

MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS ALLIANCE SUPPORTS MEDIA SURVEY WHICH IS NOT INTERESTED IN FACTUAL ACCURACY ABOUT SCIENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

First ACIJ Report into Climate Policy Not interested in Truth, Only Anti-Government Bias, But Why the Delay in the Second Report into Climate Science?

Graham Williamson

January 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to document the shortcomings of the [ACIJ](#) survey of the media coverage of climate change, [A sceptical climate – media coverage of climate change in Australia](#), & examine the response of both the [ACIJ](#), & the [Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance \(MEAA\)](#), to these shortcomings.

Using extensive documentary evidence from experts, combined with personal correspondence documented in the Appendices, the following fundamental facts have been established.

- 1. The ACIJ report is falsely described by the ACIJ as assessing “pursuit of the truth, fairness and accuracy”, since both ACIJ Director Tom Morton & report author Wendy Bacon point out the report did not seek to assess “factual accuracy”. The ACIJ report, though masquerading as a factual report, has no implications whatsoever regarding the truth and facts pertaining to climate change and its scientific basis. Serious questions must be answered as to why the ACIJ chose NOT to accurately publicise the report as having no interest in factual accuracy. Why is this contradiction endorsed by MEAA?**
- 2. Since the ACIJ report has no interest in the scientific facts re climate change, its only interest is as a survey of compliance with government policy. Media articles perceived to contradict government policy are criticised as negatively biased, even if 100% factual and accurate.**
- 3. Even though 12 months has elapsed since release of Part 1 of the report, Part 2 concerning the science of climate change has still not been released. The refusal to release Part 2 concerning the science has enabled data in Part 1 to be submitted to the Finkelstein media inquiry in an attempt to influence the outcome of that inquiry, while at the same time withholding Part 2. Refusal to release Part 2 invalidates the whole report and raises serious questions about the conduct of the ACIJ & why Part 2 has not been released even 12 months after Part 1.**
- 4. Additionally, In my complaint I cited considerable evidence to show the Bacon report was seriously biased by complete omission of pertinent information such as media reports of vilification or demonising of those who opposed the CO2 tax and/or global warming. Deliberate cherry picking of data or omission of conflicting reports is a serious breach of journalistic ethics. Both the ACIJ and the MEAA, for some reason, chose to completely avoid this matter.**

5. **The MEAA, in adjudicating upon these matters and dismissing my complaint, has fully endorsed the behaviour of the ACIJ** & supported the ACIJ in their stance on the above matters. This raises further questions about the MEAA & underlines the need for a truly independent media watchdog. Truth in media is far too important to be policed by media organisations dedicated to defending their members. Unions and organisations representing industry should have no role whatsoever in policing journalistic ethics, media accuracy, or integrity.

The fact that the private description of the ACIJ report, provide by the report author and also the Director of ACIJ (not interested in factual accuracy), is so dramatically at odds with their public description (pursuit of truth), raises serious questions about the professional conduct and integrity of the ACIJ. The fact that the MEAA not only completely failed to explain this, but even endorsed the behaviour of the ACIJ, also suggests the MEAA have abrogated their responsibility. Media coverage of the climate change issue highlights the complete failure of organisations such as [ACIJ](#), [ACMA](#), [APC](#), and [MEAA](#) to act as supposed unbiased watchdog organisations and establish a standard of journalistic integrity and professionalism to which the wider journalistic community can aspire.

The state of media regulation in Australia is in urgent need of improvement by less government interference, more media independence, reduced media concentration, and introduction of external open door transparent public regulation, and monitoring by a public panel which is totally independent of both government and industry.

The public interest must be publicly protected, not controlled by government, bureaucrats, or industry insiders.

Background – A Non-Factual Biased Survey of Anti-Government Bias

On 1st December 2011 the [ACIJ](#) released the [first part of their two stage report](#) into media coverage of climate change entitled: [A Sceptical Climate: Media Coverage of Climate Change in Australia 2011; Part 1 – Climate Change Policy](#). The Wendy Bacon study by the ACIJ is of critical importance for the following reasons, further details and evidence of which are explained more fully in the Appendix.

1. This study assumes an authoritative role in judging the truth, accuracy and fairness of climate change/CO2 tax policy related coverage in major Australian newspapers with possible implications for freedom of the press and truthful unbiased reporting.
2. This study has provided the basis for submissions ([1](#), [2](#)) to the Australian government's media enquiry ([3](#), [4](#)) and therefore could result in significant changes to freedom of the press in this country. Furthermore, the government's media enquiry in turn, will impact upon the much more broad ranging ([5](#), [6](#)) "**Convergence Review**" which will target all forms of media, including the internet.

This complaint will show that the ACIJ, as a result of the Wendy Bacon report, has violated the [MEAA code of ethics](#) and not shown "*respect for truth*", have not "*reported and interpreted honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts*", have "*suppressed relevant available facts, or given distorting emphasis*", and have not been "*accountable*".

Fundamental Bias and Credibility Problems with the Bacon Media Report

1. **Study Falsely Claims to Monitor “Truth” & Factual “Accuracy”:** study is simply a survey of compliance or disagreement with government policy & completely lacks any methodology to substantiate truth & accuracy.

Both the ACIJ web site ([7](#)) and Part 1 of the Report ([8](#)), claim the purpose of the study was to assess the “pursuit of the truth, fairness and accuracy” in the Australian media, as evidenced in following quote ([7, 8](#)):

“This Inquiry is seeking to establish whether there are issues which affect the Australian media’s ability to act in the public interest and whether current standards and codes of practice fulfill their goals of pursuit of truth, and ‘fair and accurate’ reporting.”

In spite of this claim, the study completely lacks any methodology to substantiate compliance with “public interest”, “truth”, “fairness”, or “accuracy”.

2. **Assessment of Media Bias per se, in the Absence of Methodology to Confirm Accuracy & Truth, is Merely a Means of Reinforcing Media Compliance with Government Views.**

Since the report was effectively merely a survey of anti-government policy bias and factual accuracy and truth were not considered, the results could be used to enforce government media compliance (ie elimination of anti-government ‘negative bias’).

3. **Failure to Release Part 2 of the Report concerning the science of climate change raises serious questions and further invalidates Part 1 of the Report & confirms disinterest in truth & accuracy.**

12 months after release of Part 1, Part 2 has still not been released. Why? Data from Part 1 of the Report has been used by Wendy Bacon to influence the long concluded [Finkelstein media inquiry](#) but yet Finkelstein was denied access to the crucial second part of the report concerning climate science. Why?

4. Although Bacon’s [ACIJ report](#) was simply a survey and avoided assessing accuracy or factual basis of media reports, in her [first submission to the Finkelstein inquiry](#), Bacon underlines the importance of factual accuracy in the media:

“Commercial radio is one sector of the media where there are often abuses in news and current affairs segments in which demonstrably false statements are made by commentators about climate science and other matters. (see part two of my submission.)..... For this reason, codes need to make it clear that all statements of fact should be based on a genuine attempt to establish accurate facts. Factual statements should be based on empirical evidence. Factual allegations in opinion pieces should be treated in the same way as factual allegations in news reporting.”

Bacon fails to apply these same standards to [her ACIJ media enquiry](#). For someone so concerned about factual accuracy and the truth of climate science, why has her second report not been released even 12 months after the first report? And why has Finkelstein been denied the benefit of Bacon’s second report into media coverage of climate science?

