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Land and Soil Management Community of Practice



23 March 2015, 6.12am AEDT

Disused mines blight New South Wales, yet the approvals continue

AUTHOR



Phillip Geary
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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Phillip Geary has received research funding from ARC and various State Government Departments and local Councils.



Rio Tinto's Mount Thorley-Warkworth mine in the Hunter Valley, which looks set to expand further. The NSW planning department says it would "not be reasonable" to require Rio Tinto "to completely or even partially backfill the final void". [Lock The Gate Alliance/Flickr, CC BY](#)



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It's been widely reported that the coal mining industry is facing a **prolonged downturn**, with investment analysts at Citibank telling clients last year not to expect a rapid revival in thermal coal prices, while many Australian coal producers have posted **financial losses** in recent years.

<http://theconversation.com/disused-mines-blight-new-south-wales-yet-the-approvals-continue-39059>



Land and Water sign

Posted 17 Mar 2015, 7:55am Tue 17 Mar 2015, 7:55am

Those involved in the 'gas field free' declaration at Gunnedah formed a human sign that was photographed from the air.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-17/land-and-water-signjpg/6324382>

Stability is crucial for Australian scientific success

OPINION

By [Brian Schmidt](#)

Posted Fri at 2:49pm Fri 20 Mar 2015, 2:49pm



Photo: [To reap the benefits of science, society needs patience. \(Yang Zongyou, file photo: AAP\)](#)

Funding uncertainty makes it much harder for Australia to attract and retain research talent. One story about a disappearing job very nearly put me off ever coming to this beautiful country, writes Nobel laureate Brian Schmidt.

The potential carnage of turning off Australia's science research infrastructure has been postponed for at least another year.

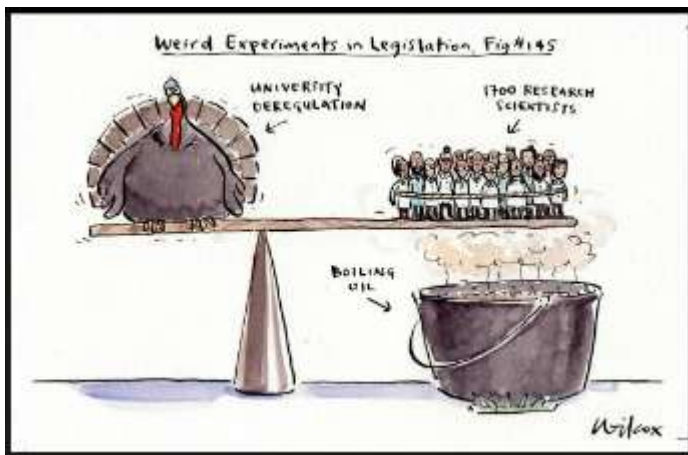
Amid a great clamour from the research and business communities, Education Minister Christopher Pyne agreed to not make funding for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) program contingent on savings from his proposed higher education reforms.

It's a win, but it's not the first time we've had to fight to continue advancing knowledge, and it almost certainly won't be the last. Do we really want the nation's brightest scientists wasting their time and energy on repeatedly convincing governments it's worthwhile to continue to invest in projects and work that's reaped significant economic rewards for Australia and made huge improvements to the lives and lifestyles of people the world over?

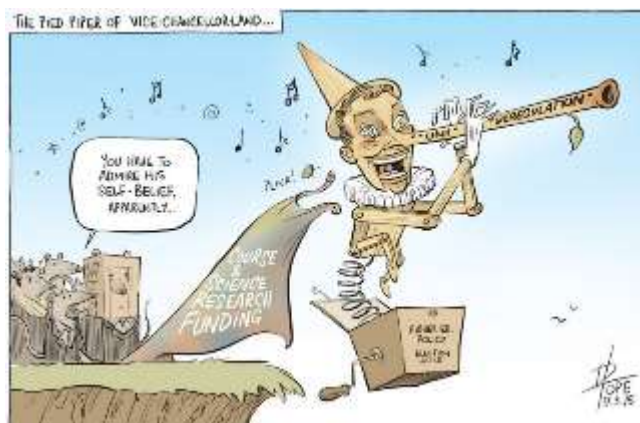
There is a better way.

Professor [Brian Schmidt](#) AC FAA is Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow and astrophysicist at the Australian National University's Mount Stromlo Observatory. In 2011, he won a Nobel Prize for his work showing that the expansion of the universe is accelerating. He is a member of the Commonwealth Science Council and the Council of the Australian Academy of Science.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-20/schmidt-stability-is-crucial-for-australian-scientific-success/6335462>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/cathy-wilcox-20090909-fhd6.html>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/david-pope-20120214-1t3j0.html>



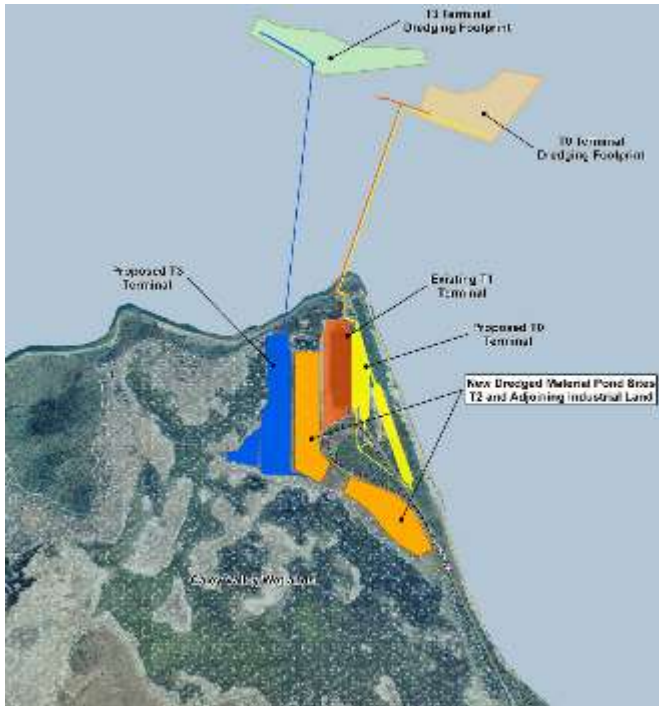
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yPjoh9YJMk>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRXtQUVNzqs>

Abbot Point opposition will need to switch tracks

Sara Phillips ABC Environment 11 Mar 2015



The Queensland Government's map shows the T2 area where Abbot Point dredge spoil would be dumped.

