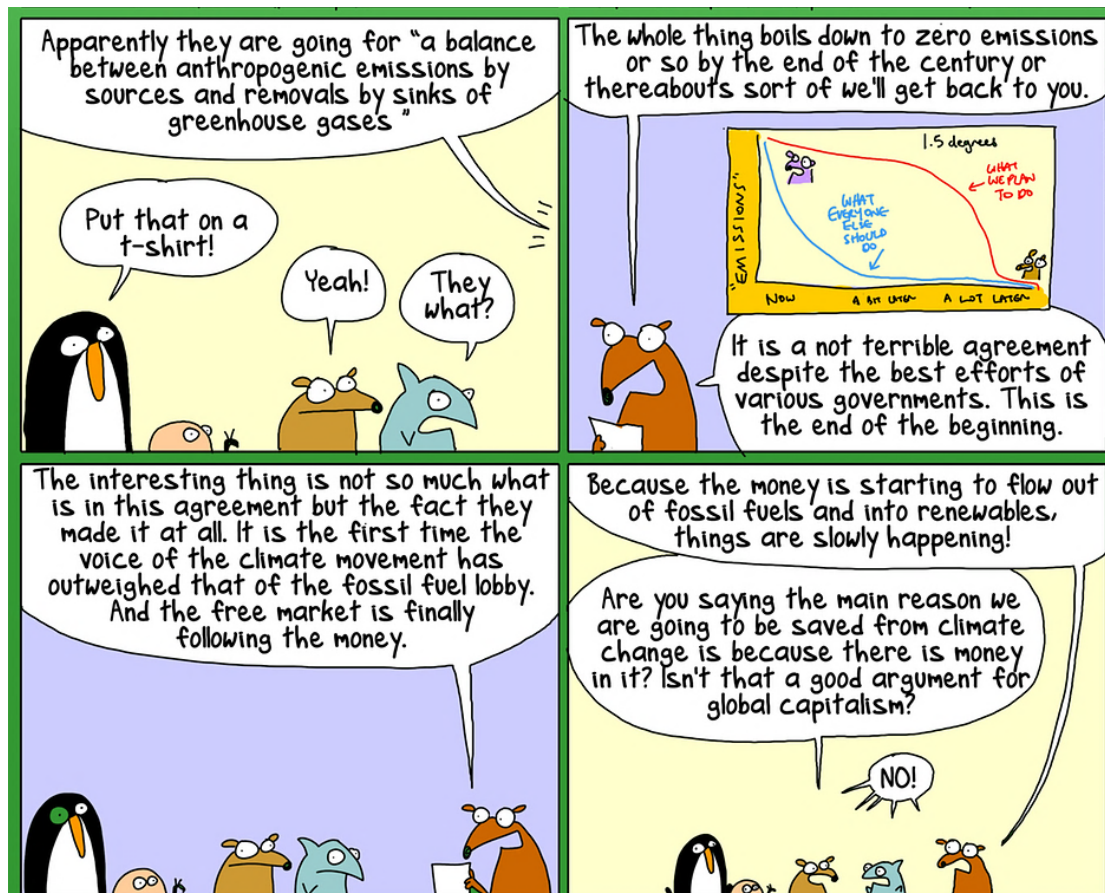
Paris - the end of the beginning

Brenda the Civil Disobedience Penguin is in Paris with the Flora and Fauna For Climate Action activist collective, including Adrian the lacto-vegan cantaloupe\* and Helvetica the anarcho-syndicalist weevil.

They have held a number of actions outside the Paris climate talks including a die-in, an extinct-off, an interpretive dance manifestation of the warming of the planet over the last 150 years and a gluten free mime flash mob hackathon.

Everyone is very excited, they've just heard an agreement may or may not have been reached possibly.





<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2015/dec/14/brenda-the-civil-disobedience-penguin-explains-the-paris-climate-agreement-vive-la-difference>

## Henny Penny lays an egg in Paris

By [John de Meyrick](#) - posted Tuesday, 15 December 2015

Over 40,000 diplomats, delegates, and the leaders of 195 nations and other luminaries, transported in a multitude of atmosphere polluting planes and motor vehicles, descended on Paris in the past two weeks to decide “the planet’s last best hope to stave off the worst consequences of climate change”; or as French President Francois Hollande put it, “the planet’s future and the future of life”.

Frightening stuff ! Enough it seems for the panic button to be pressed in the diplomatic and political ‘chicken coup’ and *Henny Penny* was off and running in every direction, with world leaders each vying to be the most convincing in their persuasion and reassurance of each other that we are all doomed unless the world can at least prevent the average global surface temperature from increasing by more than 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial revolution (circa 1760) average.

But the conference has done better. The unanimous agreement of all 195 nations provides not only to limit and neutralise carbon emissions to bring the average global temperature increase “well within” the 2°C objective, but to also strive to reduce that average to 1.5°C.

John de Meyrick is a barrister (ret'd), lecturer and writer on legal affairs.

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17897>

**COP 21: UN climate  
change conference |  
Paris**  
Opinion

## Finally, America acted like a grownup and took responsibility for climate action

### Ruth Greenspan Bell

The United States is one of the countries that is most responsible for producing greenhouse gas emissions - now it wants to be part of the solution

Tuesday 15 December 2015 05:15 AEDT



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The secretary of state, John Kerry, stressed the importance of the US being fully involved in the Paris climate talks: 'If you're not present, bad things can happen.' Photograph: Pool/Reuters

America has demonstrated a new level of maturity about tackling climate change. Winston Churchill famously said: "You can always count on Americans to do the right thing - after they've tried everything else."

Churchill could have been speaking about the progress of negotiating global climate policy - not just the American role but the entire two-decades-long process.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/14/finally-america-acts-like-grownup-takes-responsibility-climate-action>



## Growth in fossil fuel emissions slowed in 2015, so have we finally reached the peak?

December 8, 2015 6:26am AEDT

Coal consumption is down in China, slowing growth in global carbon emissions from fossil fuels. Coal image from [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

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Despite robust global economic growth over the past two years, worldwide carbon emissions from fossil fuels grew very little in 2014, and might even fall this year.

A [report](#) released today by the [Global Carbon Project](#) has found that fossil fuel emissions of carbon dioxide grew by only 0.6% in 2014, breaking with the fast emissions growth of 2-3% per year since early 2000s. Even more unexpectedly, emissions are projected to decline slightly in 2015 with continuation of global economic growth above 3% in Gross Domestic

<http://theconversation.com/growth-in-fossil-fuel-emissions-slowed-in-2015-so-have-we-finally-reached-the-peak-51669>

**“Resiliency Begins With Our Soil.”** Mike Kucera