



# CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM

Shell, the second largest energy corporation in the world, has partnered Conservation Volunteers Australia to stimulate local action on climate change. Any initiative by Shell on climate change should sound alarm bells, and they were ringing loudly at the Mangrove Hotel on March 3 when the Shell Conservation Volunteers' roadshow came to town to talk to an eclectic gathering of Broome and Derby residents about what could be done to 'climate proof' our region.

The programme, featuring a commissioned academic expert, Professor Peter Waterman, and local practitioners and activists, seemed laudable. Peter Waterman attempted to demystify the climate change public debate. He said global warming is irrefutable and that, overwhelmingly, scientists conclude that humans are causing it through CO2 emissions. He sketched a disturbing outlook 20 years from now, when the number of days of 35 degrees or higher in Broome could grow from 54 to 119 per year, causing huge pressure on energy for air conditioners, and illness and death for the elderly and very young. Severe storms, drought and coastal inundation are also likely. Yet humans are resilient by nature, said Professor Waterman, and can adapt to mitigate these challenges.

Growing demand for energy was the theme of Shell's presentation by Ian Grosse, commercial manager of the corporation's East Browse LNG activity. He spoke of rapidly rising demand for energy by a global population estimated to reach 9 billion by 2050, all aspiring to live a western consumption lifestyle. The business-as-usual approach to energy production was not an option, said Mr Grosse. But he reassured the forum that Shell were global leaders in reducing carbon emissions by taking a proactive approach on production efficiency and capturing and storing carbon in the earth.

No mention here of criticism of carbon capture as a 'pipedream' by scientists and environmentalists. No mention of the urgency of pricing carbon through taxation or investing massively in renewable energy by governments and global capital.

The forum got some respite from the alarm bells by inspirational presentations from local heroes. Jason and Tan Fowler talked about organic farming and showed vividly how the soils from their Serendipity Farm are enriched by natural carbon as opposed to chemical fertilisers. Alan Gray stirred the forum with a description of his carbon neutral lifestyle, based on his solar-powered Broome house, which more than meets his family's energy needs and also powers his electric car. Together they painted a picture of how Broome and the wider world could be: people using renewable energy, growing and eating nutritional organic food and moving around on efficient and healthy transport systems.

Martin Pritchard from Environs Kimberley gave a global perspective. Australia, he said, is the highest per capita CO2 polluting nation on earth, but no matter what individuals and local communities do, the maximum reduction they could make on our total emissions was only 16%. Industry was the real polluter, producing 70% of all Australia's CO2 emissions. But to put Australia's contribution to global carbon pollution into perspective, Martin pointed out that it was slightly less than Shell's total carbon emissions into the world's atmosphere.

'Cheap shot!', someone mumbled. Far from it: according to a recent report, partly financed by the European Union, 'Shell contributes more to global warming than any other oil company ... pursues a cynical, short-sighted, and deceptive corporate strategy, particularly in regards to climate change ... portraying itself as an environmentally conscious company .. but in reality, the company continues to invest in the most carbon-intensive oil production and works to weaken climate initiatives.' [http://www.foeeurope.org/corporates/Extractives/shellbigdirtysecret\\_June09.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/corporates/Extractives/shellbigdirtysecret_June09.pdf)

The report is a must-read for those trying to understand the spin and political manipulation around climate change. It also helps one to understand why Shell is ambivalent about investing in the proposed LNG facility on the Kimberley coast. It may feel it has enough on its plate with its continuing oil flares in Nigeria and strip mining oil shale in Canada to be embroiled in a fight over environmental and Indigenous cultural destruction in the Kimberley.

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