I would contend that the decision to exclude science from the first report, to judge bias with no consideration of accuracy or the underlying science, to falsely describe the report as seeking “pursuit of the truth, fairness and accuracy”, and to continue to refuse to release the second

report, in themselves, represent major prima facie violations of the Code. However, this violation is exacerbated, intensified and confirmed by further evidence below.

Wendy Bacon Admits Study was Not Interested in Factual Accuracy

According to Professor Wendy Bacon of the ACIJ (pers. commun. 9th Feb 2012): ***“The purpose of this report was not to establish the accuracy of the items.”***

How is it that Bacon and the ACIJ are assuming the power to judge what is (8) ***“fair and accurate” and “in the public interest”*** even in the absence of methodology to determine factual accuracy and even though ***“The purpose of this report was not to establish the accuracy of the items.”***

The Finkelstein enquiry has concluded (4), the Convergence review has concluded (6), partly on the basis of the findings of Wendy Bacon and the ACIJ, and yet the first ACIJ report (8) has no implications for factual accuracy and truth and the second report into the science has not even been released. Why?

How is it that a media study which had no interest in factual accuracy or truth has been used to condemn media coverage of climate change policy as biased?

And why does the ACIJ continue to refuse to release the second part of the report into media coverage of climate science?

Response of the [Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance \(MEAA\)](#) to these Concerns

In response to my first concern regarding truth and accuracy, the MEAA responds as follows:

“In response Professor Morton said the report set out to “determine whether or not the selection of sources in the newspapers analysed provide ‘fair, accurate and balanced’ reporting of debates about the Federal Government’s carbon price policy”. The report did not set out to make any judgment about the “factual accuracy” of the science consensus on climate change underpinning the government’s policy, which Prof Morton believed was best left to experts in that field, not journalism academics.”

However, Both the ACIJ web site (7) and Part 1 of the Report (8), claim the purpose of the study was to assess the *“pursuit of the truth, fairness and accuracy”* in the *“Australian media”*. Professor Morton makes two vitally important points in his response.

1. The ACIJ report has no implications for the *“Australian media”* generally, but rather, according to Professor Morton, only the *“selection of sources in the newspapers analysed.”* Professor Morton is here contradicting the claim that the study pertains to the *“Australian media”* and points out the report is only relevant to the *“selection of sources in the newspapers analysed”*. This of course suggests the study was deliberately biased and has no implications for the media generally.
2. Although the Wendy Bacon Report, and the ACIJ web site, both claim the purpose of the study was to assess the *“pursuit of the truth, fairness and accuracy”* of the *“Australian media”*, ACIJ Director Professor Morton apparently disagreed, claiming the study was only interested in *“fair, accurate and balanced’ reporting of debates about the Federal*

Government's carbon price policy." Report author Professor Wendy Bacon also stressed accuracy was not the purpose of the report(pers. commun. 9th Feb 2012): **"The purpose of this report was not to establish the accuracy of the items."**

The question is: why do both Tom Morton & Wendy Bacon contradict the ACIJ web site and the report & why is this behaviour endorsed by MEAA?

In connection with my concern about the disappearance of Part 2 of the study concerning the science of climate change, and the fact that the Finkelstein media inquiry has been influenced by choosing to supply that inquiry with only half of the ACIJ report, Professor Smyth responded thus:

"The committee dismisses the assertion that it was unethical to split the report, thus distorting the report or failing to disclose essential information. There is nothing improper in a publisher choosing to cover an issue in parts (especially a large inquiry), provided this is made clear to the reader and the overall effect can be considered fair and balanced."

The questions remain: Where is Part 2? Why has it still not been released 12 months after release of Part 1? Did Wendy Bacon or Professor Morton advise the Finkelstein inquiry that they were only supplying half their report and they had chosen to omit Part 2 concerning the science? Will Professors Morton & Bacon advise Finkelstein if Part 2 contradicts previously supplied information in Part 1? Why have both the ACIJ and MEAA failed to answer these questions?

Professor Smyth concludes in his response:

"Mr Williamson's main contention is that the report did not scrutinise the accuracy of the science on which sources held their views and, consequently, on which newspaper reporters and commentators based their coverage.

The committee is satisfied that the report did not set out on such an analysis. It limited its scope to an appraisal of the inclination of news stories and commentary (positive, neutral or negative) towards a government policy. Mr Williamson provided no evidence that the publisher acted unethically in its pursuit of that end. The committee sees no improper conduct in how the report set and met its research objectives."

The assertion by Professor Smyth that ACIJ *"limited its scope to an appraisal of the inclination of news stories and commentary (positive, neutral or negative) towards a government policy"* confirms my claim that ACIJ were completely disinterested in the facts. **According to this assessment the purpose of ACIJ was simply to check the degree to which journalists & media organisations had aligned themselves with government policy, irrespective of the truth. Since perceived anti-government bias (even though possibly 100% accurate), was considered to be 'negative bias', it would seem ACIJ is simply an apologist for government, NOT an independent media organisation.**

In my complaint I cited considerable evidence to show the Bacon report was biased by omission of pertinent information (see Appendix B). In spite of assuming an authoritative unbiased media watchdog role, the Bacon report, for some reason, completely ignored the extreme media vilification or demonising of those who opposed the CO2 tax and/or global warming thus presenting a clearly jaundiced view of media coverage of the climate change issue.

[Cherry picking data](#), or deliberate [bias by omission](#) of conflicting stories or facts is ["as bad as a lie"](#).

The MEAA, for some reason, chose to completely avoid this matter.

Lessons Learned – Media Reforms Needed Urgently

Media coverage of the climate change issue highlights the complete failure of organisations such as [ACIJ](#), [ACMA](#), [APC](#), and [MEAA](#) to act as supposed unbiased watchdog organisations and establish a standard of journalistic integrity and professionalism to which the wider journalistic community can aspire. The ACIJ, in apparently seeking to empower itself as an adjudicator regarding fairness and accuracy of media coverage of the climate change issue, consequently produces its own biased report which is not interested in the facts of climate change. So who maintains the integrity and balance of ACIJ?

The MEAA is one such organisation though I was advised they could not take action concerning Wendy Bacon as she is not a member. According to the [2011 Annual Report](#), MEAA is an “*activist union*” which gives top priority to the rights of its members (9):

“The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance is an activist union: one of the things we have always done best is to campaign for the rights of our members”

Further, according to MEAA Federal Secretary Christopher Warren (9), “*We already commit extensive resources to campaigning on shaping our industries for our members’ benefit*”. The MEAA is clearly dedicated to industry self-regulation (9) and the interests of its members (9), but (10) “***how can an organisation investigate itself in the public interest?***” Not surprisingly (11), “*All industry-funded watchdogs are also vulnerable to being undermined by their funders if they start barking too loudly.*”

Unions and organisations representing industry should have no role whatsoever in policing journalistic ethics, media accuracy, or integrity. There is a gross conflict of interest when media organisations dedicated to the welfare of their members are also granted the role of policing media accuracy and journalistic ethics.

The state of media regulation in Australia is in urgent need of improvement by less government interference, more media independence, reduced media concentration, and introduction of external open door transparent public regulation, and monitoring by a public panel which is totally independent of both government and industry.

The public interest must be publicly protected, not controlled by government, bureaucrats, or industry insiders.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Response Received from *Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance*

Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Code of Ethics complaint

Graham Williamson

Against

Tom Morton, Australian Centre for Independent Journalism

In July 2012 Graham Williamson complained about an article published by the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism titled *A Sceptical Climate: Media Coverage of Climate Change in Australia 2011*. The article was written by Professor Wendy Bacon and forms the first part of an investigation by the ACIJ and its partners into how well the Australian media is covering the issue of climate change.

