

Royal Society of New Zealand

Complaint about Royal Society members Renwick and Naish

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Member complaint is about:

Professor Tim Naish and Professor James Renwick

Provisions of the code of ethics alleged to be breached

2.1 Integrity and professionalism

In particular:

2a. endeavour to obtain and present facts and interpretations in an objective and open manner; and

2b. strive to be fair and unbiased in all aspects of their research and in their application of their knowledge in science, technology, or the humanities

3.1 Honesty

In particular:

2h. always be scrupulously honest in the application of findings from research and in the transfer of technology to the community wherever it occurs

Nature of complaint

The complaint refers to the public presentation “Ten by Ten” made by Professors Naish and Renwick at a number of locations around New Zealand. As it is clear that they regard themselves as experts in the field they should be familiar with all the evidence. In this presentation, they have been extremely selective with what evidence they present. In their presentation they fail to indicate that there are, as the IPCC and many other sources make clear and we illustrate below, huge uncertainties in much of the data and serious problems with the climate model predictions.

Slide entitled “global surface temperatures”

This slide breaches 2.1: 2a and 2b because it is based on the hottest of the temperature records – one that has been recently adjusted to depress older temperatures. This record is widely regarded as being the least accurate. See supporting information #1. Many scientist believe that the satellite records are the most accurate because, unlike the surface temperature records, they cover the whole world uniformly. Anyway both records show that show that, over the last 18 years, the temperature rise has not been statistically significant and is about 0.5 deg below the averaged predictions of the climate models. #2

Because temperatures dropped rapidly since the 2015 El Nino peak, it is no longer certain that 2015 or 2016 will be the warmest year. #3

Slide entitled “Looking at the scientific literature”

This slide breaches 2.1: 2a and 2b and 3.1: All2h.

Quite clearly, this slide is intended to give the impression that most scientists believe that man-made greenhouse gases cause some global warming and this presumed majority amounts to convincing scientific evidence that man-made greenhouse gases cause (by implication, dangerous) global warming. This is, of course, not true. The motto of the Royal Society is “Nullis in verba” (by no man’s word): in other words, opinions do not count, only scientifically acceptable evidence counts.

This claim is an example of "argument from authority". It is best illustrated by the troop of monkeys in Kipling’s Jungle Book that chorused “We all say so, it must be true!”

Carl Sagan wrote about arguments from authority:

"One of the great commandments of science is, 'Mistrust arguments from authority.'...Too many such arguments have proved too painfully wrong. Authorities must prove their contentions like everybody else." #4

Science is full of examples where the consensus was wrong – Galileo, continental drift, stomach ulcers, Semmelweis on infection, and so on. Einstein himself said "one paper can prove me wrong". Galileo wrote: "In questions of science, the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual."

We would also point out that several of the studies only demonstrate that a majority of scientists questioned agree that man-made greenhouse gases do cause some warming. Virtually all climate sceptics would agree with this. The critical question is, of course, "How much?"

At least one of the studies is based on less than 100 papers. It cannot be regarded as credible.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSrjAXK5pGw&feature=em-subtitle>

and <https://www.prageru.com/courses/environmental-science/do-97-climate-scientists-really-agree>

The slide also ignores the fact that more than 30,000 scientists have signed a petition stating "... There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere..."

There appears to be no equivalent petition in favour of the opposite hypothesis. #5

An unbiased presentation would have made it clear that science is about evidence **not consensus** or arguments from authority – or, better still, should not have included them at all.

We would also point out that the papers claiming a 97% consensus have been much criticised #6 and #7 and, according to Prof Mike Hulme of the Tyndall Centre, the UK's national climate research institute:

The [Cook et al.] article is poorly conceived, poorly designed and poorly executed. It obscures the complexities of the climate issue and it is a sign of the desperately poor level of public and policy debate in this country that the energy minister should cite it. It offers a similar depiction of the world into categories of 'right' and 'wrong' to that adopted in [an earlier study]: dividing publishing climate scientists into 'believers' and 'non-believers'.

It should not have been quoted.

