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Thursday, March 12, 2015

Censorship? Climate sceptics culled from universities

[Cathy Alexander](#) | Jul 12, 2013 12:42PM | [EMAIL](#) | [PRINT](#)

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Two prominent climate sceptics have lost their jobs with their respective universities. As Andrew Bolt cries ‘censorship’, *Crikey* looks more closely at Salby and Bob Carter.

Two darlings of Australia’s climate sceptic movement have been dumped by their universities, sparking charges of academic censorship from the b

The cull makes it harder for the sceptic movement to use academics to push its case by appearing at parliamentary hearings, speaking at events and newspapers.

Australia’s climate sceptic movement — from Andrew Bolt and Alan Jones to the Sydney Institute and the Coalition’s sceptic rump — has relied on academics who cast doubt on the science of anthropogenic global warming (i.e. climate change caused by humanity’s greenhouse gas emissions). They are usually male, usually older, are often geologists and are sometimes semi-retired. Some have published little on climate in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Now that pool is two men smaller. Professor Murry Salby has been controversially terminated by Macquarie University, and Professor Bob Carter, research fellow at James Cook University, has also been axed (the university says his term expired).

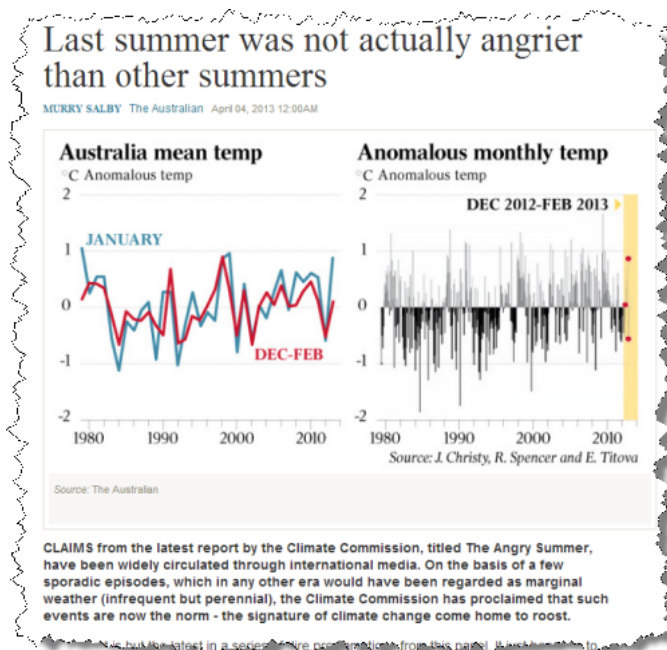
Both universities say the terminations had nothing to do with the men’s outspoken views that humanity’s emissions are not affecting the climate in a significant way. They have indicated they think their climate views were in part behind the decisions (read [Salby’s claims here](#) and [Carter’s here](#)).

Sceptic HQ is outraged. News Corp writer Andrew Bolt says [Salby has been punished](#) and persecuted for challenging “the global warming faith”. Bolt says Carter has been “blackballed ... because he speaks outside the permitted doctrine”. The popular blog *Wattsupwiththat* says “I’m beginning to think for AGW [anthropogenic global warming] crackpottery”, and the Salby case “illustrates the disturbing lengths a university will go to suppress ideas

The Australian ran a [sympathetic story](#) by Graham Lloyd on page 5 today linking Salby's sacking to his research on global warming and airing view that the situation "raised questions about the culture of climate science and the difficulty many had accepting alternative views".

The Australian misspelt his name as Murray Salby (it's Murry) and described him as "the chair of Macquarie University's Climate Department". M not have a climate department. His title was Professor of Climate Risk.