Mr Williamson said those responsible for the report breached the code of ethics because, in summary:

- The report was split into two parts (the first on the coverage of climate change policy and the second (yet to be published) on climate science reporting), thus ignoring, or delaying consideration of, the important issue of climate science reporting
- The report did not “utilise any methodology to confirm factual accuracy” of the stories it surveyed in the published report.

The committee inquired as to whether any MEAA members were involved in the publication. One person, the ACIJ’s director and publisher, Professor Tom Morton, was a member. In this role he accepted he was responsible for the publication and he answered the charge.

In response Professor Morton said the report set out to “determine whether or not the selection of sources in the newspapers analysed provide ‘fair, accurate and balanced’ reporting of debates about the Federal Government’s carbon price policy”. The report did not set out to make any judgment about the “factual accuracy” of the science consensus on climate change underpinning the government’s policy, which Prof Morton believed was best left to experts in that field, not journalism academics.

The committee considered Professor Morton’s role in the publication - that of editor and publisher – and whether he breached the code of ethics.

The committee dismisses the assertion that it was unethical to split the report, thus distorting the report or failing to disclose essential information. There is nothing improper in a publisher choosing to cover an issue in parts (especially a large inquiry), provided this is made clear to the reader and the overall effect can be considered fair and balanced.

Mr Williamson’s main contention is that the report did not scrutinise the accuracy of the science on which sources held their views and, consequently, on which newspaper reporters and commentators based their coverage.

The committee is satisfied that the report did not set out on such an analysis. It limited its scope to an appraisal of the inclination of news stories and commentary (positive, neutral or negative) towards a government policy. Mr Williamson provided no evidence that the publisher acted unethically in its pursuit of that end. The committee sees no improper conduct in how the report set and met its research objectives.

Therefore, the committee dismisses the complaint.

November 30, 2012

Associate Professor Christopher Smyth
Dean
School of Media Communication & Culture
Murdoch University
South Street
MURDOCH 6150
Western Australia

Appendix B Correspondence With MEAA, Including Additional Evidence Supplied to Them

MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS ALLIANCE
Federal Secretary: Christopher Warren
PO Box 723
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012
Ph: 1300 656512 Fax: 1300 730 543

Dear Sir,

I refer to the conduct of the [Australian Centre of Independent Journalism](#), its Director, Tom Morton, and its investigator Wendy Bacon, in regard to their investigation entitled "[A sceptical climate – media coverage of climate change in Australia.](#)" As an investigative body which assumes the role of an ethical watchdog for journalists this organisation has a special role to set an example for all journalists. This complaint will show how this organisation has failed in this responsibility and has seriously breached the [journalist's code of ethics](#), particularly in regard to the following requirements of the code.

[Requirements of the Code](#) Breached by the ACIJ

AJA CODE OF ETHICS

*Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism.....They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and **should be accountable**. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities. MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to*

- ***Honesty***
- ***Fairness***
- *Independence*
- *Respect for the rights of others*

1. **Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.**

This complaint will show that the ACIJ, as a result of the Wendy Bacon report, has not shown “**respect for truth**”, have not “**reported and interpreted honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts**”, have “**suppressed relevant available facts, or given distorting emphasis**”, and have not been “**accountable**”.

First I draw your attention to the following page of the ACIJ web site which clearly underlines the fact that the ACIJ decided to split the report into 2 parts, the second of which remains unpublished.

See <http://datasearch2.uts.edu.au/acij/investigations/detail.cfm?ItemId=29219>

A sceptical climate – media coverage of climate change in Australia

“ACIJ launches major report on the reporting of climate change.

Some of Australia's leading newspapers have been so negative in their reporting of the Gillard government's carbon policy it's fair to say they've campaigned against it rather than covered it according to a new report by Australian Centre for Independent Journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney.

The first of a two-part analysis of Australian press coverage of climate change, A Sceptical Climate, has found that between February and July this year negative coverage of the carbon policy across 10 major newspapers outweighed positive coverage by 73 per cent to 27 per cent.

Report author Professor Wendy Bacon said the overall result was driven by News Ltd group publications (82 per cent negative versus 18 per cent positive), compared to a more balanced result for the Fairfax press (57 per cent positive articles outweighing 43 per cent negative).

Read the report: [Part I - Climate Change Policy](#) (PDF, 6.9MB, 70 pages)

This project aims to provide more information about the quality of reporting on climate change. How well is the Australian media performing its role in reporting the issue of climate change? Are Australian audiences receiving adequate and accurate information? Is the selection and treatment of sources and the representation of viewpoints and evidence fair, accurate and balanced? Does the media provide a forum for debate and a range of sources?

Two reports will be published. This, the first, is on the coverage of climate change policy. The second will focus on climate science coverage.

These reports are timely. The Australian government has set up an Independent Media Inquiry into the Australian print and online media, (2011).

This Inquiry is seeking to establish whether there are issues, which affect the Australian media's ability to act in the public interest and whether current standards and codes of practice fulfill their goals of pursuit of truth, and 'fair and accurate' reporting."

At this point I draw your attention to the ACIJ decision to split the report and to make a judgement about media bias in the first part of the report without giving any consideration whatsoever to scientific accuracy which was deliberately removed from the first report, ostensibly for inclusion in the second report which has still not been released, more than 6 months after the first report. I also draw your attention to the following email from Wendy Bacon of 22nd December 2011 in which she states the second report would be released last January (6 months ago).

"Dear Graham

I am on leave at the moment. I will be back onto this in Jan. I will be bringing out a second report then.

Wendy

Professor Wendy Bacon

Director, The Australian Centre for Independent Journalism

Phone: 61 (2) 95142769

ACIJ numbers: 61 (2) 95142488 or 9514229 Mobile – 0409403774

I followed with emails to Wendy Bacon requesting release of the second report on 4th March, 9th March, and 12th April, the last 2 of these also being directed to Tom Morton. These remain unanswered.

I would contend that the decision to exclude science from the first report, to judge bias with no consideration of the science, and to continue to refuse to release the second report, in themselves, represent major prima facie violations of the Code. However, this violation is exacerbated, intensified and confirmed by further evidence below and in the accompanying attachment.

BACKGROUND

On 1st December 2011 the [ACIJ](#) released the [first part of their two stage report](#) into media coverage of climate change entitled: [A Sceptical Climate: Media Coverage of Climate Change in Australia 2011; Part 1 – Climate Change Policy](#). The Wendy Bacon study by the ACIJ is of critical importance for the following reasons.

1. This study assumes an authoritative role in judging the truth, accuracy and fairness of climate change/CO2 tax policy related coverage in major Australian newspapers with possible implications for freedom of the press and truthful unbiased reporting.
2. This study has provided the basis for submissions ([1](#), [2](#)) to the Australian government's media enquiry ([3](#), [4](#)) and therefore could result in significant changes to freedom of the press in this country. Furthermore, the government's media enquiry in turn, will impact upon the much more broad ranging ([5](#), [6](#)) "**Convergence Review**" which will target all forms of media, including the internet.