With environmentalists concerns about dredge spoil having largely been addressed, they will need a new strategy to keep the public interested.

Bowing to public pressure, the newly installed Queensland government has changed its plans for the Abbot Point port development near Bowen.

Previously, owners of the port, Adani, had wanted to massively expand the existing port to make room for a flotilla of ships which would be exporting coal dug from the Gaililee Basin, a few hundred kilometres inland. To do this, Adani needed to extend the jetty and dredge the sea floor. Adani proposed to dump the dredge spoil at sea.

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/03/11/4195803.htm>

Keeping Australian native animals as pets is a good idea

Michael Archer ABC Environment 19 Mar 2015



How could you say no to this little face?

Yesterday David Leyonhjelm suggested keeping Australian native animals as pets to stave off extinction. It's an idea Mike Archer has been advocating for years.

WITH SENATOR David Leyonhjelm's remarks to parliament yesterday advocating the keeping of native animals as pets, I thought it timely to share my own experience of living with a quoll. <http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/03/19/4200500.htm>

This isn't a vision for a fair and prosperous society

OPINION

By [John Hewson](#)

Posted 9 Mar 2015, 2:58pm Mon 9 Mar 2015, 2:58pm



Photo: [Is it reasonable that the most disadvantaged in our society should be expected to do the heavy lifting? \(AAP\)](#)

Australia needs a long-term economic plan which acknowledges the challenge of climate change and recognises that "debt and deficits" can't be avoided through welfare cuts alone, writes John Hewson.

Most Australians would now accept that our future, as a nation, is in the Asia/Pacific region. Many key nations in this region strategise and plan in terms of generations.

Yet our political system is disturbingly short-term in its focus, such that we seem to operate day-to-day, or through to the next budget, or, at best, to the next election.

This is one reason why Intergenerational Reports can be so important, at least in as far as it develops, compares, and drives a national community debate, around different scenarios for the possible development of our society, stretching out some 40 years.

[John Hewson](#) is Professor in the Crawford School ANU and former leader of the Liberal Party and the federal opposition.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-09/hewson-this-isnt-a-vision-for-a-fair-and-prosperous-society/6290952>

Plan for the future, don't squabble over the past

OPINION

By [Ian Verrender](#)

Posted Mon at 8:29am Mon 23 Mar 2015, 8:29am



[Photo: Australian workers are fleeing the mines in their thousands. \(Carmen Brown\)](#)

The growth engine is sputtering, the labour force is changing and unskilled workers are in the crosshairs - so it would be comforting to think we were governed by leaders looking to the future, writes Ian Verrender.

The numbers speak for themselves.

Australian workers are fleeing the mines in their thousands. But the hollowed out Australian economy no longer has the manufacturing base to absorb them.

Ian Verrender is the ABC's business editor. A journalist for more than 30 years, Verrender spent 25 years at The Sydney Morning Herald in a variety of roles including senior writer and business editor. He joined Business Spectator and Eureka Report in 2012 and joined the ABC in 2014.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-23/verrender-plan-for-the-future-dont-squabble-over-the-past/6339698>

Greenies are holding up a clean energy future by opposing nuclear

Sean Edwards ABC Environment 18 Mar 2015



A nuclear power plant in Gosgen, Switzerland.

The environmental, scientific, economic, philosophical and moral arguments stack up: it's time for South Australia to embrace nuclear power.

Nowadays anti-nuclear activists are among the greatest obstacles to the planet's environmental healing.

Try as they might, they can't meaningfully oppose nuclear power on environmental grounds. That's because nuclear reactors produce no emissions that contribute to global warming, acid rain or smog. In fact, the life-cycle emissions of nuclear energy rank alongside those of renewables but unlike renewables, nuclear energy can actually provide base load power.

[Sean Edwards](#) is a Liberal senator for South Australia.

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/03/18/4199992.htm>

Nuke the nuclear suggestion

Steve Campbell ABC Environment 12 Feb 2010



Nuclear power is a suggestion that belongs to the past. The future is renewables. *Credit: iStockphoto*

Claims of nuclear's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are vastly overstated.

Bolstered by the climate change debate and a recent poll which showed that one in two Australians believe the Government should consider nuclear power as a means of reducing carbon pollution, the debate over nuclear power has once again reared its head.

Steve Campbell is head of campaigns for [Greenpeace](#).

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2010/02/12/2818334.htm>

The screenshot shows the ABC Radio National website interface. At the top left is the RN logo. A navigation bar includes links for Home, Programs, Guide, Subjects, Features, RNTV, Podcasts, Transcripts, and About, along with a search bar. Below this is the 'Ockham's Razor' program header with links for Program Home, Past Programs, Features, Subscribe, About Us, and Contact Us. The main article is titled 'Energy and nuclear power' and includes options to 'Listen now', 'Download audio', and 'show transcript'. The article text begins with 'Dr Oscar Archer from Adelaide argues that Australia needs a new, clean and economical form of power and suggests that we need a revolutionary way of providing energy. He proposes that Australia establishes the world's first multinational repository for nuclear waste and tells us how we can generate power by using that waste.' To the right of the text is a portrait of the host, Robyn Williams, with the text 'Sundays 7:45am Presented by Robyn Williams'. Below the text is an image of three yellow nuclear waste barrels with radiation symbols. A caption below the image reads 'IMAGE: NUCLEAR WASTE MAY BE USED TO GENERATE POWER (GETTY/BLAZING)'.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/energy-and-nuclear-power/6261352>

Choice is key in GM debate

DANIEL KRUITHOFF

14 Feb, 2015 04:00 AM  A+ A-

 Comments 7

 Share



Daniel Kruthoff is managing director, Monsanto Australia and New Zealand.