The GWPF article concludes:

The consensus as described by Cook et al. is virtually meaningless and tells us nothing about the current state of scientific opinion beyond the trivial observation that carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas and that human activities have warmed the planet to some unspecified extent.

In summary: we contend that it was seriously unethical to contend that consensus has a place in science and that seriously flawed papers and articles claiming "scientific agreement on human caused global warming" can be put forward as convincing evidence.

Slide entitled "What does sea-level rise mean for NZ?"

This slide breaches 2.1: 2a and 2b and 3.1:2h.

The slide fails to point out that, according to the tide gauges, sea level rise in New Zealand over the last 100 years has been between 1.4 and 1.8 mm per year and shows no sign of a recent rapid increase. #8

Note that the sea level rise in Auckland between 1900 and 2013 has been steady at 1.5 mm/yr and has been virtually non-existent since 2001. #9 and #10

In the NIWA publication "Sea level on the move?" Dated 1 December 2001 Derek Goring and Robert Bell confidently wrote "We predict that sea level will rise more rapidly over the next 20 years or so..." As can be seen from #9 and #10, this did not happen. This casts serious doubt on the predictions of future sea level rise by Renwick and Naish. They must have known about this paper and yet did not mention that it cast serious doubts on the accuracy of predictions of sea level rise.

They also fail to point out that, in New Zealand, tectonic movement – both upwards and downwards – is a much more important factor than sea level rise and that all the computer-based predictions of future sea level rise have turned out to be wrong.

A photograph associated with the slide showing storm damage demonstrates only that the coast-line retreats in some areas and advances in others. A natural process that has been going on for thousands of years. To associate it with (currently virtually non-existent) sea level rise is seriously misleading.

An unbiased presentation would have pointed out that sea level rise in New Zealand has been small and uniform, that tectonic movements were more significant, that coastal erosion and advance were natural processes and that there were large uncertainties associated with the computer model based predictions of future sea level rise.

The whole presentation

It breaches 2.1: 2a and 2b and 3.1: 2h.

The overwhelming impression given by the presentation is that the science is settled, virtually no uncertainties exist, that man-made greenhouse gases do cause dangerous global warming and urgent action is needed.

Bjorn Lomborg, for instance, gives a more balanced view:

<https://www.prageru.com/courses/environmental-science/climate-change-whats-so-alarming>

The fact is that science is never settled, uncertainties abound, man-made greenhouse gases cause an unknown amount of global warming and there is nothing in the evidence that indicates urgent action is needed. They also ignore the fact that, if New Zealand took urgent action, it would have not the slightest effect on the climate. If they are experts on the subject, Naish and Renwick must know all this.

When he was interviewed in Australia, the then chairman of the IPCC said that uncertainties exist and open debate was needed. He said there was "no doubt about it" that it was good for controversial issues to be "thrashed out in the public arena". #11

According to the technical reports associated with the IPCC 2015 report, many uncertainties exist.

Examples

Here are some examples that Naish and Renwick must be aware of:

1. "... the rate of warming over the past 15 years (1998–2012; 0.05 [–0.05 to 0.15] °C per decade) ... is smaller than the rate calculated since 1951 (1951–2012; 0.12 [0.08 to 0.14] °C per decade)." [SPM, page 3, section B.1, bullet point 3, and in full Synthesis Report on page SYR-6]

>> This indicates that the world has not warmed as fast as predicted by the climate models.

2. "... an analysis of the full suite of CMIP5 historical simulations (...) reveals that **111 out of 114 realisations show a GMST trend over 1998–2012 that is higher than the entire Had-CRUT4 trend ensemble**" [WGI contribution, chapter 9, text box 9.2, page 769, and in full Synthesis Report on page SYR-8]

>> In other words, 97% of the model runs over-estimated the actual temperature rise.

