

**THE GOVERNOR LAUNCHES THE BOOK 'CLIMATE CODE RED' AT
QUEEN'S HALL, PARLIAMENT HOUSE**

Thursday 17 July 2008

I am delighted to be able to participate in the launch of this very important book on the topic of climate change, which, in my view, is the most critical issue facing mankind today. Climate change is the topic of much discussion, an increasing number of seminars, and also the subject of a number of books and many articles in the press and magazines.

So why should a Governor take time to launch another book? What is it about this book that warrants our attention and why should anyone want to read it?

I was fortunate, as Henry was as well, to be able to see the text as a document that these two passionate authors, both from Melbourne, had put together some time ago as a means of communicating their concerns that progress, dialogue and debate on the topic of climate change lacked focus and, particularly, lacked a sense of urgency. I was so taken at the time by what they had put together that I and Henry Rosenbloom, as well as others I am sure, urged them to publish the material as a book, as I believed that it made valuable contributions to the climate change dialogue that was, if you like, not the subject of previous books.

Why a book? A book provides the authors with an opportunity to logically take the reader on a journey through the science, the debates raised by sceptics, the latest data on the speed with which the climate is changing and the way forward. This book does all of those things but it actually does more.

The book draws on a vast array of information to build a cogent and compelling case that we do have a genuine emergency on our hands if we are to limit the rise of greenhouse gas emissions to a level at which we can limit the degradation of our planet to manageable levels.

In making this argument, there is an in-depth review of the factors controlling climate change and the speed at which greenhouse gases are accumulating — not just carbon dioxide, but also methane and nitrous oxide, and their effects on our climate and the biodiversity of this planet. The authors conclude that even a rise of 2 degrees in global temperatures is too great, and I quote: ‘A rise of 2 degrees over pre-industrial temperatures will initiate climate feedbacks in the oceans, on ice-sheets, and on the tundra, taking the earth well past the significant tipping points. As we have seen, likely impacts include the large-scale disintegration of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice-sheet; the extinction of an estimated 15–40 per cent of the plant and animal species; dangerous ocean acidification’ ... and so it goes on.

With these changes fresh in the reader’s mind, the authors propose that it should not be acceptable to be considering a level of greenhouse gas emissions that will cause environmental degradation, and propose that the aim should be to keep the earth in a safe climate zone. In considering the response that is necessary to achieve this aim, the authors provide convincing arguments that there is indeed a ‘climate emergency’ and hence the title of this book, *Climate Code Red*.

The third section of the book entitled, ‘The Climate Emergency,’ contains a fascinating and frightening discussion of the reasons for declaring it as an emergency. Two telling quotations that they use in the book are worth recounting. The policy analyst George Monbiot states, ‘When you warn people about the dangers of climate change, they call you a saint. When you explain what needs to be done to stop it, they call you a communist ... everyone is watching and waiting for everyone else to move.’ They also quote Churchill, when he faced the grim reality of the situation in World War II, said ‘I had no need for cheering dreams. Facts are better than dreams.’

This latter quotation leads the reader to consider the facts and the scenarios about climate change and to appreciate the dimensions of the problem complicated by the need for global action involving countries with diverse priorities and at vastly different stages of their development. It also emphasizes that the Allies in World War II did respond to the challenge by transforming their economies within a short period of time to one providing their war-time needs. In doing so, the USA, for example, increased its military expenditure from 1 per cent of national income in 1939 to 31–42

per cent in 1942–1944; and, similarly, the United Kingdom moved from 15 per cent in 1939 to 44–55 per cent from 1940 to 1944. Further, unemployment in the USA decreased from 14.6 per cent in 1940 to 1.9 per cent in 1945, while the gross national product grew 55 per cent in five years.

They use these figures to indicate that solutions can be found when the facts are confronted and the reality of a degraded and unrecognizable planet is contemplated.

For instance, there will be a need to support the developing countries if a global solution is to be found. The authors indicate that the estimate of the cost of providing all the households in India with power by 2030 would be approximately \$US120 billion, and that this would double if it came from renewable sources. That would translate into \$20 billion per year for 15 years or just 3 per cent of the \$700 billion annually spent by the USA on its military and intelligence budget in 2007. As another example, the cost of providing climate-safe power to all countries outside the OECD would be \$30 billion per annum — just 0.1 per cent of the total annual production of the OECD, which is small when we consider that 33 per cent or more of the national income that the antagonists spent in World War II was spent by those countries. Gestures such as this should be contemplated as it may well break the stalemate in trying to broker global agreements about climate change action.

The book reviews a range of approaches to solving the climate change problem and can give the reader an understanding that much can be done if the sense of urgency can replace the slow pace of change in many countries. In examining the reasons for the slow progress, the authors raise their concerns as to whether democratic systems of government, with elections every third to fourth year, can initiate and maintain a 20–40 year program of make-climate-safe actions, some of which will be unpopular with the electorate.

Is there an emergency? Having read this book and also another published recently called *The Hot Topic*, written by Gabrielle Walker and Sir David King, the recently retired Chief Scientist of the UK, there is no doubt in my mind that this is the greatest problem confronting mankind at this time and that it has reached the level of a state of emergency. It does require urgent action which should obtain bipartisan support if

one's to consider a 20–30 year frame of action. In a democratic country, education of the public is critical to ensure that they understand the dimensions of the tasks and the consequences of failure. This book helps in that educative process. Please read it.

Finally, I congratulate the authors on a timely, cohesive and comprehensive book that will contribute greatly to our approaches to managing climate change. I also congratulate the Publisher for his willingness to facilitate the dissemination of this critical information by publishing this book.

It's my delight to launch *Climate Code Red*.