



INSIDE

Generator News.....2
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Gadget.....6
A hot pot that cooks without a fuel source. Sometimes the simple things are the best.

Measure sustainability?..6
If we only we could label products and activities to get a grip on how sustainable they actually are.

What the Tesla?.....7
The mailbag delivers. An alternative energy enthusiast blows up a microwave for us.

Cry Me a River.....8
One man's journey to the heart of Australia's water crisis. An EcoForum launch.



Lobby group bets the farm on climate change denier

Ian Plimer made a youthful habit of debunking myths



Discredited climate chaos denier, Ian Plimer, has received undue publicity for his latest regurgitation of the fossil fuel industry's favourite arguments that deny global warming and the resulting climate chaos. Despite the lack of any new evidence, the paid up lobbyist has received support from a range of vested interests including the current executive of the National Farmers Federation (NFF).

That organisation is engaged in a high risk bid to sell membership to agribusiness companies, despite widespread opposition from small farmers. Backing Plimer would appear to be a way to indicate support for the multinational corporations and polarise the membership before the crucial vote at the national conference in Brisbane. It is a ploy that could backfire.

Full story – page 4

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GENERATOR NEWS

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Federal scheme ups motorist's emissions

The Federal government's proposed subsidy for polluters will extend to private motorists, the petrol company Caltex confirmed last week. Work done by the Australian Conservation Foundation shows the Carbon Pollution Reward Scheme proposed by the Rudd Government will subsidise private motorists at least \$150million a year until 2025. Caltex spokesman for government affairs, Frank Topham said the scheme would increase emissions from private vehicles for 15 years. Caltex wants the transport sector to be exempt from the mandatory scheme.

Europe takes Biogas on as energy source

Biogas extracted from waste forestry and agricultural produce has become a leading source of renewable energy in Europe. "If you look at all the countries in the top of the EU table when it comes to producing renewable energy, they all make use of bioenergy. Austria, Sweden, Latvia and Finland all have abundant forests. Bioenergy around the globe has a huge potential," said Kasimir Nemestothy, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture. Austria expects to supply one fifth of its energy needs from biogas by 2020.

Wind energy grows 70 percent in States

Over 5,000 new wind turbines were installed in the United States, last year, generating almost 8,500Megawatts of electricity and directly employing about 35,000 people. In addition 100 companies began manufacturing components for wind generators. This represents a growth of 70 percent for the year, the fastest growing sector of the US economy. The economic benefits have extended to education with more than 100 new courses being offered to train workers for the rapidly growing industry.

Water limits solar play in US deserts

Power companies are facing challenges in setting up solar thermal power generation plants in California's Mojave desert. The limited supply of water and the delicate ecosystem of the region have both contributed to a scaling back of plans to build more than 150 solar powered electricity generators across the region.

Solar thermal power generation which superheats an oil or saline solution to drive traditional steam powered turbines have been the hardest hit, because of the volume of water they use. Some companies have proposed to switch over to concentrated photovoltaic systems, others are exploring air cooled turbines, which are less efficient.

As well as the shortage of water, the impact of the development on wildlife has become an issue.

World's major rivers face double threat

The most population regions of the world coincide with major rivers, many of which will be seriously depleted due to global warming. The double impact of increased population and water use, along with higher temperatures and lower rainfall is expected to bring acute water shortages to China, India and much of Africa. A report released last week by the Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado shows that only the Mississippi and the Nile have gained increased run-off as a result of climate change in the last fifty years.

Reef recovers after bleaching event

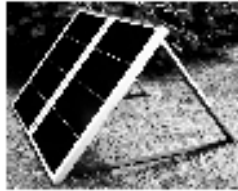
Scientists studying Australia's Great Barrier Reef have been pleasantly surprised by the reef's ability to recover from a major bleaching incident in 2006. Dr Guillermo Diaz-Pulido said there were a number of factors contributing to the recovery. "The first was exceptionally high regrowth of fragments of surviving coral tissue. The second was an unusual seasonal dieback in the seaweeds, and the third was the presence of a highly competitive coral species, which was able to outgrow the seaweed." Despite the good news in this instance, scientists remain concerned that regular bleaching events may outpace the coral's ability to recover.

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The Generator

NFF bets the farm on climate scoundrel

... from front page

Despite having been discredited a number of times, geologist Ian Plimer is making media waves and lots of money from his dogged opposition of the basic facts on climate change.

With no qualifications in meteorology, climatology or hydrology, Plimer trots out the regular arguments used by the fossil fuel lobby.

They are that:

- most carbon dioxide in the atmosphere comes from geological events,
- on a geological time frame we are due for a period of cooling rather than warming,
- in the short term time frame (the last decade) trends do not show consistent warming.