This is illustrated by Roy Spencer's chart comparing 95 climate models runs to the actual observations. #12

3. "There may also be a contribution from **forcing inadequacies and, in some models, an overestimate of the response to increasing greenhouse gas and other anthropogenic forcing** (dominated by the effects of aerosols)." [SPM, section D.1, page 13, bullet point 2, and full Synthesis Report on page SYR-8]

>> It is possible that the climate forcing factor has been overestimated as well as other key factors. These are the numbers that drive the computer model-based predictions of dangerous global warming.

4. "This difference between simulated [i.e. model output] and observed trends **could be caused by some combination of (a) internal climate variability, (b) missing or incorrect radiative forcing and (c) model response error**". [WGI contribution, chapter 9, text box 9.2, page 769]

>> The climate model predictions were not correct and the IPCC are not sure why.

Supporting information

#1 From climate4you.com

Climate4you

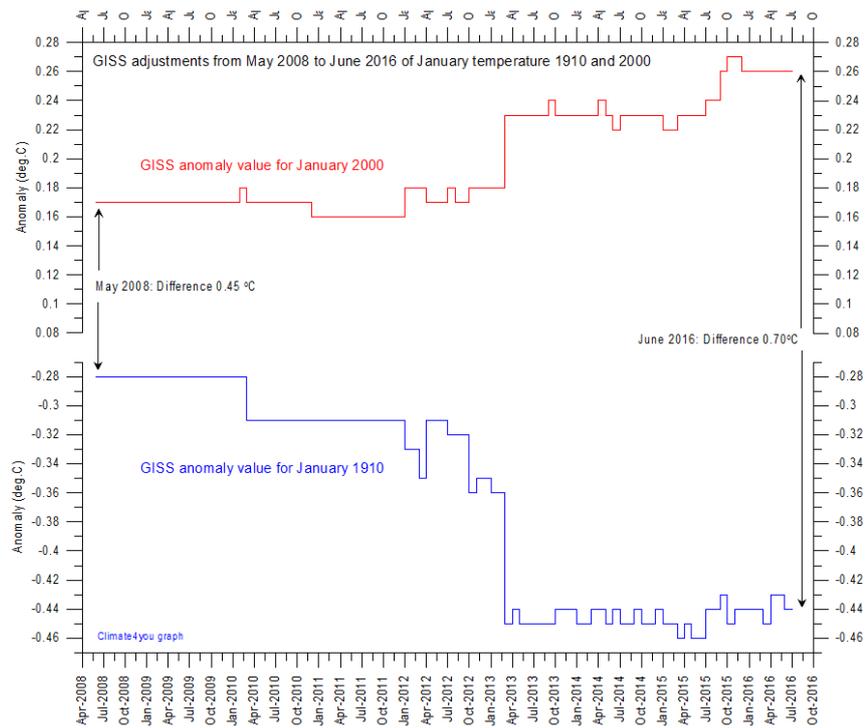
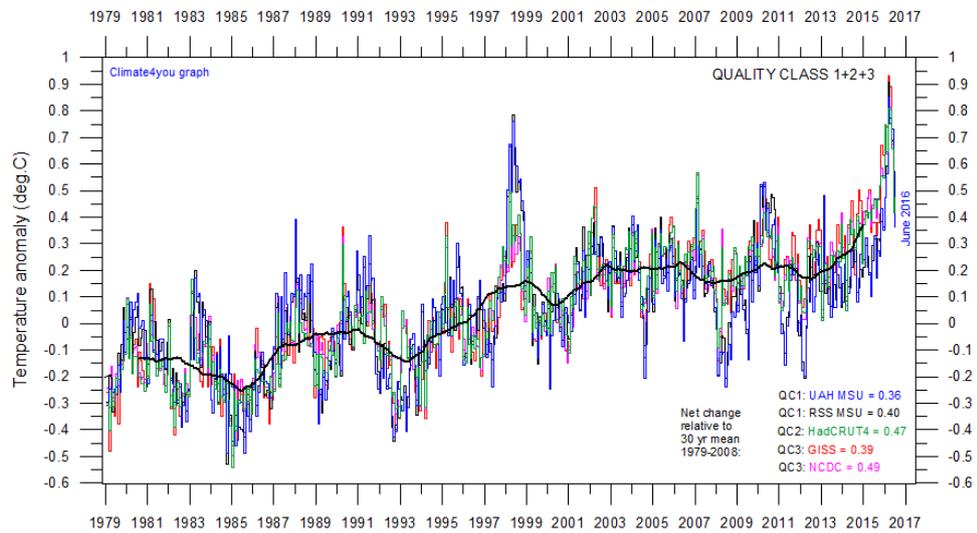


