

I'm enjoying reading "Around Williamstown". It's great to have a journal that focuses on our beautiful little corner of the world. I'm so pleased that the journal is engaging with the issue of climate change, although I'm disappointed to see this kicking off with a four part opinion piece denying climate change.

The time has long passed for debate on the existence of anthropogenic (human caused) climate change, just as we no longer debate whether the earth goes around the sun, or whether the earth is in fact a globe, or whether babies grow under pumpkins. A quick google search will be enough to thoroughly debunk the arguments presented by the author.

The debate has moved on – now we need to talk about what to do about climate change. Companies like BP and Shell are debating whether they are obliged to warn shareholders that up to three quarters of fossil fuel reserves will have to stay in the ground in order to meet our global carbon budget. Insurance companies are debating how to defray increasing costs of payouts from more frequent "extreme weather events". Energy companies are debating whether to lobby for nuclear power and scientist are debating whether geoengineering is a solution to reflecting some of the sun's rays back into space. Meanwhile, farmers try to work out how to maintain productivity in the face of changing weather patterns and dependence on fossil fuel-based fertilisers and pesticides. The UN Climate Change Conference, in Paris in December this year, is not debating the existence of climate change, but seeking global commitment to the urgent actions we need to undertake.

For Williamstown residents, the way we have adapted to climate change means that we need to check on relatives and friends during heat waves, and this will happen more and more. It means that we put up family and friends from the country during code red days. It means that more of our local council rates and state taxpayer dollars are spent on the impacts of increased hospitalisations, disaster relief, and desalination plants. It means draping cotton sheets over my fruit trees to stop the relentless hot sun destroying my crop during increasing heatwaves. Soon we will need a massive injection of federal tax dollars to support our belated transition to renewable energy, and Australia's coal-dependent economy will take a hit as global restrictions on burning more fossil fuels come into place. Fifty-five percent of Australian superannuation is invested in fossil fuel companies – for many Williamstown residents, this means your nest egg is at great risk, should international bodies finally reach agreement on the need to curtail coal, oil and gas mining.

Hobsons Bay residents are particularly at risk from rising sea levels, with projections available online and from the council so you can see how this will affect your property (<http://www.ozcoasts.gov.au/index.jsp>). Many people have noted the increase in blue blubber jellyfish at Williamstown Beach – the 'jellification of the oceans' is attributed to warming ocean temperatures and increasing acidification.

Last year, Australia ranked second worst (after Saudi Arabia) on climate change performance – coming 60th out of 61 industrialised nations. We voted to remove a tax on big carbon emitters in favour of taxpayers paying carbon polluters directly. This week US think tank Council of Foreign Relations (whose Board includes a former US Secretary of Treasury and a former US Secretary of State), said that our Prime Minister "looked completely baffled on climate change issues".

Australia is dangerously out of step with the world on the issue of climate change. This lack of planning will affect our economy, health services, our ability to grow our own food and maintain social supports in the wake of increasing extreme events. Rather than looking at websites maintained by unaccredited individuals, we need to be seeking the opinion of respected scientists, international bodies, and noting the preparations being made by multinational corporations to maximise profits in a time of rapid change.

In the interests of balanced journalism, for every three pages denying climate change, I call on the respected community journal Around Williamstown to publish 97 pages that constructively discuss climate change, its

effects and what we can do to prepare our communities. This would more accurately reflect the global scientific community's views on the subject.

SIDEBAR

What can I do?

Transition Hobsons Bay is a volunteer-run group that aims to bring the local community together to move towards a low-carbon future, and have fun doing it. We want to build resilient, thriving communities that contribute positively to the earth and our social networks. We support each other and our local communities to grow food, socialise, shop, work and live locally. Some of our activities include food swaps, workshops, shared meals, garden tours, lobbying for better cycling and public transport infrastructure, and supporting each other to find local, environmentally responsible work. Anyone can join – find us on Facebook or google 'Transition Hobsons Bay'.

Divest! Investigate whether your superannuation and your home loan can be moved to a financial organisation that steers clear of fossil fuel investment. Try www.gofossilfree.org.au for more information on how this works.