(In fact, until last year they showed distinct cooling, but the hottest summer on record in 2009 has blown that furphy and reduced its prominence in the denier's standard spiel.)

All these facts are true, but they have absolutely nothing to do with the evidence for global warming.

The impact of human output of carbon dioxide is not significant compared to the swings in atmospheric concentrations of the gas over geological epochs, but it is remarkably significant over a time frame measured in centuries. Similarly, the galactic cycles that affect solar influence on the earth's climate and the geological cycles that are measured in

hundreds of thousands of years, may far outweigh the puny influence that living organisms have on the earth, but our life span and our influence is limited to the scale of individual centuries not thousands of them.

To jump from a scale of hundreds of thousands of years to a scale of individual years and then say, the long term picture and the short term picture, both show that climate science is wrong, is not only bad statistics, it is invalid science.

The weather in individual years is useless in predicting trends and merely highlights the difference between the weather and the climate. Plimer has simply hunted for any figures at all that run counter to the overwhelming weight of evidence that shows human greenhouse emissions are damaging the earth. He represents a minority of less than 0.1% of scientists.

What makes Ian run?

It is always difficult, and dangerous, to attribute motives, but Plimer is not only receiving money and publicity directly from his denial of climate change, he is allied with the Canadian group, the Natural Resources Stewardship Project which refuses to confirm or deny whether its funding comes substantially from energy companies, but which has three directors who are executives of the High Park Advocacy Group, a lobby group working on behalf of energy companies.

He is also an Associate of the Institute of Public Affairs, a right wing policy group with connections to the

extreme dries in the Liberal Party that has published policy positions advocating privatisation, deregulation, reduction in the power of unions and denial of most significant environmental problems, including climate change.

A question of balance

The entire notion of balance in reporting has been abused by lobby groups from tobacco in the sixties, through star wars in the eighties to climate deniers now. If every extremist was given equal time to put their opinion on every item in the news, news bulletins would take hours and would be dominated by the rantings of extremists all demanding equal time. It is up to editors to decide what is fair on the basis of the evidence and community values, rather than let well backed publicists promote extreme views simply by demanding balance.

For the National Farmers Federation to promote Plimer's contribution to the debate as a blow for balance is disingenuous at best and will be judged by most as deliberately misleading. Either way, it paints the organisation into a corner which is not in the best interests of its member farmers, in which it could get trapped.

A better way forward

Accepting the facts on global warming and working on new pasture and land management techniques to reduce methane production and biosequester carbon are what the world and the traditional membership of the NFF needs. To come out backing a lobbyist for the fossil fuel sector indicates the



The “science” in Plimer's book has been repeatedly discredited

extreme positions that the current NFF leadership is prepared to adopt to court the agribusiness companies from which it hopes to get most of its money in the future. The fact that two state organisations have already deserted the once powerful lobby group because of its support for agribusiness at the expense of the farmer on the land, indicates how thoroughly it has lost its way.

To back a discredited gun for hire who has been publicly shamed so many times indicates that it has lost its media savvy as well. The NFF could well lose the vote at next month's national conference to allow agribusiness companies in as paid up members. If it does, the current leadership will also be on the line. Backing Plimer is a high risk bid to polarise the membership.

It might well backfire.

**Links to all the evidence on
www.thegenerator.com.au**

GADGET

Each week The Generator lines up a new device and puts it through its paces. Some make it. Some don't.

Slow food finds an energy efficient tool

The slow food movement involves its proponents in the food from harvest to table. A new way of cooking has emerged to complement the ethos that cooks the food slowly, in its own heat.

The basic approach is simply to heat up the food on the stove top and then lock it away to cook in its own juices. Obviously the approach works best with stews and casseroles, but Nina Bishop, who introduced it to us, brought a beautiful banana cake into the studio she had baked in her hot pot.

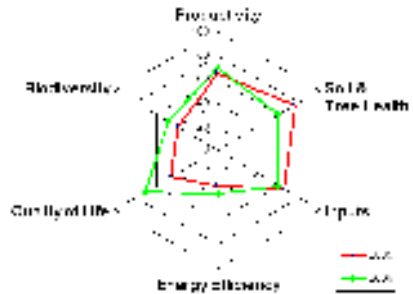
Iconic US food container company, Thermos, has leapt into the game with its Shuttle Chef line. There is a 4.5 litre pot and a 6 litre pot, which can hold two three litre cooking utensils to make a two part meal.

Testing the system to feed guests at *Generator* events, we were pleased to note lots of little touches that mark this as a quality product. The handles spring up so that you can easily grab them, the entire systems locks shut simply and the whole thing comes apart for a thorough wash. At \$369 it ain't cheap, but it is built to last and as effective as many electrical appliances that end up sitting in the cupboard unused.

