

## How Seriously Are We Taking Climate Change: Monitoring Climate Change Communication

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### **Abstract**

Scientists and now most of our politicians know that climate change is real and requires action. Despite the best efforts of the IPCC and Al Gore and their joint award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize global warming still seems to suffer from a continuing credibility shortfall. Those of us who try to get strong messages of urgency and certainty into public arenas, can be dismayed by, for example, our national newspaper, the Australian, running anti-greenhouse stories day after day and Robyn Williams (previously an excellent science journalist and ABC editor) giving a double slot to a 'should-know-better' denier on Occam's Razor. Here I try to explore some of the possible reasons why greenhouse 'nay-sayers' still get airtime in the mass media. Most of us are well aware of the arguments regarding the perceived need for 'balance' in public broadcast media. An interesting proposal is that at least part of the reason for the lack of effective climate change communication due to the 'code' we use. Words that seem perfectly common to scientists are still jargon to the wider world and always have simpler substitutes. For example very few regular guys would say "spatial" and "temporal," they say "space" and "time. How many real people do you know from whose tongues trip the term "anthropogenic"? Don't they more likely say, "caused by us (or people)". The very terminology we have developed to talk about this diabolical challenge for humanity may be slowing down our ability to galvanise action. I conclude with a new proposal for continuing monitoring of climate change communication in Australia.