Diagram showing the adjustment made since May 2008 by the [Goddard Institute for Space Studies \(GISS\)](http://www.giss.nasa.gov) in anomaly values for the months January 1910 and January 2000. See also [this diagram](#). Last diagram update 15 June 2016.

#2 From climate4you.com

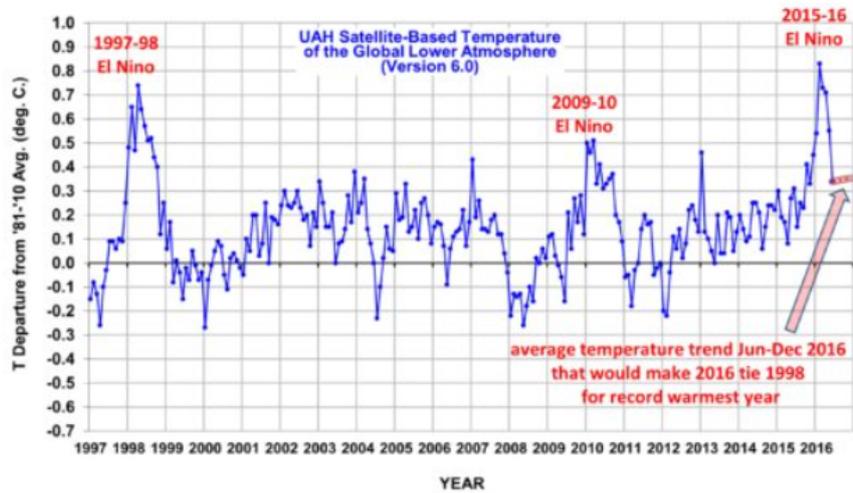
Note the recent drop in temperature



Superimposed plot of *Quality Class 1* and *Quality Class 2* and *Quality Class 3* global monthly temperature estimates. As the base period differs for the different temperature estimates, they have all been normalised by comparing to the average value of 30 years from January 1979 to December 2008. The heavy black line represents the simple running 37 month (c. 3 year) mean of the average of all five temperature records. The numbers shown in the lower right corner represent the temperature anomaly relative to the above average. Values are rounded off to the nearest two decimals, even though some of the original data series come with more than two decimals. Last month shown: June 2016. Last diagram update: 31 July 2016.

#3 From drroyspencer.com

Here's an update of what the average temperature trend would have to be in the next 6 months for 2016 to tie 1998 as record warmest year in the 38 year satellite record:



Basically, as long as the anomalies stay below the June value of 0.34 deg. C, 2016 won't be a record warm year.

#4 From Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argument_from_authority

...Scholars have noted that the academic environment produces a nearly ideal situation for these processes to take hold, and they can affect entire academic disciplines, giving rise to groupthink.

One paper about the philosophy of mathematics for example notes that, within mathematics, "If...a person accepts our discipline, and goes through two or three years of graduate study in mathematics, he absorbs our way of thinking, and is no longer the critical outsider he once was...If the student is unable to absorb our way of thinking, we flunk him out, of course. If he gets through our obstacle course and then decides that our arguments are unclear or incorrect, we dismiss him as a crank, crackpot, or misfit."

#5 From <http://www.petitionproject.org>

#6 <http://www.thegwpf.org/content/uploads/2013/09/Montford-Consensus.pdf>

#7 Quantifying the consensus on anthropogenic global warming in the literature



Short Communication

Quantifying the consensus on anthropogenic global warming in the literature: A re-analysis



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ABSTRACT

A claim has been that 97% of the scientific literature endorses anthropogenic climate change (Cook et al., 2013, Environ. Res. Lett. 8, 024024). This claim, frequently repeated in debates about climate policy, does not stand. A trend in composition is mistaken for a trend in endorsement. Reported results are inconsistent and biased. The sample is not representative and contains many irrelevant papers. Overall, data quality is low. Cook's validation test shows that the data are invalid. Data disclosure is incomplete so that key results cannot be reproduced or tested.