Fundamental Bias and Credibility Problems with the Bacon Media Report

- 1. Study Not Designed to Check Factual Accuracy: study is a survey of compliance, or otherwise, in regard to government policy and the government version of the science.**
Although the purpose of this study was stated as being to assess the (7, 8) “*pursuit of the truth, fairness and accuracy*” in the surveyed media, in actual fact no clear methodology was established to verify factual accuracy and truth and conclusions were made in complete absence of any consideration of the scientific facts. Why has the ACIJ been so determined to avoid looking at the science? Why did the ACIJ pretend they were going to examine the science and yet deliberately leave this until after Finkelstein enquiry was concluded?
- 2. Assessment of Media Bias per se, in the Absence of Clear Methodology to Confirm Accuracy & Truth, is Merely a Means of Reinforcing Media Compliance with Government Views.**
Since the report was effectively merely a survey of anti-government policy bias and factual accuracy and truth were not considered, there is a real danger that the results could be used to enforce government media compliance (ie elimination of anti-government ‘negative bias’).

Wendy Bacon Admits Study was Not Interested in Factual Accuracy

According to Professor Wendy Bacon of the ACIJ (pers. commun. 9th Feb 2012): ***“The purpose of this report was not to establish the accuracy of the items.”***

How is it that Bacon and the ACIJ are assuming the power to judge what is (8) ***“fair and accurate” and “in the public interest”*** even in the absence of methodology to determine factual accuracy and even though ***“The purpose of this report was not to establish the accuracy of the items.”***

The Finkelstein enquiry has concluded (4), the Convergence review has concluded (6), partly on the basis of the findings of Wendy Bacon and the ACIJ, and yet the first ACIJ report (8) has no implications for factual accuracy and truth and the second report into the science has not even been released. Why?

I have attached my analysis of the ACIJ report which clearly establishes the grounds for very serious breaches of the CODE. I contend that the ACIJ, and participating investigators, should be either deregistered or suffer extremely severe penalties.

In view of the watchdog role of the ACIJ, the penalties for these breaches must be very severe indeed if the CODE and the Media, Entertainment, and Arts Alliance are to have any credibility whatsoever.

Regards

Graham Williamson

Below is attachment provided to MEAA with complaint, containing back up evidence

**Media Enquiry Targets Bias, Sacrifices Truth, Freedom of Speech
If it disagrees with government, it must be ‘negative bias’**

Graham Williamson

March 2012

A response to the report, "*A Sceptical Climate: Media Coverage of Climate Change in Australia 2011: Part 1 – Climate Change Policy*", by Professor Wendy Bacon, ACIJ.

SUMMARY

1. **Implications for media accuracy.** The Bacon report has no implications or credibility in respect of judging media "*truth, fairness, and accuracy*" since the report fails to utilise any methodology to confirm factual accuracy. Any express or implied claim that this report can be utilised to establish factual accuracy are completely invalid.
2. **The Bacon report is itself biased and subjective.**
3. **Bacon report biased by omission.** In spite of assuming an authoritative unbiased watchdog role, the Bacon report, for some reason, completely ignored the gross media vilification or demonising of those who opposed the CO2 tax and/or global warming.
4. **Lacking credibility.** To conclude that "*many Australians did not receive fair, accurate and impartial reporting*", in the absence of any methodology to confirm factual accuracy, merely serves to destroy the credibility of the report and necessitate that serious questions be asked regarding a possible abandonment of journalistic ethics.
5. **Danger of enforcing pro-government media subservience.** Any attempt to enforce a pro-government media bias with no concern for factual accuracy poses a real threat to the freedom and independence of the media.

Examples of Media Bias not Mentioned in Bacon Report

A thorough understanding and awareness of the following four facts is essential to understanding the CO2 tax and climate change science yet media coverage of these facts has been extremely poor, yet these issues were completely ignored by the Bacon report.

1. **Government carbon policy will further enforce UN control over Australia.**
2. **UN says main reason for carbon tax is as a source of international finance.**
3. **WA Premier thwarted democratic vote for Royal Commission into climate change.**
4. **Government climate experts admit science of AGW is NOT settled.**

It is concluded that the Bacon report is merely a biased media survey structured to favour positive alignment with government policy and with absolutely no implications as far as media accuracy is concerned. It is further concluded that unless the media are prepared to publish the truth, the facts, regardless of whether they are positively or negatively aligned with government policy, then freedom will be no more than a relic from the past. **Such pro-government media subservience is an open invitation to 21st century Hitlers.**

Introduction

The Rudd-Gillard government's decision to pursue anti-Australian globalist policies has produced a crisis in the popularity of the government. Given that the government is determined to continue on this unpopular anti-Australian course their only recourse to avoid complete political suicide is to change the perception of the people. This of course means living in a world of spin and media control where a new virtual reality is created.

This is the political environment which has seen the government launch an enquiry into the Australian media by Ray Finkelstein ([1](#)). At the same time Professor Wendy Bacon from the **Australian Centre for Independent Journalism** (ACIJ) was conducting a parallel enquiry into media

coverage of climate change issues in Australia entitled (3, 4) ***“A Sceptical Climate: Media Coverage of Climate Change in Australia 2011.”*** This enquiry was divided into two separate reports, the first report covers media coverage of government climate change ‘policy’ (ie CO2 tax) while the second, yet to be released part, concerns media coverage of ‘climate science’. This article will focus upon Part 1 of the Bacon report since the second report, pertaining to climate science, is yet to be published.

Justice Finkelstein concluded his media enquiry and released his findings on 28th February (1) partly based upon the findings of Professor Bacon’s report into media bias. But almost 4 weeks after Finkelstein’s findings were released the second part of Bacon’s report into media coverage of climate science has yet to be published.

Both Part 2 of the Bacon report, and also the findings of the Finkelstein enquiry, will be considered by separate subsequent articles.

PART 1

Media Survey Reveals the Only ‘Accurate’ Bias is a Pro-government Bias

The Bacon study by the ACIJ (3, 4), ***“A Sceptical Climate: Media Coverage of Climate Change in Australia 2011”*** is of critical importance for the following reasons.

1. This study assumes an authoritative role in judging the truth, accuracy and fairness of climate change/CO2 tax policy related coverage in major Australian newspapers with possible implications for freedom of the press and truthful unbiased reporting.
2. This study has provided the basis for submissions (2, 2a) to the Australian government’s media enquiry (1) and therefore could result in significant changes to freedom of the press in this country. Furthermore, the government’s media enquiry in turn, will impact upon the much more broad ranging (36, 37) ***“Convergence Review”*** which will target all forms of media, including the internet.
3. There is a perception that the mainstream media is biased in favour of government and biased against those who disagree with the science of AGW and the government’s undemocratic enforcement of UN based environmental reforms upon the Australian people. The Bacon study should confirm or disprove this given an effective truth based methodology.