OPINION: AGRICULTURE is once again at the forefront of the national conversation about Australia's future prosperity. Having ridden the mining boom all the way to shore, sectors such as agriculture are being viewed as the next wave of economic growth.

Improved market access through free trade agreements will undoubtedly help drive demand for Australia's high quality food and fibre, particularly among the booming middle class of Asia.

<http://www.theland.com.au/news/agriculture/general/opinion/choice-is-key-in-gm-debate/2723181.aspx>

18 March 2015, 12.44pm AEDT

Land clearing in Queensland triples after policy ping pong

AUTHORS



Martine Maron

Associate Professor of Environmental Management at The University of Queensland



Bill Laurance

Distinguished Research Professor and Australian Laureate at James Cook University



Bob Pressey

Professor and Program Leader, Conservation Planning, ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University



Carla P. Catterall

Professor in ecology and environment at Griffith University



James Watson

Honorary Associate Professor at The University of Queensland



Jonathan Rhodes

The University of Queensland



Recent increases in land clearing threaten Queensland's biodiversity. *Bill Laurance*

In 2013, a group of 26 senior scientists in Queensland (including ourselves) **expressed serious concern** that proposed changes to vegetation protection laws would mean a return to large-scale land clearing. The loss of these protections followed a **Ministerial announcement** in early 2012 that investigations into and prosecutions of illegal clearing would be halted.

<http://theconversation.com/land-clearing-in-queensland-triples-after-policy-ping-pong-38279>

13 February 2015, 3:54pm AEDT

Mike Raupach: the scientist who tallied the world's carbon budget

AUTHORS



Helen Cleugh

Deputy Director, Oceans and Atmosphere at CSIRO



John Finnigan

Leader, Complex Systems Science at CSIRO



Pep Canadell

Executive Director, Global Carbon Project at CSIRO

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

helen.cleugh@csiro.au has received funding from the Commonwealth Government of Australia, through grants to fund research programs in the Department of the Environment (Australian Climate Change Science Program) and Department of Industry (NCRIS). She is a research scientist in the CSIRO.

John Finnigan receives government funding for earth system science and climate change research.

Pep Canadell receives funding from the Australian Climate Change Science Program.



Mike Raupach, CSIRO. Author provided

Dr Mike Raupach died earlier this week after a brief illness. He passed away peacefully at home with his family in Canberra, Australia. He was 64.

Mike was a brilliant and outstanding scientist. He was one of the nation's foremost climate researchers, focusing on interactions between the climate, the carbon cycle and humans. Crucially, he excelled in communicating with the broader Australian and international community.



[http://theconversation.com/mike-raupach-the-scientist-who-tallied-the-worlds-carbon-budget-37575?utm_source=Ecos+CSIRO&utm_campaign=a35b858dab-ECOS_February_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ee5fec188-a35b858dab-22990057&ct=t\(ECOS_February_2015_5_2015\)&mc_cid=a35b858dab&mc_eid=d39eba5bf6](http://theconversation.com/mike-raupach-the-scientist-who-tallied-the-worlds-carbon-budget-37575?utm_source=Ecos+CSIRO&utm_campaign=a35b858dab-ECOS_February_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ee5fec188-a35b858dab-22990057&ct=t(ECOS_February_2015_5_2015)&mc_cid=a35b858dab&mc_eid=d39eba5bf6)

24 March 2015, 6:11am AEDT

Fraser paved the way for a national environment policy

AUTHOR



Peter Christoff
Associate Professor at University of Melbourne

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Peter Christoff is a Board member and former Vice President of the Australian Conservation Foundation.



Provides funding as a Founding Partner of The Conversation AU.
unimelb.edu.au

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE JOBS

Laboratory Supervisor (Fluorid Coal Biology Research Centre) (Full Advertised)

Contact: Dale Mansour



The Franklin River which would prove to be Fraser's environmental undoing. [© iStockPhoto, CC BY-NC-SA](#)

Following the defeat of Malcolm Fraser's government in 1983, the Hawke government's first move was to pass the **World Heritage Properties Conservation Act**, giving itself the legal power to stop the World Heritage-listed Franklin River in Tasmania from being dammed.

<http://theconversation.com/fraser-paved-the-way-for-a-national-environment-policy-39182>

A massive increase in coal mining is a cause for concern

EDITORIAL

Premier Mike Baird is very open about his plan to privatise the state's poles and wires.

While the plan is unpopular, he is trusting voters will see the benefits of more infrastructure outweighing the risks of loss of revenue and loss of control over what could be an important asset in driving NSW towards a greener economy in years to come.

What voters know less about is an issue just as dangerous politically for Mr Baird.

Behind the scenes, his government seems to be preparing the way for a massive increase in the state's coal production, in largely agricultural land in the Upper Hunter Valley. Like the electricity proposal, the nascent coal agenda is also likely to be unpopular in the electorate, and not just locally.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/smh-editorial/a-massive-increase-in-coal-mining-is-a-cause-for-concern-20150303-13tuqn.html>

23 March 2015, 6.12am AEDT

Disused mines blight New South Wales, yet the approvals continue

AUTHOR



Phillip Geary

Associate Professor
Environmental Science at
University of Newcastle

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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Rio Tinto's Mount Thorley-Warkworth mine in the Hunter Valley, which looks set to expand further. The NSW planning department says it would "not be reasonable" to require Rio Tinto "to completely or even partially backfill the final void". Lock The Gate Alliance/Flickr, CC BY



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It's been widely reported that the coal mining industry is facing a **prolonged downturn**, with investment analysts at Citibank telling clients last year not to expect a rapid revival in thermal coal prices, while many Australian coal producers have posted **financial losses** in recent years.

