

Dear Professor Tranter,

Congratulations on your paper about climate change scepticism. I cannot think of a faster way to give all intelligent people a very poor impression of Social Science at UTAS.

I would have failed a first year student for churning out such utter drivel.

Why?

1. "In presenting their results, the researchers noted when identifying climate sceptics, the survey did not specify man-made climate change, but argued that the term "climate change" was increasingly associated with anthropogenic climate change and so the results were still useful." (report in [news.com.au](http://news.com.au)).

Unbelievable! You seem to know that "climate change" is ambiguous but you lack the basic integrity to either correct it or discard it. And you a professor!

How ambiguous? Let me give you an example ... Do I believe in climate change? Yes because data shows that climate has changed. Do I believe in man-made climate change? Yes, but I'm not convinced that the effect is anything but local and due to the Urban Heat Island Effect or land use changes. Do I believe in significant and dangerous manmade warming? Categorically not because there's no data to support such a claim.

Which subjective category would you put me in for your survey? I'm not at all sceptical about climate change but I've very sceptical about man-made climate change. Your survey shouldn't be drawing any conclusions at all because you don't know how many of the survey respondents would have answered differently had the questions been clarified.

2. The report said "Climate scepticism persists despite overwhelming scientific evidence that anthropogenic climate change is occurring". Do I take it that you BELIEVE that the latest IPCC report shows that "overwhelming" evidence? If so, would you care to cite the page number and paragraph that shows that evidence.

I don't think you've read that report. I don't think you know exactly what is in it. I do. I read the WGI contribution from end to end when I participated in the Expert Review of the second order draft (and then went on to make the greatest number of review comments). In my opinion the report shows NO CREDIBLE EVIDENCE whatsoever, so I would appreciate it greatly if you could identify that evidence.

I suspect that you haven't read the following points that appeared in the text.

(a) "... the rate of warming over the past 15 years (1998–2012; 0.05 [–0.05 to 0.15] °C per decade) ... is smaller than the rate calculated since 1951 (1951–2012; 0.12 [0.08 to 0.14] °C per decade)." [SPM, page 3, section B.1, bullet point 3, and in full Synthesis Report on page SYR-6]

(b) "... an analysis of the full suite of CMIP5 historical simulations (...) reveals that 111 out of 114 realisations show a GMST trend over 1998–2012 that is higher than the entire HadCRUT4 trend ensemble ...." [WGI contribution, chapter 9, text box 9.2, page 769, and in full Synthesis Report on page SYR-8]

(c) "There may also be a contribution from forcing inadequacies and, in some models, an overestimate of the response to increasing greenhouse gas and other anthropogenic forcing (dominated by the effects of aerosols)." [SPM, section D.1, page 13, bullet point 2, and full Synthesis Report on page SYR-8]

(d) "This difference between simulated [i.e. model output] and observed trends could be caused by some combination of (a) internal climate variability, (b) missing or incorrect radiative forcing and (c) model response error". [WGI contribution, chapter 9, text box 9.2, page 769]

So what exactly is the "overwhelming scientific evidence" that you claim exists?

By the way, climate models are run with and without greenhouse gases in an attempt to estimate the human influence on climate. This is a completely futile attempt when climate models are flawed, ergo the IPCC and by extension the UNFCCC, don't have any idea whatsoever about the magnitude of the human influence.

And if you think that increasing atmospheric CO2 drives warming then how do you explain the absence of warming for about 17 years? (NB. It was 15 when the IPCC authors drafted that report and there's been negligible if any warming since then).

Also, don't you think that if even one paper showed irrefutable evidence of manmade warming that paper would be cited at every opportunity and by now be well-known to all of us? Doesn't the failure to cite such a paper not tell you anything?

3. Basing a paper on an ambiguous question and falsely claiming that overwhelming evidence exists when it doesn't is capped off by only considering a single narrow perspective when attempting to explain survey correlations. I put it to you that your statement "Only political orientations (conservative), gender (male) and being unconcerned about the environmental issues are relatively consistent predictors of climate scepticism on a country by country basis" is a distortion.

The far simpler explanation is that independent thinkers are more likely to have examined the data for themselves and drawn their own conclusions. Independent thinkers tend to favour the conservative side of politics because that side favours reward for effort and general free market thinking. The gender bias towards males is probably a reflection of more males doing the kinds of university courses that directly relate to climate science and that in general males are more interested than females in technical issues.

Yes I am a sceptic. I have a background in IT, which is a profession dominated by males, and have used those skills to analyse climate data. What I found during that analysis convinced me that there is negligible, if any, sign that human activity is having any influence on climate at all in other than very localised sense.

Further, I struggle to understand how anyone could be so gullible, as you seem to be, as to accept the unsubstantiated claims that the UNFCCC and IPCC have been making for over 20 years. (Now that's a far more interesting line for research!)

I'll be quite happy to apologise for what I've said here if and when you provide precise details for that "overwhelming scientific evidence", but in the meantime I'll be watching to see what a laughing-stock you've made of the University of Tasmania.

John McLean

IPCC Expert Reviewer  
Author of four peer-reviewed papers on climate