Fundamental Bias and Credibility Problems with the Bacon Media Report

1. **Study Not Designed to Check Factual Accuracy: study is a survey of compliance, or otherwise, in regard to government policy and the government version of the science.** Although the purpose of this study was stated as being to assess the (3, 4) ***“pursuit of the truth, fairness and accuracy”*** in the surveyed media, in actual fact, since no clear methodology was established to verify factual accuracy and truth, this study is merely a survey of how many newspaper articles were considered positive or negative with respect to government policy and the government version of climate science. This survey was never designed to check factual accuracy and yet the study purports to be designed for this purpose. The survey result is merely a statistical analysis of how many articles in each surveyed newspaper were positively or negatively aligned with government policy or the government’s version of the science. There are no definite implications for factual accuracy.
2. **Assessment of Media Bias per se, in the Absence of Clear Methodology to Confirm Accuracy & Truth, is Merely a Means of Reinforcing Media Compliance with Government**

Views

Since factual accuracy and truth were not considered by this report there is a real danger that the results could be used to enforce government media compliance (ie elimination of ant-government 'negative bias'). As Bacon correctly points out (4 p19): ***“promoting sources with vested interests without testing them against credible sources provides opportunities for misinformation and scare campaigns.”*** There is no doubt in this instance that the government has an enormous vested interest and yet according to Bacon (4) 54% of the sources for the surveyed articles were ***“political.”*** **Elimination of negative bias, without concern for accuracy and truth, grants the seal of approval to any ruthless unscrupulous government propaganda machine.**

3. Conclusion invalid and unjustifiable

Since the report has no clear implications for accuracy and truth of the surveyed articles the following conclusion by Bacon is completely invalid and unjustifiable (4):

“Evidence in this report suggests that many Australians did not receive fair, accurate and impartial reporting in the public interest in relation to the carbon policy in 2011. This suggests that rather than an open and competitive market that can be trusted to deliver quality media, we may have a case of market failure.”

It appears that Bacon and the ACIJ are here assuming the power to judge what is ***“fair and accurate and in the public interest”*** even in the absence of methodology to determine factual accuracy. A majority of the surveyed articles may have been negative in certain newspapers, but the report does not substantiate the assumption that these negative articles were factually incorrect. Neither is evidence provided to show that positive articles are factually correct.

4. The Bacon report is itself biased and subjective.

According to Bacon (4): *“Negative coverage can also be critical, pointing out shortcomings in policy, but it can also lapse into one-sided promotion of particular interest groups, abusive commentary and exclusion of stories and sources that do not fit the negative narrative.”*

But what about positive articles, could they also (4) *“lapse into one-sided promotion of particular interest groups, and exclusion of stories and sources that do not fit the”* **positive “narrative?”** Bacon does not consider this possibility.

Bacon continues (4): *“Herald Sun and The Daily Telegraph – have been so biased in their coverage that it is fair to say they ‘campaigned’ against the policy rather than covered it.”* If there was no analysis of factual accuracy how can it be concluded they *“campaigned”* against the policy? This clearly implies the articles were critical without factual basis.

Bacon further states (4): *“Meanwhile Australian readers received their usual dose of climate scepticism.”* **This subjective statement itself is fundamentally biased and disqualifies the Bacon report from any claim to impartiality.**

5. Effect upon the Federal government media enquiry.

The Bacon report is especially significant because of its possible impact upon the results of the Australian government’s media enquiry (1) which some see as an attempt by an unpopular government to gain more control of the media (18, 19, 20). In this respect, based on her media report (4), Bacon has made two submissions to the Federal government’s enquiry (2, 2a).

In her first submission (2), Bacon underlines the importance of factual accuracy in the media even though her report (4) avoided assessing such accuracy (2): *“Commercial radio is one sector of the media where there are often abuses in news and current affairs segments in which demonstrably false statements are made by commentators about climate science and other matters. (see part two of my submission.)..... For this reason, codes need to make it clear that all statements of fact should be based on a genuine attempt to establish accurate*

facts. Factual statements should be based on empirical evidence. Factual allegations in opinion pieces should be treated in the same way as factual allegations in news reporting.”

Bacon not only fails to support her claim of factual inaccuracy (2), but she also fails to supply these same standards to her own media enquiry (4).

In her second submission to the Federal government’s enquiry, Bacon summarises (2a): *“The study found while there was some variation across News Ltd mastheads, there is a stark contrast between News Ltd overall and Fairfax papers. The negative headlines of news and features in all News Ltd papers outweighed all the neutral and positive headlines combined. In The Age and the Sydney Morning Herald, the positive headlines slightly outweighed the neutral and negative. Across the ten newspapers, negative comment pieces outweighed positive ones nearly 4:1. The Herald Sun commentary was almost entirely negative. The most prolific and most published columnists across the ten newspapers were News Ltd opinion writers Andrew Bolt and Terry McCrann who were very strongly opposed to the policy. These are just a sample of the findings of the research that shows high levels of bias against the carbon reduction policy in News Ltd papers.....”*

The *“high levels of bias against the carbon reduction policy”* may in reality have involved factually accurate criticisms although this was not explained by Bacon and neither did the report utilise any methodology to determine this.

6. **Importance of Sources to Check Accuracy**

As is acknowledged by Bacon, sources are very important as a means of checking accuracy (4): *“The inclusion or exclusion of sources is one significant way in which media exercises power. An analysis of quoted sources is therefore an important way of assessing the nature of coverage. The first three sources in all news and features articles across the six months were coded.”* However, given the importance of sources, it is odd that Bacon fails to include specific sources for selected positively biased and negatively biased articles, thus making it impossible to determine which were better sourced.

7. **Vilification and intimidation of so called ‘sceptics’ or anyone opposed to the CO2 tax.**

Although the media has been used to demonise or vilify anyone who dares to oppose the government’s version of climate science or the CO2 tax (21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31), this information was excluded from the Bacon study (4).

PART 2

The Facts they Forgot to Tell You: facts suppressed or ignored by the media

Are you aware of the following facts which have been largely suppressed or ignored by the mainstream media?

1. **Government Carbon Policy Will Enforce UN Control Over Australia**

One of the main purposes of the **Clean Energy (CO2 Tax) Legislation**, according to Section 3a of the Act (6), is to give the United Nations increased power to interfere in Australian affairs by legalising and enforcing the **UN Climate Change Convention** and the **Kyoto Protocol** (6; **Part 1, Section 3a, Clean Energy Legislation**). The option of a coordinated national approach which does NOT involve surrendering sovereignty to the UN (33, 34, 35) was never presented to the Australian people, either by the government or the media. This represents a deliberate abandonment of Australia’s independence and national sovereignty and the rights of Australians to determine their own social, economic, and environmental policies. **The Australian government, and the media, did not even canvass the possibility that**

Australia should have the right to determine its own economic and environmental future WITHOUT interference from external agencies. This was completely excluded from the public debate. And the Opposition, Greens, and Independents, did not demand that this section of the Bill be deleted so that Australians could determine their own future.

2. UN Says Main Purpose of Carbon Tax is for Supplying International Finance

The UN however, had already stated the main purpose of a CO2 tax is to raise revenue, it is for the purposes of (7, 8) **“international finance”** because of **“the unequal distribution of world income”**, and **NOT** to control climate. In fact, the UN points out that if the carbon tax is going to continue to generate sufficient global revenue then it (7) **should not be set at such a high level that it reduces CO2 emissions to zero** as this would be counterproductive as far as international finance is concerned and this is the main purpose of the tax (7).

3. WA Premier Thwarted Democratic Vote for Royal Commission into Climate Change

Almost 3 months before the CO2 tax legislation was passed by the Australian Parliament, concern about climate science was so serious that the WA Liberal Party members voted **“overwhelmingly”** for a Royal Commission into climate science (9, 10, 11). This democratic vote was thwarted by the WA Premier and yet this amazing denial of democracy, at this crucial time, was virtually unmentioned in the mainstream media (9, 10, 11).

4. Government Climate Experts Admit Science of AGW is NOT settled

Many people think, because of biased media coverage, that it is only so called climate change deniers who believe the science of climate change is not settled and have serious concerns about the reliability of the science of AGW. The fact that government associated scientists and scientific organisations, including the **Climate Change Commissioner**, the **CSIRO**, and the **Australian Academy of Science**, have all expressed serious doubts about the degree to which humans are influencing climate (12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17) has not been widely reported in the mainstream media. The facts are clear, but they have not been widely communicated to the public.