<http://theconversation.com/disused-mines-blight-new-south-wales-yet-the-approvals-continue-39059>

Australia facing a brain drain if research priorities don't change: Chief Scientist

Michael Brissenden reported this story on [Thursday, March 12, 2015 08:07:57](#)

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MICHAEL BRISSENDEN: The Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, is warning that Australia needs to change its research approach or risk medium to long term damage to the nation.

In a speech to a meeting of university heads, he'll outline a list of research priorities that he says presents a pragmatic balance between pure learning and problem solving.

Professor Chubb says the rest of the world is already well ahead of us and unless Australia's research priorities change we'll fall further behind and see a talent drain.

The Chief Scientist, Ian Chubb, joins me in our Canberra studio.

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2015/s4195970.htm>

A Crisis at NCRIS – Australia's Science Infrastructure under Threat.

By [Guest Contributor](#)

Posted: March 11, 2015

by **Ginny Barbour**



The Murchison Widefield Array. Image credit: Natasha Hurley-Walker/Wikimedia

There's a high-stakes game of chicken currently being played out in Australia that has everyone who uses science infrastructure (that's, well, pretty much every scientist then) in Australia biting their nails with anxiety. The issue is this. The government of Prime Minister Tony Abbot has had a woeful year in attempting to get its budget passed. One after another, the key issues that were laid before the Parliament last year have been either voted down, or not even made it to a vote. Almost the last one, an attempt to reform higher education funding – something that everyone agrees needs to happen, just not how – is now the subject of frenzied

- [Corey Blacksell](#), Grain grower, Pinnaroo in South Australia

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-12/drought-farmer-forum/6292876>

AgForce must come clean on CSG

Posted By: **Brad Cooper** on 23/10/2014 3:30:00 AM | Comments (2)

Comments

2



If landholders thought they had it bad under the current climate, they ain't seen nothing yet!

AN ominous warning was sounded to Queensland landholders this month, alerting those on the agriculture and mining belts that peak production of coal seam gas (CSG) is yet to occur.

In short, if landholders thought they had it bad under the current climate, they ain't seen nothing yet! <http://www.stockjournal.com.au/blogs/a-matter-of-opinion/agforce-must-come-clean-on-csg/2715577.aspx>



The rise of basic science in China

▶ Listen now ▶ Download audio ▶ show transcript

Sunday 22 March 2015 7:45AM

Dr James Tickner, a senior researcher with the CSIRO in Canberra, has visited China a number of times during the last eight years and discovered that that country has had an astonishing growth in science. According to him China's huge investment in both basic and applied science together with her political and economic drive to push ideas out of the lab and into commercial reality contrasts starkly with the fragmented approach to research and innovation adopted by many Western countries.



IMAGE: JAMES TICKNER AND YI LIU WITH SOME OF THE CHINESE QUANTUM MATTER TEAM



Sundays 7:45am

Presented by Robyn Williams

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/the-rise-of-basic-science-in-china/6328688>

Christopher Pyne's last chance for fair university fee reforms

Without limits on fee increases, the government is proposing a potentially unreasonable and unfair use of policy power.

EDITORIAL

Having all but grasped defeat from the jaws of victory, Education Minister Christopher Pyne has been forced into an embarrassing backdown to try to rescue his university fee deregulation plans.

Even that won't be enough, though. The minister will need to compromise further to improve the plan's fairness and to examine the sustainability of quality university education as part of a holistic review, not just as an ideologically driven thought bubble.

On Monday Mr Pyne promised to decouple fee deregulation from a planned 20 per cent cut in university grants. This \$1.9 billion saving will be dealt with after the budget, although many believe it is dead and buried already. If so, the pressure on universities to raise fees exorbitantly under deregulation may ease.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/smh-editorial/christopher-pynes-last-chance-for-fair-university-fee-reforms-20150316-1lzyll.html>

INTELLIGENT DESIGN



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/alan-moir-20090907-fdxk.html>

20 March 2015, 6.28am AEDT

The future of coal seam gas after the NSW election

AUTHOR



James Horne

Visiting Fellow in public policy/water at Australian National University

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Between 2007 and early 2011, Dr James Horne was Deputy Secretary in the Australian Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, with responsibility for Water, where he led the development of water policy in the Australian Government. He was Chair of the Murray Darling Basin Basin Officials Committee and the Council of Australian Governments' Water Reform Committee. He held senior executive positions in the Australian government over the past 20 years, until his retirement from the Australian public service in January 2011 to find new challenges in water and elsewhere. He is a member of the International Steering Committee, XVth World Water Congress 2015, and the editorial board of the Journal of Water Resources Development. He is currently a Visiting Fellow at the ANU. Dr Horne does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article.



Unless community concerns are heard and responded to, the NSW coal seam gas industry will keep running into road blocks. Stop CSG @waters/ANU

Coal seam gas (CSG) is one of the **most controversial** issues bubbling through the New South Wales election campaign.

It's a particularly hot topic in **regional NSW**, where communities and farmers have often felt their concerns have not taken seriously enough by the CSG industry and successive Labor and Coalition governments. As NSW Deputy Premier and Nationals' leader **Troy Grant recently said** about the CSG debate:

<http://theconversation.com/the-future-of-coal-seam-gas-after-the-nsw-election-38904>



We live in a greenhouse with no vents

▶ Listen now ▶ Download audio [] show transcript

Sunday 8 March 2015 7:45AM

Professor Frank Stacey is a former Professor of Physics at the University of Queensland and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and he believes that the concern about the greenhouse effect and global warming warrants a consideration about the definition of the expression 'greenhouse effect'. He has some interesting observations and he also suggests that the following principle should be applied to climate change studies generally: Ignore short term and transient effects and look for long term trends. Professor Stacey is talking about work he's done jointly with Jane Hodgkinson from the CSIRO, the co author of the book *The Earth as a Cradle for Life*.