Available at One Stop Green Shop.
www.onestopgreenshop.com.au

What is this thing called sustainability?

Imagine if we could measure sustainability instead of simply talking about it. Macadamia farmer, Charlie Starrett, did and then he created a set of indicators that measure progress.



- **Productivity** measures yield, quality and return
- **Soil health.** Healthy, fertile soil is the basis of agriculture.
- **Inputs.** Variable costs are compared to productivity.
- **Energy Efficiency.** Energy used relative to production.
- **Quality of Life.** Your sense of well-being.
- **Biodiversity.** Measure the ecosystem that supports you.

In this example, the farmer increased productivity by spraying under trees to make harvesting easier. The loss of weeds led to erosion and poorer growth after harvest. Biodiversity was increased by rainforest regeneration.

With some adjustments these indicators can be applied to any industry. Nuts by Nature specialise in agriculture.

nutsbynature.com.au

What the Tesla?

Your feedback and questions answered

Dieter Horstman blows up his microwave making biochar



"Burn after Reading"

contact: >ByronNewEnergy@googlemail.com<

Tested and works but ...

a pain to my wife
a smell in the house
I have to clean over

Dieter Horstmann



The Generator has always encouraged readers to experiment as a way of testing the theories expounded by various guests. Dieter Horstmann of Byron New Energy has always been one of our most responsive listeners, and the Byron New Energy project that he supports on his land in Tyagrah on the northern NSW coast is a living example of a community testing solutions to global problems in their own back yard.

This week, Dieter has excelled himself. In response to a news story about a NZ venture to microwave biomass and produce charcoal, Dieter took himself outside, grabbed a large handful of grass clippings and threw them into the microwave.

Off the grid and living high

Duncan Dey of Main Arm in NSW reports that solar powered, battery backed up electricity keeps him humming. "Blackout? What Blackout?" was his less than sympathetic but justifiable response to our moans and groans after recent powerouts due to trees falling across powerlines during recent storms.

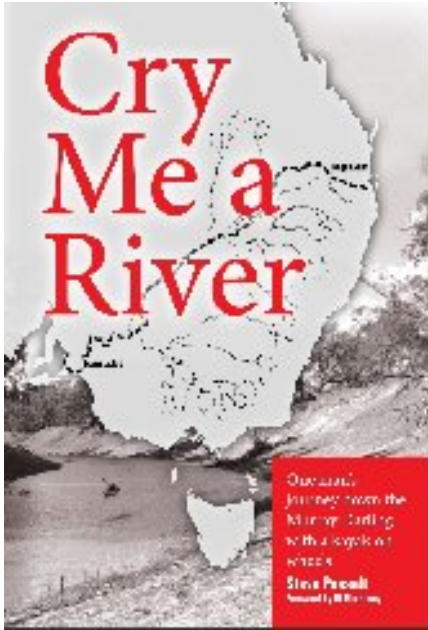
Sparse centre-spread teases readers

Mitra Ardron of Natural Innovation points out that last issue's centre spread has too little detail. "It should be longer with detailed instructions," he wrote.

Absolutely. The Generator should be a 96 page newspaper with thousands of readers. This whole document is a tease really, but we prefer to call it a prototype. Watch this space.

teamgenerator@thegenerator.com.au

To the heart



Saul was on the road to Damascus when he realised there was more to life than gouging taxpayers. Steve Posselt making equipment for water agencies.

A water engineer for more than three decades, he wanted to see our greatest river system for himself so he set off from Brisbane to Adelaide with a wheeled kayak.

A down to earth bloke by nature, he tells it as he sees it. His conversations with mayors, farmers, irrigators and publicans are unique insight into our psyche. He debunks folklore, reveals the past and explores what might help these outback towns thrive again.

Steve Posselt's journey to the heart of Australia's water crisis is terrifying and heart warming. Read it and weep.

www.kayak4earth.com.au

The Generator

The Generator

Good news for a post carbon world

The Generator regularly interviews practitioners who have developed tools to live and work more sustainably.

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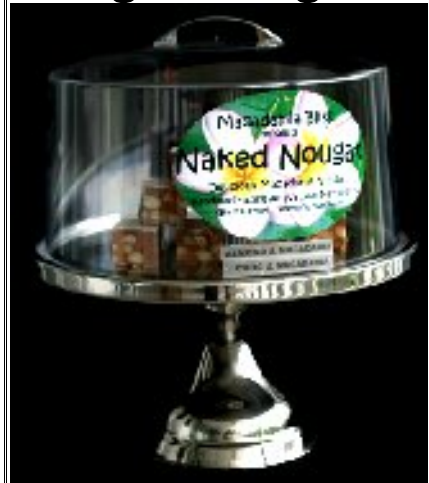
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