

# YOUR DINNER PARTY SURVIVAL GUIDE

Climate change might be a taboo topic, but **Dr Jennifer Marohasy** suggests putting the facts on the table.



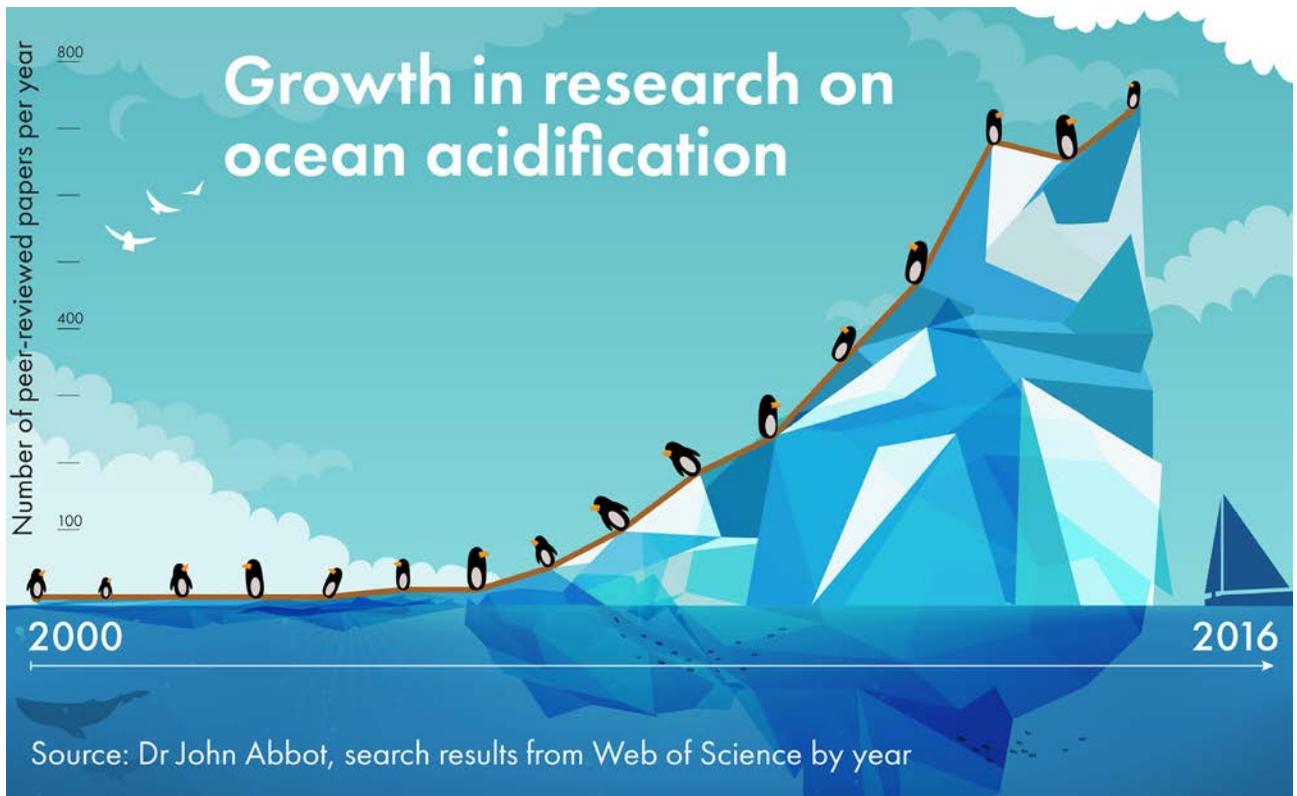
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**T**here are certain things best not discussed at dinner parties and gatherings of the extended family. This list used to only include religion, sex and politics. More recently ‘climate change’ has become a sensitive issue. At the same time climate change is more likely to be included in a church sermon—indeed, while once considered the concern of scientific institutions, climate is now increasingly incorporated into faith-based initiatives. Pope Francis has even issued an Encyclical on the subject, explaining that: ‘A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system.’

**➤ ONCE CONSIDERED THE CONCERN OF SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS, CLIMATE IS NOW INCREASINGLY INCORPORATED INTO FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES.**

A problem for those wanting to negotiate a middle road is that communities are increasingly polarised. There are those who believe Pope Francis and admire Al Gore. Then there are the die-hard sceptics and their support-base, which some claim have an undue political influence, successfully thwarting attempts to implement necessary public policy change. Both groups argue that they have the empirical evidence on their side, yet they seem unable to engage in any meaningful discussion together.



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Pope Francis’s 2015 Encyclical *Laudato Si’* definitely reflects the view of the establishment, a view often reported in the mainstream media via the release of new peer-reviewed studies, well-funded from the public purse. In just one area of research—ocean acidification—the number of published papers has increased from about zero a year to almost 800—all in less than 20 years.

Ocean acidification is sometimes referred to as global warming’s evil twin. And of course most articles on ocean acidification emphasise the detrimental effects, often based on output from a model, which is extrapolating from a laboratory experiment in which scientists might have even added some hydrochloric acid to artificially reduce the pH (the scale in which seven is neutral, lower values are more acidic and higher

values are more alkaline). Editors like to publish research that the ocean may become acidic because of increasing levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide. This has become known as consensus science.