IMAGE: A POLLUTED EARTH IS A THREAT TO US AND OUR CHILDREN IN THE FUTURE. (GETTY IMAGES/ABLOOMARD)



Sundays 7-8am
Presented by Robyn Williams

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/we-live-in-a-greenhouse-with-no-vents/6277528>


Green shackles could bury farming's future

ALAN OXLEY

05 Mar, 2015 08:45 AM  A+ A-

 Comments

7

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“
An overview of the performance of our agricultural industries in the last decade is sobering
”

The markets opened up by our free trade agreements will simply go to rivals if we allow land clearing and water use rules to kill productivity growth on our farms, says ALAN OXLEY.

The government's new free trade agreements (FTAs), especially that with China, have underlined the huge market for food growing in Asia. However, if Australia's farmers think that bounty will just drop into their laps, they are wrong.

LATEST

GM appeal rests on 'duty of care'

Stars align for \$105,000 Irelands Jeopardy

Barnaby hops over roo export report

<http://www.theland.com.au/news/agriculture/general/opinion/green-shackles-could-bury-farmings-future/2725555.aspx>

Lester Brown: 'Vast dust bowls threaten tens of millions with hunger'

Over his 50-year career, Lester Brown has become known for his accurate global environmental predictions. As he enters retirement, he warns the world may face the worst hunger crisis of our lifetimes



Lester Brown fears the world may be on the verge of ever greater levels of hunger. Video produced by Laurence Mathieu-Léger

Vast tracts of Africa and of China are turning into dust bowls on a scale that dwarfs the one that devastated the US in the 1930s, one of the world's pre-eminent environmental thinkers has warned.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/feb/25/lester-brown-vast-dust-bowls-threaten-tens-of-millions-with-hunger>

20 March 2015, 2.40pm AEDT

Can the Gates Foundation be convinced to dump fossil fuels?

AUTHOR



Matthew Rimmer
ARC Future Fellow and
Associate Professor in
Intellectual Property at Australian
National University

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Dr Matthew Rimmer is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow, working on Intellectual Property and Climate Change. He is an associate professor at the ANU College of Law, and an associate director of the Australian Centre for Intellectual Property. Matthew Rimmer is currently an Australian Research Council Future Fellow working on a project entitled "Intellectual Property and Climate Change: Inventing Clean Technologies".



Is Bill Gates' desire to help tackle the world's problems compatible with his foundation's huge fossil fuel investments? EPA/Cole Burston

This week, **The Guardian newspaper** has campaigned for the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** to divest its fossil fuel investments – which the newspaper claims are worth **US\$1.4 billion**.



<http://theconversation.com/can-the-gates-foundation-be-convinced-to-dump-fossil-fuels-38993>



Big Ideas

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Optimism vs pessimism

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Monday 9 March 2015 8:05PM

Is the future bright or bleak? Former Greens leader Bob Brown and author James Boyce discuss **optimism vs pessimism** and share their thoughts on realism and idealism, human nature, salvation, religion, politics and the environment.

Highlights of *Optimism vs pessimism*, Perth Writers festival, 20th February 2015



IMAGE: ARE YOU AN OPTIMIST OR PESSIMIST? IS THE TANK HALF FULL OR HALF EMPTY? (CRAIG DINGLE E+/GETTY IMAGES)



Monday to Thursday 8pm
Repeated: Tuesday to Friday 3am
Presented by Paul Barelay

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/optimism-or-pessimism/6221344>

Ignore the scare campaign about privatisation

OPINION

By [Tony Wood](#)

Posted yesterday at 12:31pm Mon 23 Mar 2015, 12:31pm



[Photo: Liddell power station \(Mick Tsikas: Reuters\)](#)

The shadow of the Queensland election hangs over Premier Mike Baird's campaign for privatisation, but New South Wales has nothing to fear and much to gain from this reform, writes Tony Wood.

After years of prevarication by his predecessors on both sides of politics, New South Wales Premier Mike Baird wants to privatise electricity network assets as a way to fund investment in other new infrastructure.

But, hanging over Premier Baird's campaign for privatisation is the shadow of the Queensland election where retention of government ownership was seen as key factor in the Labor win. Now, the NSW Labor Opposition is strongly campaigning with claims that privatisation will mean higher electricity prices and a less reliable network with more blackouts. Neither of these claims stands up to an examination of the evidence.

Tony Wood is energy program director at the Grattan Institute.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-23/wood-ignore-the-scare-campaign-about-privatisation/6340294>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/cathy-wilcox-20090909-fhd6.html>

23 March 2015, 1:34pm AEDT

Key environment policy still unknown in the NSW election

AUTHOR



Neil Perry

Research Lecturer at University of Western Sydney

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Neil Perry is an unpaid academic associate of the Centre for Compassionate Conservation at UTS.