Part 3

Conclusion

Has the Media Provided A Balanced, Accurate, Unbiased and In-depth Coverage of Matters Pertaining to AGW and the CO2 Tax/ETS?

All the available evidence indicates the media coverage of AGW and the CO2 tax has generally been very heavily biased in favour of a pro-government position, perhaps even a deliberate bias against the truth. Evidence in favour of this includes the following.

- As discussed above, media coverage and consequent community awareness of the following four fundamental facts has been extremely poor, most Australians being completely unaware of these matters, matters which are so vitally important if Australians are to have any hope of accurately assessing the advantages or disadvantages of the CO2 tax legislation.

1. Government carbon policy will enforce UN control over Australia.

2. UN says main reason for carbon tax is as a source of international finance.

3. WA Premier thwarted democratic vote for Royal Commission into climate change.

4. Government climate experts admit science of AGW is NOT settled.

The complete failure of the media to convey these facts to the Australian people indicates either an amazing pro-government, anti-truth bias or an unbelievable level of media incompetency, or perhaps a combination of both.

- Although the ACIJ Bacon inquiry into media coverage of the CO2 tax (3, 4) assumed an authoritative role in checking the “*pursuit of truth, fairness and accuracy*” of the surveyed media coverage, justification for such authority is completely lacking in the absence of clear methodology to establish factual accuracy. In fact the Bacon ACIJ inquiry did not elucidate any clear methodology to establish factual accuracy of surveyed articles and therefore was merely a statistical survey which surveyed the percentage of articles which were biased for or against government policy. Any deliberate decision by the ACIJ to assess media ‘bias’ without assessing factual accuracy, and then on this basis conclude “*many Australians did not receive fair, accurate and impartial reporting*”, merely serves to destroy the credibility of the report and necessitate that serious questions be asked regarding a possible abandonment of journalistic ethics (32).
- Further indicating the pro-government bias of the Bacon report (3, 4) is the fact that this study completely ignored media vilification or intimidation of those opposed to the government’s position on the CO2 tax or the science of AGW. This implies extreme bias and selectivity. Given the disgraceful insults and name calling employed by some sections of the media to target those opposed to the government’s version of the CO2 tax or AGW science, when a media watch dog establishes an enquiry to examine the behaviour of the media but excludes such intimidation, then serious ethical questions must be asked.

The Media as a Safeguard Against Totalitarian Dictatorships and UN Interference

The freedoms taken for granted in Australia, which make this country so wonderful compared to many others, are under attack from an introspective ideologically extreme and dishonest government which is constantly seeking to enforce undemocratic policies upon the Australian people. In all free countries a strong independent media is one of the vital safeguards protecting the people against those who seek to enslave and lower community standards. Yet, in spite of this, the media in this country is under attack from the Australian government (18, 19, 20, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42). Lessons from history and politically subjugated countries clearly indicate the government should be taking positive steps to ensure media freedom and independence, yet the current Australian government is moving in an opposite, negative, direction.

And amazingly, the Bacon media inquiry was highly critical of CO2 tax coverage that was negative with respect to government policy, even though the criticisms may have been factually correct. In other words it seems, if the government is involved in any activities counter to the interests of the Australian people, be they matters of political corruption or subversive anti-Australian activities, then any truthful accurate account by media outlets would be vigorously condemned by media watchdogs such as the ACIJ as “*negative bias*”. Unless the media are prepared to publish the truth, the facts, regardless of whether they are positively or negatively aligned with government policy, then freedom will be no more than a relic from the past.

Pro-government media subservience is an open invitation to 21st century Hitlers. Have we learned nothing? What will you do to ensure media freedom and independence and a free Australia for your children and grandchildren?

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Appendix C Correspondence with ACIJ

Email of 16/4/2012

**Associate Professor Tom Morton
Director
Australian Centre for Independent Journalism
Room 503, Level 5, Building 3 Bon Marche
University of Technology,
755 Harris Street, Ultimo NSW**

Dear Tom,

I have as yet received no response to my earlier communication below.

I am advised that the second part of your report into media coverage of climate change concerning the science was due to be released last January but the release is now well overdue.

Can you please advise your time frame for this release.

Regards

Graham Williamson

From: Graham [mailto:grahamhw@iprimus.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 12 April 2012 9:48 AM
To: 'tom.morton@uts.edu.au'
Subject: Climate report

Dear Tom,

Could you please advise your time frame for the release of your second climate change report into climate science.

When will it be released? What is the reason for the delay?

Regards

Graham Williamson

Email of 12/4/2012, cc'd to Tom Morton

Dear Wendy,

Could you please advise your time frame for the release of your second climate change report into climate science.

When will it be released? What is the reason for the delay?

Regards

Graham Williamson

Email of 19/3/2012, cc'd to Tom Morton

Dear Wendy,

I have received no response to my request for a copy of your second media report into coverage of climate science.

This report, you state below, was to be released in January.

Could you please send a copy of this report.

Regards

Graham Williamson

-----Original Message-----

From: Wendy Bacon [mailto:Wendy.Bacon@uts.edu.au]

Sent: Thursday, 22 December 2011 12:28 PM

To: Graham

Subject: RE: Media enquiry

Dear Graham

I am on leave at the moment. I will be back onto this in Jan. I will be bringing out a second report then.

Wendy

Professor Wendy Bacon
Director, The Australian Centre for Independent Journalism
Phone: 61 (2) 95142769
ACIJ numbers: 61 (2) 95142488 or 9514229 Mobile - 0409403774

From: Graham [grahamhw@iprimus.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2011 9:07 PM
To: Wendy Bacon
Subject: RE: Media enquiry

Professor Wendy Bacon,
Australian Centre for Independent Journalism PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007 I have not as yet, received a response to the matters raised in my earlier email which is reproduced below. When can I expect a response?
Regards
Graham Williamson

Dear Wendy,
Thank you for your response.

In answer to your queries, no unfortunately I had not had an opportunity to thoroughly digest your report, although I have now rectified this, and yes I would greatly appreciate a copy of the second report. What were your reasons for separating the 2 reports?

I make the following comments.

Firstly, in consideration of your terms and methodology you state
(1<<http://www.acij.uts.edu.au/pdfs/sceptical-climate-part1.pdf>>):

“The underpinning of journalism is the pursuit of the truth. In pursuing truth, journalists aim to be ‘fair and accurate’. This does not mean that in every article a reporter needs to canvas a range of opinions in every article but it does mean that editors have a responsibility to ensure readers get a good range of views and accurate information from which to make up their minds on critical issues. Promoting sources with vested interests without testing them against credible sources provides opportunities for misinformation and scare campaigns.....Some might argue that the negative approach to the carbon policy is simply the result of the application of conventional news values that tend to highlight conflict. But while the negativity of news values may well explain some of patterns revealed by the content analysis, they do not explain why the marked difference between Fairfax and News Ltd papers. The explanation lies rather in different corporate and editorial policies that editors and journalists apply in making decisions about how to cover climate change issues. This does not imply uniformity across a company or a masthead but the patterns of representation are the result of informal policies combined with the application of professional reporting conventions by individual editors and reporters.”

So how do you ensure you are most accurately checking the “pursuit of the truth” and the “journalists aim to be ‘fair and accurate’?”