It is more difficult to find a sceptical perspective, which is why I’m so pleased to be editing *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* to be published by the IPA in the new year. This follows earlier iterations of *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* that were published by the IPA in 2012 and 2014, and it will be dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Bob Carter.

Professor Carter was very aware that it is impossible to get government funding to test the alternative hypothesis—to study natural climate cycles and their drivers, or natural variability in ocean pH. Rather than providing funding to consider all perspectives,

the Australian government has even funded a survey attempting to link skepticism of catastrophic anthropogenic global warming with belief in conspiracy theories—in particular drawing a link between those unconvinced of catastrophic anthropogenic global warming and those who deny the moon landing.

Yet this in itself ignores the former astronauts—including Harrison Jack Schmitt—who have been to the moon and back and have publicly stated that the risks posed by climate change are overrated. Harrison has gone as far as to state that ‘climate change’ is a tool for people who are trying to increase the size of government—though he does not deny that he was a part of the last mission to the moon on Apollo 17 in 1972.

Use of the word ‘fact’ has become almost as controversial as the issue of climate change. We use the word in the

title of our new book: *Climate Change: The Facts 2017*. Then again, you will rarely hear someone from our side argue that climate change is a moral issue. Science, of course, is meant to be concerned with empirical evidence, which, when appropriately amassed can generate a fact. Scepticism was once considered a mindset that was critical to proper scientific enquiry. For example, Thomas Huxley, a contemporary of Charles Darwin and former president of the Royal Society, wrote in 1866 that:

The improver of natural knowledge absolutely refuses to acknowledge authority, as such. For him, scepticism is the highest of duties; blind faith the one unpardonable sin. And it cannot be otherwise, for every great advance in natural knowledge has involved the absolute rejection of authority, the cherishing of the keenest scepticism, the annihilation of the spirit of blind faith; and the most ardent votary of science holds his firmest convictions, not because the men he most venerates hold them; not because their verity is testified by portents and wonders; but because his experience teaches him that whenever he chooses to bring these convictions into contact with their primary source, Nature—whenever he thinks fit to test them by appealing to experiment and to observation—Nature will confirm them. The man of science has learned to believe in justification, not by faith, but by verification.

Verification, evidence and fact were also of primary concern to



■ Professor Bob Carter

➤ **VERIFICATION, EVIDENCE AND FACT WERE ALSO OF PRIMARY CONCERN TO PROFESSOR CARTER – A GIANT AMONGST THE MODERN COMMUNITY OF SO-CALLED SCEPTICS.**

Bob Carter—a giant amongst the modern community of so-called sceptics. A real expert on climate change, he was director of the Australian Office of the Ocean Drilling Program, an international co-operative effort to collect deep sea cores. From these cores, records of past climates for specific regions have been reconstructed.

Bob Carter considered himself a rationalist, rather than a sceptic. He would argue from a reasonable and logical perspective that the recent preoccupation of the Royal Society with a ‘global temperature’ and its yearly change is wholly political, and that no one lives in a world climate. He also noted that popular usage of the term ‘climate change’ was a tautology: climate by its very nature always changes.

Professor Carter would remind us that climate change is real, and it presents dangers. For example, 1816 was known as ‘the year without a summer’. It was cold because of the Dalton solar minimum (a period of low solar activity) and a super-eruption of the Indonesian volcano Tambora. This eruption, which occurred exactly 201 years ago, caused famine in Europe. Such events are often associated with extreme hardship and famine, so Professor Carter would argue that to the extent possible, nations should use their resources to mitigate against such catastrophes. Instead, weather and climate have become a point of politics, with climate science little more than the handmaiden of the particular ideology to which you might subscribe.

There will be twenty chapters in *Climate Change: The Facts 2017*, which ends with a chapter by Clive James, a literary giant. His works are examined and re-examined regularly by the literary elite, but so far he has written only incidentally on climate change. In what will be the final chapter of our book, James acknowledges that he is no expert on simulation modelling. He is, however, able to place the current obsession with catastrophic global warming—and the imminent demise of the Great Barrier Reef—in a broader cultural context.

The book will begin with a chapter on the Great Barrier Reef by Peter Ridd (a professor at James Cook University), followed by a review of the ocean acidification literature by John Abbot (an Imperial College trained chemist). You can also read Bjørn Lomborg on the Paris Accord, Craig Idso on the beneficial effects of carbon dioxide, Willie Soon and Sallie



■ Torres del Paine National Park, Chile, Patagonia | Douglas Scortegagna

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Baliunas on everything except the Medieval Warm Period and Roy Spencer on the satellite temperature record—all in one little book. Of course, my friends Ian Plimer, Jo Nova, Tony Watts and Steve Goddard have also contributed chapters, along with the very clever Matt Ridley and Nicola Scafetta, ever-earnest Paul Driessen, moon-obsessed Ken Ring, Oxford-don Tom Quirk and free speech advocate and IPA Executive Director John Roskam in conjunction with his colleague

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Simon Breheny. And there is a chapter by Pat Michaels on the funding of science. I contributed something small on temperature

homogenisation, the technical term for remodeling raw temperature data so it better fits the theory of catastrophic anthropogenic global warming.

The last chapter by Clive James will hopefully put all of this—everything that has gone before—in some context for readers wherever you may belong (or not) in the extended family.

*This is an edited extract from the introduction to Climate Change: The Facts 2017. The book will be published by the IPA in early 2017. ■*