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#8 From Sea Level info

Station ID	Station Name	First Year	Last Year	Year Range	% Complete	MSL Trend (mm/yr)	+/- 95% CI (mm/yr)	MSL Trend (ft/century)
690-002	Auckland II, New Zealand	1903	2000	97	96	1.29	0.20	0.42
690-011	Wellington, New Zealand	1944	2011	67	94	2.45	0.29	0.80
690-022	Lyttelton II, New Zealand	1924	2000	76	89	2.36	0.29	0.77
690-041	Bluff/Southland Harbour, New Zealand	1917	2011	94	26	1.57	0.24	0.51

http://www.sealevel.info/NOAA_AllStationsLinearSeaLevelTrends_2015-08_50yr_less_high30_and_low40.htm

#9 From

<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/SiteCollectionDocuments/aboutcouncil/planspoliciespublications/technicalpublications/tr2010065sealevelchangeintheaucklandregion.pdf>

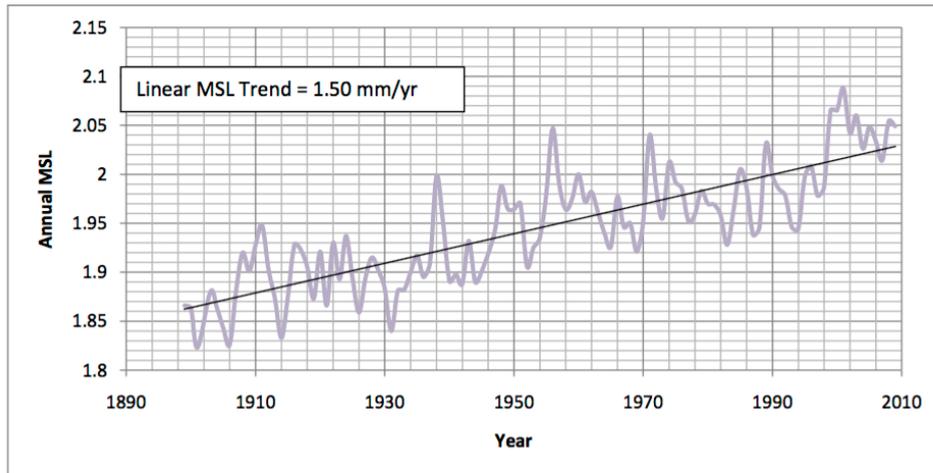
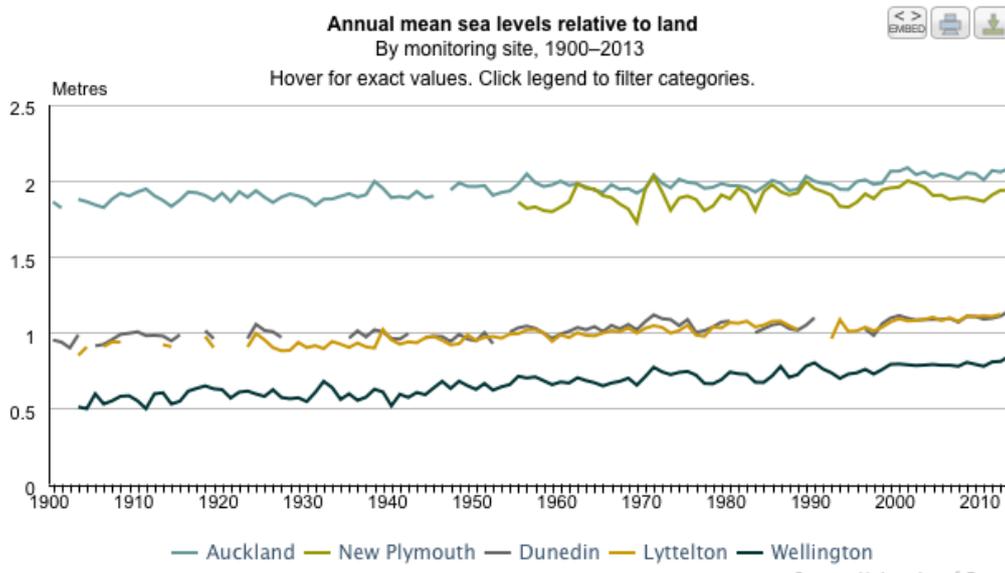