You have performed a statistical analysis of the frequency of positive and negative articles but how have you established the relationship to truth?

In other words, have you eliminated the possibility that negative articles may be more factual or have you assumed the majority must be correct? For instance, why is it that some media outlets consistently display a pro government or left wing ideological bias? When the CO2 tax protesters protested in Canberra for instance, they were subsequently subjected to a tirade of insults, vilification and name calling from various government members. Although this is a simple fact, why is it that such government intolerance and demonization tends to be ignored or suppressed by various media outlets? Did you investigate the reason why the truth was suppressed in this instance? In the same way, why is it that certain media outlets ignore criticisms of government CO2 tax policy even if it is sourced from eminent climate scientists? And when there are news reports such as climategate emails which may embarrass the government it seems such events are continually downplayed by certain media outlets. Did you check this?

You further state that "In our second report, we will report on climate science reporting. It is worth noting that the report will show that The Age, the newspaper with the most in-depth coverage of climate science, had the most positive stance towards action on climate change."

When you say most in depth coverage of climate science, to which brand of climate science were you referring? Were you referring to climate science from leading independent world climate scientists such as Professor Richard Lindzen and Professor John Christy, both of whom are former IPCC lead authors and both of whom state there is no evidence of human caused climate change? Or the thousands of other scientists, including the NIPCC, who agree with Linzen and Christy? Or, on the other hand, were you simply referring to alarmist political climate science provided by those with vested interest in supporting government policy?

You continue:

"Readers that were receiving the most negative coverage of the policy in The Herald Sun, The Daily Telegraph and The Australian also received a substantial dose of commentary, which either rejected or raised questions about the scientific consensus on human induced climate change."

You seem to be assuming the negative commentary is not factual. Is this correct? Did the Fairfax publications give fair representation to independent scientists whose evidence contradicts government policy or was their commentary biased against such scientists? This is absolutely fundamental to your report. In this connection I note you failed to provide a detailed breakdown of scientific sources for each newspaper or columnist. Do you have this data?

Although you acknowledge the importance of sources you choose to list sources as a percentage of total articles rather than list sources by newspaper or columnist:

"The inclusion or exclusion of sources is one significant way in which media exercises power. An analysis of quoted sources is therefore an important way of assessing the nature of coverage. The first three sources in all news and features articles across the six months were coded."

In other words, you have refrained from addressing the issue of whether negative articles were better sourced or sourced from more independent sources.

In conclusion you state (I have added comments in red):

"In itself, these findings are not particularly remarkable or surprising. What is more significant are the differences between the media outlets and the extent of the negative bias – how did you

differentiate between accurate reporting of negative facts and incorrect or negative reporting of positive facts? Overall, News Ltd papers have been far more negative towards the policy than the Fairfax papers. The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald were balanced in their coverage. The Age was the only paper to be more positive than negative. how did you confirm positive articles were not simply a censoring of negative facts?

There is variation across the News Ltd stable with The Hobart Mercury and The Adelaide Advertiser being more balanced than other papers. The two biggest News Ltd tabloids – The Herald Sun and The Daily Telegraph – have been so biased in their coverage that it is fair to say they ‘campaigned’ against the policy rather than covered it - how did you differentiate between accurate reporting of negative facts and incorrect or negative reporting of positive facts?. The influence of these two publications extends far outside Sydney and Melbourne. The Herald Sun and The Daily Telegraph columnists are syndicated across News Ltd mastheads including some regional ones. They also publish blogs, which carry a large amount of material in similar vein to print material and regularly appear on television and radio, supported by corporate marketing techniques designed to amplify their impact.

While the impact of columnists is considerable, negative coverage cannot be attributed merely to several well-published conservative personalities. Bias is an editorial accomplishment achieved through a variety of journalistic techniques included headlining, the selection and prominence of topics and sources, structuring and editing of stories, selection and promotion of commentators, editorials and cartoons or other visuals.....

The Australian, the only general national newspaper, pitches itself as a leader of national political debate, was also strongly negative toward the Gillard Government’s carbon policy- to what extent were these criticisms soundly based and sourced?. This may reflect its overall opposition to the Gillard government, the Greens and support for big business. It often states its broad support for a carbon price and published neutral and occasional positive commentary. It can be contrasted with The Age, which carried a similar amount of neutral material but was the only paper to have more positive articles than negative..... how did you confirm positive articles were not simply a censoring of negative facts?

The accusation that Fairfax has a ‘dark heart’ in which complex debates are distilled to simple viewpoints, peddled to a deliberately misinformed readership is a heavy one. It conflicts with the results of this study which showed that both the SMH and The Age were both more likely to be neutral and were more evenly balanced between positive and negative than the Australian.....your main purpose here is not statistical but rather, as you point out, the ‘pursuit of the truth’ and ensuring ‘journalists are fair and accurate’. The fact that one is ‘more likely’ negative proves absolutely nothing other than a statistical correlation. How have you assessed truth and fairness in dismissing this allegation of censorship?

Political values and support for political policies are embedded in journalists’ reporting either implicitly or explicitly. It is clear that The Age is a more progressive than The Australian but there is no evidence in this study that The Age engages in censorship-see above. Indeed it appears to be considerably more balanced than any News Ltd paper. All papers in this study strongly represented business sources and if any sources were shut out of the debate, it was civil society sources and scientists who supported the policy.....please substantiate the inference here that scientists opposed to the policy were NOT shut out of the debate.

On the day the Clean Energy bills passed parliament, The Daily Telegraph ran a full-page story: ‘Carbon Casualties –three million families will suffer under a new carbon tax regime.’ (November 10, 2011). The story that was featured on news.com.au, The Daily Telegraph, Perth now websites is about Teddy Samuelson. “The stay-at-home mum said her husband worked "bloody hard for his money" with the family battling existing expenses and the cost of raising three boys in Sydney on Mr. Samuelson's wage of more than \$150,000 a year.” The article explained that "A lot of the debate is based on inconclusive scientific evidence ... we don't really get a say in anything any more." While

the available evidence showed that most Australians will be better off under the carbon price compensation measures (are you denying existence of contrary evidence? Evidence please), the story was headlined and constructed to emphasise the cost of the scheme to Australian taxpayers. The reference to inconclusive scientific evidence merged scientific claims with a feeling of democratic exclusion, reinforcing the doubts of readers who are not yet convinced by the scientific consensus on human induced climate change- are you suggesting some kind of inaccuracy here? Evidence please..

Yes, this report has established that the reporting of climate change in sections of the Australian media has been far from impartial, fair or balanced. Is it in the public interest for a media organisation that dominates the market to 'campaign' as The Daily Telegraph and The Herald Sun have done, on an issue which a huge majority of the world's scientists have found threatens the lives of millions? In what circumstances does a lack of diversity and balance, represent a threat to democracy?

Our research has also found evidence of strong reporting, both in these ten publications, the ABC and the fledgling independent media. At the same time however, News Ltd amplifies the power of some of its most biased reporting through blogs, video, links with talk back radio and broadcast media.

Our second report which deals with the reporting of climate science will provide more evidence that while the carbon policy was the focus of intense attention, climate science reporting slipped right down the news agenda. Meanwhile Australian readers received their usual dose of climate scepticism – this subjective statement itself is fundamentally biased and disqualifies your report from being impartial.

Evidence in this report suggests that many Australians did not receive fair, accurate and impartial reporting in the public interest in relation to the carbon policy in 2011. This suggests that rather an open and competitive market that can be trusted to deliver quality media, we may have a case of market failure."

