

## **Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation**

**Individual Submission by R. J Petheram**

**Please find below my personal views on the greatest barriers to achieving effective adaptation to climate change, based on the past five years of mainly voluntary work with community groups and also a university campus. The main barriers I have experience are all related to lack of effective engagement by government with the public on this increasingly worrying issue.**

**As a scientist, I find the evidence for dangerous anthropomorphic climate change is now overwhelming – so there is no longer any excuse for the slow rate of progress and commitment to action by governments on this issue. The main 'barriers' experienced in working among several 800 volunteers and a population of 10 000 people are summaries below:**

**1.) There is a glaring lack of public awareness of the serious dangers of climate change, and hence of the need for urgent adaptation.**

This failure has been exacerbated by lack of effective public information programs on climate change. (We have public education programs on alcohol abuse, gambling, safe driving, AIDS and Diabetes - but nothing effective on Climate change, the biggest national and global threat).

**2.) The lack of political commitment and leadership in dealing with this serious issue has resulted in failure to move communities towards the vibrant low carbon economy that is essential for: halting the decline in the health of our natural environment; countering the threats to the long term welfare of communities; and Australia providing leadership on CC adaptation in the region and globally. (We have the natural resources and hence economy to have achieved this – but have failed.)**

**3.) The Federal and State governments and agencies have made little effort to counter the doubt and misinformation (about climate change) promoted by a few prominent 'deniers' of climate change and often sponsored by the fossil fuel lobby and other large industries. Failure to counter the 'merchandising of doubt' about the science of climate change, has fostered widespread community denial, and has removed the otherwise high potential to appeal peoples' basic ethics good will in dealing with climate change.**

**4.) Despite some initially promising programs and policies, the federal and state governments have failed to run (or support for long enough) effective projects promoting adaptation to climate change, and have even retracted from some effective mitigation programs. (If Govt withdraws from CC action programs, why should individuals make personal effort towards adaptation?).**

**5.) The failure to honestly explain the basic science and dangers of climate change has also contributed to a serious lack of public understanding of the Carbon Tax and other adaptation and mitigation policies that are essential parts of the mix of policies and programs needed for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change in Australia and globally.**

**6.) Recent withdrawal of funding to support the work of community/NGO organisations in engaging the public on climate change adaptation issues - is causing major difficulties to many groups and many thousands of volunteers, and a serious loss of faith in governments' commitment to dealing with adaptation to climate change. Membership of climate change groups has declined**

substantially in the past two years - through a lack of support by governments for community CC adaptation programs. Such programs could (and often do) provide the greatest potential for achieving community adaptation, in collaboration with government agencies.

**7.) The continued hypocrisy of major political parties in claiming commitment to dealing with global climate change, while simultaneously expanding carbon emitting industries and exports, is jading (undermining) public views about the need for a low carbon economy and for more sustainable lifestyles.** If national agencies cannot achieve reduced annual carbon emissions, why would businesses and individuals be inclined to reduce their emissions, or adapt to climate change at all.

**8.) Before the population can be expected to make commitments to changing (adapting) to environmentally safer lifestyles, the dangers of current carbon-extravagant lifestyles need to be much better articulated, and the need for change will have to be demonstrated (and lived up to) by politicians and governments - even if this means calling for the tightening of belts.**

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