Figure 6: Linear trend in Auckland annual MSL data (to pre-1973 Port of Auckland Chart Datum)

#10 http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/environment/environmental-reporting-series/environmental-indicators/Home/Marine/coastal-sea-level-rise.aspx

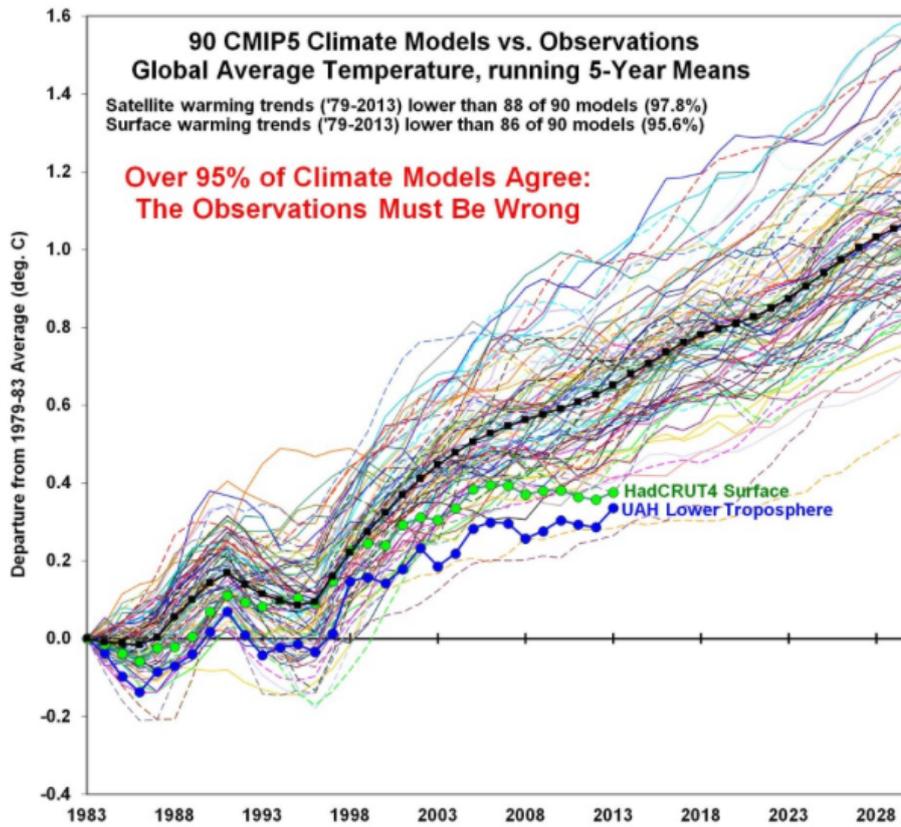
Also see Regional sea level trends in New Zealand, John Hannah and Robert G. Bell First published: 7 January 2012



#11 From <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nothing-off-limits-in-climate-debate/story-e6frg6n6-1226583112134>

Dr Pachauri, the chairman of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, said that open discussion about controversial science and politically incorrect views was an essential part of tackling climate change.

#12 From drroyspencer.com



Outcome sought

The Royal Society should insist that the two members desist from using the Society's name in conjunction with biased presentations and other communications regarding aspects of climate change and, if they want to continue using the Society's name, they make sure that they present unbiased information that clearly sets out the uncertainties and, wherever necessary, puts both sides of the argument.

The Royal Society should also issue a press release to this effect.