

Predictions, Forecasts or Just Pure Guesses?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its Fourth Assessment Report, forecasts a “likely” increase in average global temperatures of between 1.5 and 4.5°C by the year 2100, with a “best estimate” of 3°C, and attributes this increase to anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases, most notably CO₂.

Now, politicians of almost every persuasion, bureaucrats, economists and “global warming soothsayers (such as Al Gore)” tell us that there is now a “scientific consensus that global warming and climate change is a fact, not a theory” and that, unless we spend trillions of dollars to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the next century, “the whole world will be devastated by catastrophic climatic events”! Meanwhile, thousands of eminent scientists continue to demonstrate that the IPCC’s statistics and computer models are fundamentally flawed (even fudged), yet their opinions are censored and suppressed by those on the populist bandwagon!

Interestingly, there appears to be no rigorous definition of what the term “average global temperature” means. Is it the average between daily maxima and minima; or between day and night temperatures; summer and winter; northern and southern hemispheres; the poles and the tropics; sea-level and mountain tops; or the oceans and the outback? Importantly, what does the term “average” mean across such diverse locations?

Unlike Melbourne (which often experiences “Four seasons in the one day”), Brisbane has one of the most stable and predictable climates in the world (as we like to claim: “Beautiful one day, perfect the next”).

For this reason, one might expect that the Bureau of Meteorology, with all of its highly-skilled scientists, monitoring stations, weather balloons, radar stations, satellite observations, over 100 years of accurate historical data and state-of-the-art weather-modelling computers, to fairly accurately predict Brisbane’s minimum and maximum temperatures for the following 24 hours! Interestingly, despite this plethora of knowledge and technology, they rarely attempt to forecast temperatures more than 7 days ahead.

With this in mind, I’ve been monitoring the Brisbane Bureau’s 24-hour temperature forecasts and actual temperatures for a total of 2834 days (over 7-3/4 years). So how have they managed to perform?

In 2834 days, they’ve managed to predict both the minimum and maximum temperatures correctly on only 239 occasions - approximately one day in 12 (or 8.4% of the time). The average total error in their predictions was 2.4 degrees, whilst their maximum error was 9 degrees!

If, on the other hand, one made the assumption that “Brisbane’s weather is so predictable, that tomorrow’s temperatures will be the same as today’s”, one would have been correct on 187 occasions - one day in 15 (or 6.7% of the time).

More recently, I’ve been monitoring their 7-day forecasts as well, and have found that their forecast is correct only 4.1% of the time or once every 25 days, with an average error of 3.43 degrees.

According to the IPCC’s “Guidance on Addressing Uncertainties”, any prediction with less than 10% probability is “very unlikely” to be correct! So, where does this leave their own projection of a rise in Average Global Temperature of between 1.5 and 4.5 degrees over the next 100 years and with what accuracy?

Earlier this year, I happened to hear a Senior Meteorologist from the Melbourne Bureau interviewed on the ABC's 7.30 Report, who was asked: ***“How accurate are forecasters today?”*** Given the statistics I've quoted above, his response literally staggered me: ***“Well, on average, around about 85-90 per cent - that's the accuracy of the temperature forecast; that's looking at one day ahead. And that falls away to about 60 to 65 per cent out to 7 days.”*** - Ignorance? Wishful thinking? Or just plain hype?

Actually, in quoting the above statistics, I am not attempting to denigrate the Bureau of Meteorology or its staff - merely to highlight the difficulty of reliably predicting temperature changes in the immediate, let alone the distant, future.

In summary, the global warming protagonists have failed to define what they mean by “average surface temperatures”, have fewer than 30 years of accurate world-wide temperature measurements, upon which to base their projections, and completely ignore natural phenomena, which have produced global warming and cooling cycles over millions of years.

And what will be the outcome of government-imposed reductions in CO₂ emissions, emissions trading schemes, renewable energy targets, etc? - Huge increases in energy bills and the price of food, the distortion of agricultural and farming practices, increased taxes and galloping inflation - not forgetting the adverse impacts on the poorer countries and their economies! These outcomes are already evident in countries such as the USA and the EU, which have mandated and subsidised the addition of ethanol to motor fuels, causing sky-rocketing prices for grains and meat and shortages of other commodities.

Call me a sceptic if you must, but I'm prepared to accept that “the Earth is flat” and that “the Sun revolves around the Earth”, before I am willing to accept “the fact that global warming is solely due to human emissions of CO₂ and that it will have catastrophic climate change consequences”!

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Resume:

Foundation Lecturer in Computer Science at UQ, 1960

Technical Adviser to UQ Professorial Board Computer Committee, responsible for organising the funding, selection and installation of the first digital computer in Queensland in 1962

Assisted in the development of the first courses in Computer Science (1961) and in Information Technology (1967) at UQ

Senior Systems Analyst at GE Australia's Computer Service Centre, Melbourne (1964-65)

Appointed Senior Lecturer and Officer-in-Charge of the UQ Computer Centre (1966)

President of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Computer Society (1968) and member of the National Executive of ACS

Founding member of the Department of Computer Science at UQ (1972)

Senior Lecturer and consultant to government and industry (1965-2001)

Now retired, with time to study and assess papers and articles on the issue of “Climate Change”