Provides funding as a Member of
The Conversation AU.
uws.edu.au



NSW Labor has promised a Great Koala National Park to protect kosles, but what about more insidious threats to the environment? Nicki Mannix/Pixie, CC BY

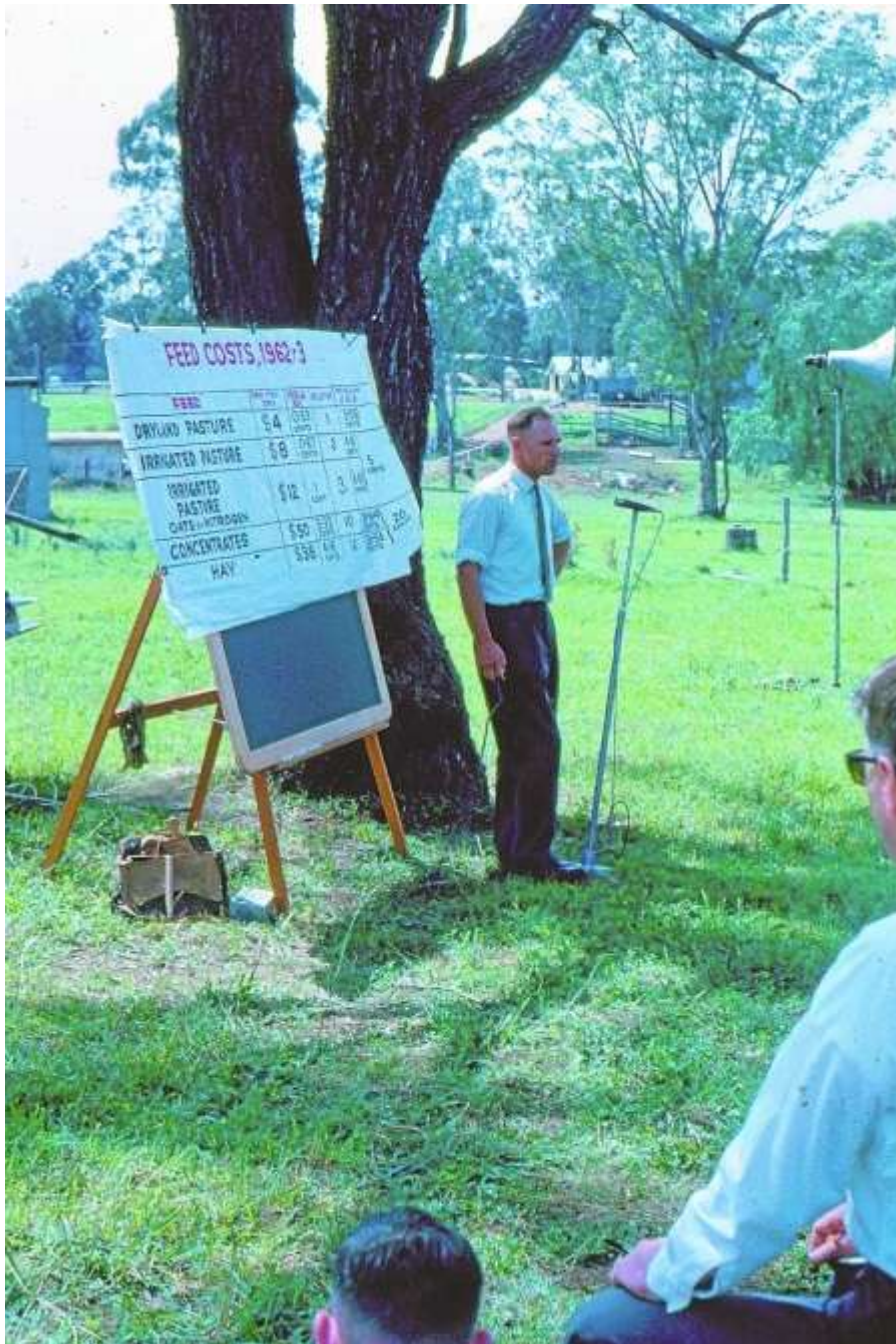
With less than a week to go until the New South Wales state election, there are still major concerns about what the election holds for the state's wildlife and ecosystems.

<http://theconversation.com/key-environment-policy-still-unknown-in-the-nsw-election-39051>

Conservation cropping leader

LINDSAY CAMPBELL AND ANDREW MARSHALL

21 Mar, 2015 04:00 AM



Mr Crofts was largely responsible for developing the practice of sod-seeding

Frank Crofts lecturing at Wirra Walla in 1966.

FRANK Crofts was a distinguished agricultural scientist and inspiring university teacher whose career achieved huge savings in fuel and water for Australian croppers.
<http://www.theland.com.au/news/agriculture/general/opinion/conservation-cropping-leader/2726864.aspx>

At last, bush is back on govt political radar

ANDREW NORRIS

19 Mar, 2015 04:00 AM  A+ A-

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WHILE former Premier Barry O'Farrell's shock downfall during last year's Independent Commission Against Corruption hearings deepened the embarrassment for the Coalition government (which put a lot of effort into dragging Labor's dirty laundry over the coals), the stumble has, in some ways, provided a timely opportunity.

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Tourism development in wilderness areas

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Monday 16 March 2015 8:05PM

Tasmania's iconic wilderness, national parks and reserves could soon be open to tourism development, as a result of a state government proposal. Tasmania contains some of the nation's most magnificent wild places. Almost 20% of the state is World Heritage listed. So can you conserve this unique pristine environment, while also permitting tourists to experience this natural wonder?



IMAGE: SHOULD MORE TOURISTS BE ABLE TO EASILY ACCESS WILD PLACES LIKE TASMANIA'S LAKE JUDD? (BOB BLAKES/WILD ISLAND)



Monday to Thursday 8pm
Repeated: Tuesday to Friday 3am
Presented by Paul Barclay

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/tourism-development-in-wilderness-areas/6304394>

Agricultural movement tackles challenges of a warming world

By [Lisa Palmer](#) - posted Wednesday, 11 February 2015

Rice is a thirsty crop. Yet for the past three years, Alberto Mejia has been trying to reduce the amount of water he uses for irrigation on his 1,100-acre farm near Ibague in the tropical, central range of the Colombian Andes.

He now plants new kinds of rice that require less water. He floods his paddies with greater precision and has installed gauges that measure the moisture content of the soil. On a daily basis he can determine how much nitrogen the plants need, and he relies on more advanced weather forecasting to plan when to fertilize, water, and harvest the grain.

