

The Big Picture

Issue 87
3 July 2010

“News to use & amuse”



Editor: Mike Bolan

Editorial

An unexciting week in the news. Big fuss about [Julia Gillard](#) and loads of speculation about the mining tax followed by details of how it was fixed up.

Not everyone believes that the Prime Minister is running things .

First female Prime Minister? What about the “first” female State Premiers? Think Carmen Lawrence in WA, Joan Kirner in Victoria, Kristina Keneally in NSW and Anna Bligh in Qld. All were installed, not elected, all were handed a poisoned chalice, all were used as a last resort, all were part of and inherited dysfunctional, rotten-at-the-core Labor Governments.

Nothing’s changed, as Ms Gillard admitted today when she said that the Government (of which she was second-in-command) had “lost it’s way”. While Kevin Rudd has taken the fall, it’s important to remember that Gillard herself was Acting PM for about a quarter of the time during Rudd’s first 18 months.

The fact is, Federal Labor’s shiny new façade belies a tired old strategy aimed solely at retaining power. It’s all about desperately clawing at an election victory, not good government. [ThePunch](#)

The model is of Labor being run by faction powerbrokers whose main goal is to keep the favours and benefits flowing to Labor and its supporters a.k.a. Mates.

No real change on climate although some worrying reports are now appearing in the media...

The balance between mitigation and adaptation has been one of the central themes at the Climate Adaptation Futures Conference at the Gold Coast, which has attracted nearly 1000 delegates and some of the top climate scientists in the world.

‘You have to adapt to what you cannot prevent, but you have to try and prevent what you cannot adapt to,’ says Stanford University’s Steven Schneider. Right now, the world seems to be heading for failure on both counts. [BusinessSpectator](#)

James Lovelock, creator of the Gaia hypothesis, has written a new book with some pretty alarming predictions.

We also discover other observations of the real Earth that are equally alarming. By 2007 the area of the Arctic Ocean covered by summertime floating ice had fallen to 4 million square kilometres, a condition that the IPCC models predicted was unlikely before 2050. If this trend continues, within fifteen years all the Arctic sea ice will have melted in summer and the extra heating caused by the sun’s warming of the dark ocean will be equivalent to that caused by all the anthropogenic carbon dioxide now present in the atmosphere.

Lovelock explores what sort of climate we can expect to experience over the next decade or so due to these changes, using one of his simple but powerful Gaian models that includes feedbacks between oceanic algae, land plants and global mean temperature. To begin with, not much happens when the model is forced with increasing emissions of carbon dioxide, but when the atmospheric concentration of the gas reaches between 400 and 500ppm, global average temperature suddenly increases by 5°C, after which the model stabilises in this new, hot state. In contrast to the non-Gaian models of the IPCC, which predict smooth linear changes, Lovelock’s model

captures the dynamics of the real Earth, where similarly rapid changes have not been uncommon.

His prognosis, now shared by increasing numbers of eminent climate scientists, is that with around 380ppm carbon dioxide currently in the atmosphere, a sudden catastrophic warming is either currently in process or is extremely likely. In the hot state much of the Earth will become uninhabitable due to desertification in the low latitudes and severe weather elsewhere. As a result, within decades billions of people will lose their lives. The survivors will be forced to seek refuge in the high latitudes, particularly in the northern hemisphere. Things will also go badly for the biosphere, which will experience an extinction event of gargantuan proportions that will make the warming more severe as forests burn and marine algae disappear. [ICH](#)

Tasmania has a perfect opportunity to create a global species bank, life escape hatch and centre for sustainable living.

Of course, to achieve such an outcome would require a different approach to forestry and environment. Can brand Labor do it?

It seems very doubtful.

That Was The Week That Was

Governance + spin

Taxpayer funded massages for Vic bureaucrats [HeraldSun](#)

‘No’ to big Australia policy: Gillard [TheAge](#)

Forestry/Food/Agriculture

New ‘free range’ rules pander to big business [WeeklyTimesNow](#)

Climate/water/energy/resources/environment

Clarity needed in climate debate [TheAge](#)

Adapt to survive: Lovelock [Resurgence](#)

Health & education revolutions/communication/defence

We’ll pay dearly for NBN folly: Ergas [Australian](#)

Patients charged \$50 for running 10 min late [HeraldSun](#)

Class action against health officials possible [Australian](#)

Vic surgery wait times are crippling [TheAge](#)

China students switch to UK & US [Australian](#)

We need to fix the mental health crisis [TheAge](#)

Economy/social/shelter/transport/free speech

\$300,000 p.a. per place in Tas Ashley detention centre [Mercury](#)

Vic Myki displays government competence [TheAge](#) [HeraldSun](#)

ASIO creates asylum limbo [Australian](#)

How culture of corruption grows in Vic: Davidson [TheAge](#)

World & GFC

In the eye of the GFC storm [BusinessSpectator](#)

The definitive cockney alphabet [SMH](#)