

Kiwi climate scientist confirms IPCC models don't predict

by Bob Carter
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New Zealander Kevin Trenberth, who heads the large US National Centre for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) and who is one of the advisory high priests of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has made some remarkable concessions in the global warming debate.

Trenberth has had a distinguished career as a climate scientist with particular interests in the use of computer General Circulation Models (GCMs), the outputs from which form the basis for most of the public alarm about dangerous global warming.

When such a person gives an opinion about the scientific value of GCMs as predictive tools, it is obviously wise to pay attention.

In a contribution to *Nature* magazine's [Climate Feedback blog](#), Trenberth has conceded that GCMs cannot predict future climate and claims that anyway the IPCC is not in the business of climate prediction.

This might be news to some people.

Among other things, Trenberth asserts: "... there are no [climate] predictions by IPCC at all. And there never have been."

Instead there are only "'what if" projections of future climate that correspond to certain emissions scenarios."

GCMs "...do not consider many things like the recovery of the ozone layer, for instance, or observed trends in forcing agents.

"None of the models used by IPCC are initialised to the observed state and none of the climate states in the models correspond even remotely to the current observed climate.

"The state of the oceans, sea ice and soil moisture has no relationship to the observed state at any recent time in any of the IPCC models. There is neither an El Nino sequence nor any Pacific Decadal Oscillation that replicates the recent past; yet these are critical modes of variability that affect Pacific rim countries and beyond.

"...the starting climate state in several of the models may depart significantly from the real climate owing to model errors" and "regional climate change is impossible to deal with properly unless the models are initialised."

Current GCMs "...assume linearity" which "works for global forced variations, but it cannot work for many aspects of climate, especially those related to the water cycle. ...the science is not done because we do not have reliable or regional predictions of climate."

Strange that.

I could have sworn that I heard somewhere that the science was supposed to be settled. And one wonders whether anyone has told New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmosphere (NIWA) or the CSIRO that their much-vaunted regional climate models are worthless predictive tools?

Trenberth's statements are a direct admission of the validity of similar criticisms that have been made of GCMs and the IPCC by climate rationalists for many years.

Of course, his tail-covering assertion that the IPCC doesn't make climate predictions or forecasts anyway has to be taken with a grain of salt.

In a paper being presented at the 27th International Symposium on Forecasting in New York this week, Scott Armstrong and Kesten Green present an audit of the relevant chapter in the IPCC's latest report.

They find that "in apparent contradiction to claims" by some climate experts that the IPCC provides "projections" and not "forecasts," the word "forecast" and its derivatives occurred 37 times, and "predict" and its derivatives occur 90 times in the body of Chapter 8."

Strange that the public has this misimpression that the IPCC predicts future climate, isn't it?

Having analysed the IPCC's approach in detail, Armstrong and Kesten conclude finally that "because the forecasting processes...overlook scientific evidence on forecasting, the IPCC forecasts of climate change are not scientific."

Like Trenberth's advice, this also may well be news to some people.

In a third devastating blow to the credibility of climate forecasting, another lead author of the IPCC Working Group 1 science report, Jim Renwick, has recently admitted that "Climate prediction is hard, half of the variability in the climate system is not predictable, so we don't expect to do terrifically well."

Renwick was responding to an audit that showed the climate forecasts issued by NIWA were accurate only 48 per cent of time. In other words, one can do just as well by tossing a coin.

These various criticisms of climate modelling can be summed up in the following brief statement – there is no predictive value in the current generation of computer GCMs and therefore the alarmist IPCC statements about human-caused global warming are unjustified.

Yet in New Zealand and Australia we have oppositions and governments that support the Kyoto protocol, and profess to set their climate policies on the basis of IPCC advice.

Both also seem determined to impose an inefficient, ineffective and costly carbon trading or taxation system on the economy, for the aspirational absurdity of "stopping climate change."

Perhaps someone should tell both prime ministers that dangerous global warming has been called off.

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