Lisa Palmer is a freelance journalist and a public policy scholar at The Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. She reports on energy, climate change, the environment, and sustainable business for publications such as *Slate*, *Scientific American*, and *The Guardian*. Previously for *e360*

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17080>

24 March 2015, 2:32pm AEDT

Tasmania's fox hunt was worth it, even if there were no foxes

AUTHORS



Christopher Johnson

Professor of Wildlife Conservation and ARC Australian Professorial Fellow at University of Tasmania



Menna Jones

ARC Future Fellow, School of Zoology at University of Tasmania

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Chris Johnson is a member of the Tasmanian government Fox Technical Advisory Panel. This is a voluntary position.

Menna Jones conducts research funded by the Australian Research Council on fauna in Tasmania that is vulnerable to fox predation.



Did foxes ever make it to Tasmania? DNA evidence suggests they did. *Chris Pawley. CC BY-ND*

For the last 15 years, Tasmanians have been arguing in pubs, parliament and online about whether or not there are foxes on the island. Recent research republished in PLOS One suggests that if they were here, foxes are **now extinct in Tasmania**.

<http://theconversation.com/tasmanias-fox-hunt-was-worth-it-even-if-there-were-no-foxes-34045>



SOIL IS A NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE



2015
International
Year of Soils

It is the basis for



2050 THE CHALLENGE

global population
will exceed **9 billion**



increased demand for healthier and nutritious food will only be met if



agricultural production increases



Soils are under pressure of intensification and competing uses of forestry, cropping, pasture & urbanization

OUR SOILS TODAY



33% of global soil is moderately to highly degraded through

erosion, salinization, compaction, acidification, chemical pollution & nutrient depletion



hampering soils functions and affecting food production



83% of rural people in Sub-Saharan Africa depend on their land for livelihood

40% of Africa's soils are currently degraded



in most countries there is little opportunity for expansion of arable land

SAVING OUR SOILS



inclusive policies and governance



investment in sustainable soil management



targeted soil research



stopping soil degradation & restoring degraded soils



effective education & extension programmes



soil information systems

sustainable soil management

increasing soil organic matter content

keeping soil surface vegetated

using nutrients wisely

promoting crop rotations

reducing erosion

can lead to an average crop yield increase of

58%



Agriculture Has a Science Problem

Several recent findings, particularly on nutrition, have sowed confusion.

By Jerry Hagstrom

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Should low-income people be allowed to use government benefits to buy white potatoes? The answer keeps changing.(Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

Agricultural science is in trouble.

Everyone in agriculture—from farmers, to agribusiness executives, to the professors who conduct agricultural research—says that decisions ranging from what to eat to settling international trade conflicts should be based on science.

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/outside-influences/agriculture-has-a-science-problem-20150224>

Where's the plan to confront technological change?

OPINION

By [Jim Chalmers](#)

Posted 9 Mar 2015, 12:28pm Mon 9 Mar 2015, 12:28pm



Photo: [Technological change can create more opportunities than it destroys if we plan for it properly. \(Reuters: Mick Tsikas, file photo\)](#)

Today's economists are asking us to embrace technology and prosper from it, despite the challenges to our labour market. So where are the Government's forward-thinking policies, asks Jim Chalmers.

In economic debates, people rarely use the term "Luddite" as a compliment. If anything the mention of Luddism or neo-Luddism is a kind of economic Godwin's Law, casting the prospect of any kind of reasonable debate out the window.

But in recent months, and now in the wake of the Government's [Intergenerational Report \(IGR\) released last week](#), there has been resurgence in the use of the term in the [global](#) and [domestic](#) press.

But deeper reflection suggests that use of the term in this way does not give full justice to an important discussion of the impact of technology on our future workforce and economy - a discussion largely absent from the IGR.

The original Luddites date to the 1770s, when tech-rebels led by Ned Ludd mounted an attack on emerging technology. In 1779, after a whipping for idleness, he destroyed two weaving frames that he blamed for his unemployment.

[Jim Chalmers](#) is the member for Rankin and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition, and for Trade and Investment.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-09/chalmers-wheres-the-plan-to-confront-technological-change/6289968>

17 March 2015, 6.16am AEDT

Dumping Abbot Point dredge spoil on land won't save the reef

AUTHOR



Selina Ward

Lecturer, School of Biological Sciences at The University of Queensland

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Selina Ward is a past president of the Australian Coral Reef Society.



Abbot Point on the Great Barrier Reef, where dredge spoil will be dumped on land. AAP Image/Supplied by Greenpeace



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Queensland Labor's **new plan** to dump Abbot Point dredge spoil on land announced last week, and not at sea or in sensitive wetlands as under previous proposals, is a welcome one, but it will do little to stem the flow of damage to the Great Barrier Reef.

<http://theconversation.com/dumping-abbot-point-dredge-spoil-on-land-wont-save-the-reef-38716>

What does the nuclear lobby want, for South Australia?

By [Noel Wauchope](#) - posted Thursday, 19 March 2015

In South Australia, a government appointed panel is considering the Terms of Reference for a Royal Commission into expanding South Australia's nuclear industry. So far, the membership of this panel has not been made public, with the exception of the Head of the Commission, Kevin Scarce, former Governor of South Australia. Mr Scarce has already expressed support for nuclear industry expansion.

In the meantime, there have been numerous articles published, promoting the cause of nuclear expansion. Most of this publicity has appeared in South Australian media. The nuclear promotion in South Australia comes mainly, but not entirely, from South Australians. Nuclear technology marketers in Canada, USA, and UK take a keen interest in Australia. At

the end of this article, I will note some of the most recent prominent promoters.
<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17185>

The TPP has the potential for real harm

OPINION

By [Ian Verrender](#)

Updated 16 Mar 2015, 8:55am Mon 16 Mar 2015, 8:55am



[Photo: Andrew Robb hopes to ink yet another trade deal, his fourth since being elected to government just 18 months ago \(AAP: Alan Porritt\)](#)

Most free trade agreements deliver little in the way of benefits, apart from photo opportunities for politicians, but the highly secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership has the potential for real harm in Australia, writes Ian Verrender.