The case of Salby is an interesting one that *Crikey* has monitored for some months. So what happened to him? Macquarie University says it terminated him for [teach as required](#) and breached the university's travel rules. He claims he was treated poorly and denied resources, and links this to his re-emissions. Salby, who has spoken twice at the [Sydney Institute](#), [hints his sacking](#) might have been something to do with this op-ed in *The Australian*. Some senior staff on the Climate Commission, which he criticises in the op-ed, are also [employed at Macquarie](#):



Crikey looked into this piece at the time because it makes some bold claims. The piece challenges [a report](#) by the government-funded Climate Commission. Australia's 2012-2013 summer was hot and "angry" due in part to climate change. Salby claims temperature data from the Bureau of Meteorology indicates makes serious claims that the BOM's temperature records are "routinely readjusted" in a manner that is opaque and "discretionary". This claim, which indicates the BOM is faking temperature data, incensed the bureau, which said this (read BOM's [seven-page response](#) to *Crikey*'s enquiry here):

"The Bureau stands by its climate analysis that portrays the last Australian summer as exceptional. So many temperature records were broken across the area of the continent during this summer past, that it is absurd to argue otherwise. The Bureau rejects assertions that surface based climate observations analysed by the Bureau of Meteorology are somehow fatally flawed."

Salby presents his own graphs, which appear to show Australia's summertime temperatures have not warmed in the last 30 years (see above). *Crikey* contacted Salby and Macquarie University repeatedly by phone and email over a six-week period in April and May to find out where the data came from. He never responded — he was overseas on a lecture tour — and the university was not able to answer the question.

Crikey tracked the data to academic John Christy from the Atmospheric Science University of Alabama. Christy told *Crikey*:

"I'm fairly certain this chart was derived from our satellite data ... The satellite measures a deep layer, about surface to 10km altitude, so it is a measurement of atmospheric temperature ... The traditional surface temperatures don't always align with the deep atmosphere above, but over annual averages (or so) they look quite similar."

So Salby's op-ed for *The Australian*, which claims to show that the climate is not warming insofar as Australian summers are not getting hotter, is based on data from 10 kilometres above the earth's surface, which "don't always align" with temperatures on the earth's surface.

So astronauts have no need to worry about climate change, then.

[ENVIRONMENT](#), [Andrew Bolt](#), [censorship](#), [climate change](#), [climate sceptics](#), [murry salby](#), [The Sydney Institute](#), [universities](#)

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Comments

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Geoff Russell

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 1:16 pm | [Permalink](#)

Most Universities have a code of practice or set of policies or mission statements which contain pledges of a commitment to excellence, or simply meaningless if they can't be invoked to get rid of people whose work is simply sloppy and substandard. I don't know of detailed scrutiny of Professor Ian Plimer's book "Heaven and Earth" has been analysed in detail and that detailed analysis makes it clear that, at the very least, the

substandard.

http://www.complex.org.au/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=91

• 2

JohnB

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 1:34 pm | [Permalink](#)

This has come not before time.

• 3

Liamj

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 1:38 pm | [Permalink](#)

Salby's refusal to teach (and thus face questioning?) or provide data substantiating his claims is pretty damning, by any productivity measure that News Corp is a museum of white male dead wood, and their casual approach to facts, what's the bet that Salby &/or Carter end up there.

• 4

Cathy Alexander

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 2:57 pm | [Permalink](#)

If you're interested in the debate around Salby's thesis on AGW, as detailed to the Sydney Institute in 2011, this post is not bad:

http://www.skepticalscience.com/salby_correlation_conundrum.html

• 5

JohnB

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 2:58 pm | [Permalink](#)

Re Liamj's opining that Salby or Carter will end up in the Murdoch stable, Carter at least is such a well-known bore that even the dead white find his presence trying.

Better to leave him to his many directorships and other interests; he has plenty of other work in hand.

Salby is a complete unknown to me. If, as may be the case, the quantity and quality of his output was such as to not reach even the bar of acceptance then surely even News would balk at putting him on the payroll.

Bolt may well be criticised on the basis of quality, but he makes up for any shortcomings there with quantity. Never-ending, unchanging, brain quantity.

• 6

Mike Smith

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 3:10 pm | [Permalink](#)

Perhaps you mean astronauts have no need to fear for their jobs if they comment on climate change.

