


There is no need to worry about the condition of the Great Barrier Reef

12:00AM NOVEMBER 30, 2019 •  27 COMMENTS

It is ironic that sceptic Clive James died on the same day the latest climate doomsday paper appeared (“Planet ‘cascades’ towards hothouse”, 27/11) claiming the Great Barrier Reef was approaching a tipping point to catastrophe.

In one of his last articles, James noted that in 1971 scientists claimed the reef had only six months to live, and that these doom scenarios just keep on coming. A calm scan of the scientific literature indicates the outlook for the Great Barrier Reef is good. There is still excellent coral on all 3000 reefs, coral growth rates have, if anything, increased in the past 100 years, and the amount of coral is about the same today as when reliable records began.

Peter Ridd, Townsville, Qld

According to Nature, the world must now aim at decreasing carbon emission by five times what was previously needed to avoid disastrous climate tipping points. But as we stand at this critical juncture, coal and other fossil fuels are making a renewed surge with China, the US and India leading the way. This will require even higher emission targets that will be financially and politically impossible.

When are scientists and climate activists going to get real? The only chance we have to avert catastrophic climate scenarios is breakthroughs in renewable technology. The only useful thing Australia and the world can do is to divert funding into this and away from subsidies.

Tom Drake-Brockman, Berrilee, NSW

Republican two-step

I welcome the conversion of Malcolm Turnbull to the idea of asking Australians to choose the model for a republic instead of simply putting a “take it or leave it” choice (“Turnbull fires debate with two-step push for republic”, 28/11). As a delegate to the Constitutional Convention that preceded the failed referendum, it was clear that Australians would support a directly elected head of state.

Any plebiscite preceding a referendum must contain two questions: whether Australians want a republic, and what model they want for it. If a republic is supported, then the model chosen in a plebiscite should form the basis for a referendum question.

A two-step process involving two separate plebiscites would be a waste of money as opponents of a republic would ask what type of republic are we being asked to support. A two-step plebiscite process could see the republic fall at the first hurdle as opponents drum up a campaign urging voters not to sign a blank cheque.

David Muir, chairman, Real Republic Australia, Indooroopilly, Qld

James’s climate sense

Clive James was too free-thinking to swallow the nonsense of the climate evangelists. In *Mass Death Dies Hard* — his contribution to climate change — he ripped apart the pretensions of its two high priests, Al Gore and Tim Flannery. Take this put-down of Flannery:

“(He) will not shrink to the position conferred by his original metier — an expert on the extinction of the giant wombat. He is more likely to be one of the mass media’s mobile oracles on climate. While that continues, it will be dangerous to stand between him and a TV camera.”

Or on the climate apocalypse: “A starting point might be when *The Sydney Morning Herald* announced, on August 3, 1971, that the Great Barrier Reef would be dead in six months.” No alarmist has been able to counter that sort of satire.

P. C. Wilson, Miami, Qld

How about a fair dinkum Australian literary or general communications award or scholarship in memory of Clive James, a man for all seasons?

My reasoning is that no matter where he was, he was always a true blue Aussie. I stand and salute James, and his true Aussie style.

Stan Marks, Caulfield, Vic