You can almost picture it.

Palms swaying gently in a breeze laden with the heady scent of plumeria, a troupe of women in grass skirts, hips gyrating to the intoxicating rhythm of ukuleles and the soulful sounds of a Polynesian choir as the sun sinks beneath the Pacific in a riot of ever darkening orange.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-16/verrender-the-tpp-has-the-potential-for-real-harm/6321538>



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The rise and, perhaps, the fall of orange juice - global bacterial threats to the citrus industry



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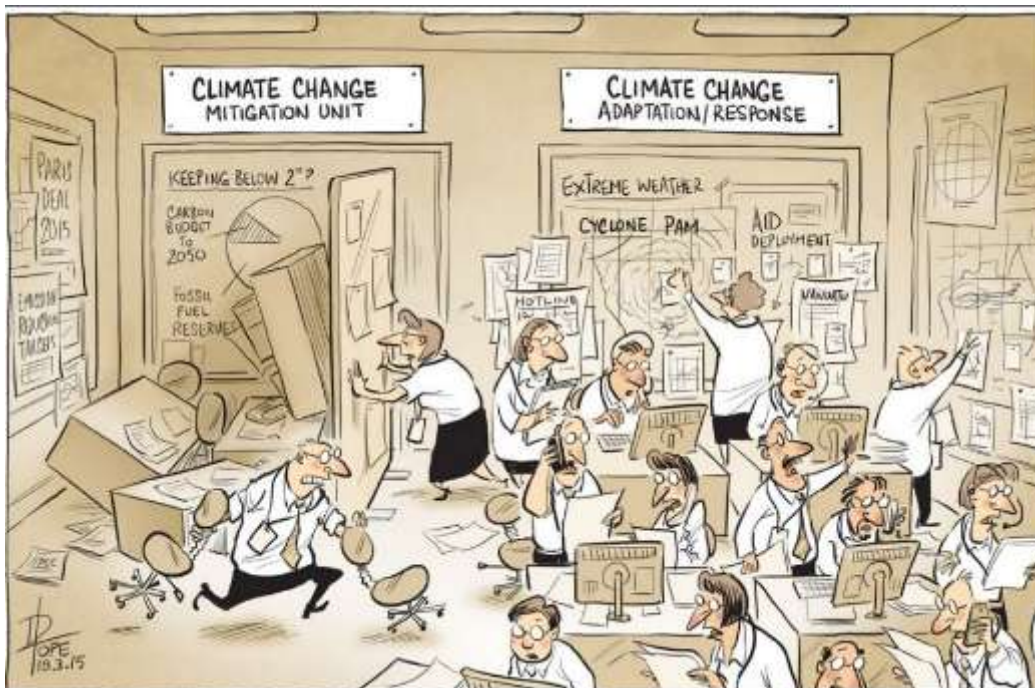
Sunday 15 March 2015 1:45AM

Botanist and writer Professor David Mabberley says that the threat to citrus from a variety of bacteria is forever present. One of the diseases that can befall citrus, the citrus greening disease, is one of the most severe plant diseases in the world and can affect any variety of citrus trees. Once a tree is infected, there is no cure.



IMAGE: GROWING CITRUS FRUIT CONTRIBUTES SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE ECONOMIES OF WARM COUNTRIES. (GETTY/LACAGNA)

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/the-rise-and2c-perhaps2c-the-fall-of-orange-juice/6302370>



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/david-pope-20120214-1t3j0.html>

'Love that Moves the Sun': Catholicism's Deeper Ecology - A Response to Clive Hamilton

Mary Taylor ABC Religion and Ethics Updated 17 Mar 2015 (First posted 16 Mar 2015)



Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration upsets relations in society. Whenever nature is pitted against persons, both suffer. *Credit: shutterstock*

Few people over the centuries have had the confidence, or perhaps the *chutzpah*, to publicly prognosticate on what a papal encyclical would say.

But the ascension of Pope Francis has been accompanied by the rise of an entire industry devoted to ripping his words from their contexts, putting words in his mouth, or applying convoluted hermeneutics to tease out what he "*really*" means. As a result, speculation about his upcoming ecological encyclical has reached fever pitch.

Mary Taylor is a consulting editor of Communitio: International Catholic Review. She received a master's degree from Yale Divinity School and a doctorate in philosophy from the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Spain. An earlier version of portions of this article appeared in the Winter 2011 issue of Communitio: International Catholic Review.

<http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2015/03/16/4198771.htm>

The Sacrament of Creation: What Can We Expect from Pope Francis's Ecological Encyclical?

Clive Hamilton ABC Religion and Ethics Updated 4 Mar 2015 (First posted 3 Mar 2015)



Francis calls for a new model of development that "knows how to respect creation" in place of the growth-at-any-cost mentality used to justify the wholesale degradation of the natural world. *Credit: giulio napolitano / Shutterstock*

Pope Francis has made no secret of his conviction that human-induced climate change, along with other forms of environmental degradation, represents a grave threat to humanity's future.

At times he even speaks in [quasi-apocalyptic terms](#): "Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!"

His [forthcoming "ecological encyclical"](#) - expected around the middle of this year - is shaping up as a decisive intervention. We can surmise that he hopes it will help turn the world away from a path of self-destruction.

Clive Hamilton is Professor of Public Ethics at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University, Canberra. His most recent book is Earthmasters: The Dawn of the Age of Climate Engineering. He wishes to acknowledge his debt to Canon Scott Cowdell for his advice and comments, as well as to the Right Reverend Stephen Pickard and Professor Wayne Hudson for their helpful discussions.

<http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2015/03/03/4190521.htm>

We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology. -- Carl Sagan