I repeat, so far you have simply provided a statistical analysis, yet, merely on the basis of numbers, you have sought to judge what is truth and what is not. Are you suggesting the majority view is always correct?

You refer to climate scepticism in a derogatory or negative context. Why do you regard the top climate scientists in the world in this way?

I refer you to the most recent climate report from the CSIRO and BOM which states (2<http://www.cawcr.gov.au/projects/PCCSP/Nov/Vol1_Ch8.pdf>):

"Trends in climate are evident over the Pacific as a whole, including the PCCSP region, however the extent to which these trends are attributable to natural variability and to human activities is not yet well understood."

According to CSIRO and BOM the effects of humans upon climate is still not well understood. Do you agree with this or do you regard it as bias or scepticism? This is of absolutely fundamental importance to the credibility of your report.

Indeed, if you were not aware of this simple fact it seems the medias bias opposed to truth and in favour of government propaganda was too effective and your entire study therefore invalidated.

I feel sure you will agree with me as to the seriousness of the matters I have raised and I therefore look forward to a positive response which may alleviate my concerns.

Regards

Graham Williamson

From: wendybacon1@gmail.com [mailto:wendybacon1@gmail.com] On Behalf Of wendy bacon
Sent: Tuesday, 13 December 2011 11:58 AM
To: Graham
Subject: Re: Media enquiry

Dear Graham

I am not sure if you have read the report or not but assume that you have. We clearly explain that there are two reports. The first on Climate change policy which in this context was overwhelmingly about the carbon policy. The second report is about climate science. My own view is that these are best treated separately.

I am only covering Australian material in this report but I am interested in the wider context and other research, of course. Thanks for sending this material to me.

Would you like to receive a copy of the second report?

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Bacon

On Tue, Dec 13, 2011 at 8:45 AM, Graham

grahamhw@iprimus.com.au<mailto:grahamhw@iprimus.com.au>> wrote:

Professor Wendy Bacon,

Australian Centre for Independent Journalism PO Box 123, Broadway NSW 2007

Dear Wendy,

I refer to your current report into the media coverage pertaining to climate change (1<<http://www.acij.uts.edu.au/pdfs/sceptical-climate-part1.pdf>>).

Unfortunately your Report appears to be deliberately biased.

Your report is titled "Coverage of Climate Change Policy" and the Preface to your report further states: "There are few media stories in which there is such an obvious public interest as that of climate change. There is no doubt that the subject has been well covered by the media."

There is a very clear implication here that your report is intended to examine all aspects of the media coverage of "climate change", but yet, astonishingly, your analysis seems to have been deliberately confined to a survey of news reports concerning the carbon dioxide tax (see below). Where are all your reports concerning media reports of the science of climate change upon which the government's policy is allegedly based?

Why have you selectively chosen to include only one aspect of climate change in your report while at the same time pretending your report has broad unbiased coverage?

In the Appendix below you will see the outcome of studies which examine this matter in an unbiased light. Why has your enquiry chosen to exclude media coverage of scientific reports criticising or disproving the science upon which government policy is purportedly based? When will this data be included?

You represent the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism and yet you have produced this biased one eyed report. Why?

The credibility of your organisation is at stake.

Regards

Graham Williamson

You list the following key findings in your report.

COVERAGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

- Overall, negative coverage of the Gillard government's carbon policy across ten newspapers outweighed positive coverage across ten Australian newspapers by 73% to 27%. (Note: After neutral items were discounted). (See page 32)
- All papers contained some positive and a substantial amount of neutral material. The highest level of neutral articles was found in The Age and The Hobart Mercury, the lowest level was found in The Northern Territory News and The Daily Telegraph. (See page 32)
- After neutral items were discounted, negative coverage (82%) across News Ltd newspapers far outweighed positive (18%) articles. This indicates a very strong stance against the carbon policy adopted by the company that controls most Australian metropolitan newspapers, and the only general national daily. (See page 33)
- By comparison, Fairfax was far more balanced in its coverage of the policy than News Ltd publications with 57% positive articles outweighing 43% negative articles. (See page 33)
- The Age was more positive (67%) rather than negative towards the policy than any other newspaper. The Daily Telegraph was the most negative (89%) rather than positive of newspapers. (See page 33)
- Headlines were less balanced than the actual content of articles. (See Figures 7 and 9 on pages 29 and 30).

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- Neutral articles were more likely to be headlined negative (41%) than positive (19%). (See page 34)
- Readers relying on metropolitan newspapers living in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane received more coverage of carbon policy issues than readers in Perth, Adelaide and Darwin. (See page 25)
- The Australian gave far more space to the coverage of climate change than any other newspaper. Its articles were coded 47% negative, 44% neutral and 9% positive. When neutrals were discounted, there were 84% negative articles compared to 17% positive. (See page 32)

APPENDIX

Summary of Report Into BBC Climate Bias

(2<There%20are%20few%20media%20stories%20in%20which%20there%20is%20such%20an>)

The purpose of this report is to measure the BBC's coverage of all aspects of the climate change issue between 2005 and the present day against its statutory obligation to report on the world 'with due accuracy and impartiality'.

The report shows how in 2005 and 2006 the BBC adopted a new interpretation of what was meant by impartiality in this context. It took the view that the 'consensus' supporting a belief in the threat of man-made global warming was now so overwhelming that it was now the BBC's duty actively to promote that belief, while ignoring or belittling any views or evidence which contradicted it.

The report consequently examines the BBC's one-sided coverage of some of the major climate-related events of 2006 and 2007, such as Al Gore's film An Inconvenient Truth, the Stern Report and

the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, while failing to report evidence which indicated that the scientific 'consensus' was now beginning to be questioned seriously.

In 2007 the Channel 4 documentary *The Great Global Warming Swindle* aroused widespread interest by publicising the views of eminent dissenting scientists which the BBC had ignored, as it did the evidence of a sharp if temporary drop in temperatures, which raised questions over the projections of the computer models on which the 'consensus' relied.

In 2008 the BBC responded to Channel 4's documentary by attacking some of the scientists it had featured in one of its own, *Climate Wars*. It also omitted to report on the huge financial costs and practical shortcomings of the measures now being proposed by politicians to meet the supposed warming threat, notably those of the government's wind power programme and the Climate Change Act.

In 2009 the BBC went out of its way to publicise various scientific papers and publicity stunts designed to heighten alarm over global warming in advance of the Copenhagen conference; and could not hide its dismay when the conference ended in acrimony without the far-reaching treaty it had hoped for. The BBC tried to hold the line for the 'climate establishment' through all the scandals which assailed it during that winter, from the publishing of the 'Climategate' emails to the revelations surrounding the IPCC.

In 2010 it supported the establishment over the various inquiries staged to downplay the significance of Climategate. So far had these events put the BBC and the cause it supported on the back foot, that in 2011 it turned more aggressively than ever on the 'deniers' who had dared question the 'consensus'. Most bizarrely of all this was reflected in a review on 'impartiality' in reporting on science commissioned by the BBC Trust, which in effect recommended that, far from needing to become more balanced in its coverage, the BBC should show more bias than ever.

This report's conclusions discuss some of the reasons for the BBC's inability to recognise why its coverage of climate change has been so fundamentally flawed, and why there seems little likelihood that, at any time in the immediate future, it will amend its policy to comply with its statutory obligations.

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Wendy Bacon
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