• 7

Boerwar

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 3:20 pm | [Permalink](#)

In the past week or so 'The Australian' in its eternal quest for excellence in science reporting has had an article by Lomberg, an article by Rick (something of a credibility issue in the banking industry) extolling the virtues of Carter's book, and a totally uncritical article by Lloyd (some AGW science) on Salby.

Some things never change.

• 8

Blaggers

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 3:28 pm | [Permalink](#)

Salby claims temperature data from the Bureau of Meteorology is not robust, and he makes serious claims that the BOM's temperature record is "readjusted" in a manner that is opaque and "discretionary". Enough said, really though. Of course the BOM is going to fudge its own data...

Who's the greater fool? The Fool or the fool who follows him?

Time to shut these fools up. Kudos to the universities.

• 9

simon.chapman

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 3:38 pm | [Permalink](#)

Carter was an adjunct appointment. These are typically given to people who make small, occasional contributions to a university Dept like through a review etc. They have a review date, and very often they are not renewed if the person has accepted the title and its perks like free library access but done little to nothing in return. It would be interesting to hear Carter's account of what he thinks he actually did for the Dept.

• 10

[Gavin Moodie](#)

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 3:39 pm | [Permalink](#)

Thanx to Cathy Alexander for this excellent work.

Australian universities do indeed require their staff to achieve appropriate standards of teaching and research but these are rarely used to sack used to pressure staff to improve their performance. Some staff resign or retire early to escape this pressure.

Most academics are dismissed for redundancy (usually as a result of a fall in students in a discipline such as economics at the University of W obey a lawful command or discharge prescribed duties (as in this case) and occasionally for misbehaviour such as fraud or sexual harassment

• 11

wally crusoe

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 3:44 pm | [Permalink](#)

i love it how denialists are now saying “even though record highs have been set it’s not actually hot”. and they still shriek at the term “denial

• 12

Mike Smith

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 4:34 pm | [Permalink](#)

I love it how um, ‘non-denialists’ shriek if you dare argue...

Look, it may be right, it may be wrong, myself I’m not qualified to argue that, but many seem to accord it the status of a religion - just believe the unbelievers.

• 13

Alan

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 5:05 pm | [Permalink](#)

I know nothing about Salby’s case but I followed one aspect of Carter’s contribution to climate science. In a famous 2009 paper he co-author McLean, the increase in global temperatures was removed by a careful statistical trick to filter out long-term variation! I read the paper myself past a bright statistics undergraduate. I won’t weigh in to a discussion of whether he should have been removed but I know he put his name to and I think he should have known it was rubbish.

• 14

Floss

Posted Friday, 12 July 2013 at 6:17 pm | [Permalink](#)

Emotion has no part to play in science except a passion for the truth, everything should be challenged, there is no right or wrong in science or all follow the leader on the same path to find the facts they should not draw personal attack or ridicule, it has proven to retard progress.

• 15

Anon

Posted Saturday, 13 July 2013 at 1:06 am | [Permalink](#)

Why do so many people who have no studied climate science in depth hold such strong views on it (at least as many in the ‘for’ camp as ‘aga thought it’d belong in the quantum physics category — a shrug, and a presumption that the scientists probably know what they’re doing.

• 16

Altakoi

Posted Saturday, 13 July 2013 at 4:08 am | [Permalink](#)

I tried recommending bleeding in my final exams, and it got me nowhere with the closed minded folk in the medical faculty. Antibiotics? Hal all propaganda by big pharma. And they have the judges in their pocket! Bled to death my arse.

• 17

Terrence Burns

Posted Saturday, 13 July 2013 at 12:27 pm | [Permalink](#)

Bolt supports them. Enough said.

• 18

burninglog

Posted Saturday, 13 July 2013 at 7:30 pm | [Permalink](#)

maybe they were just ‘poo’ at their jobs.

Why doesn’t Bolt offer them a gig? Seems the decent thing to do. They can sit around and fulminate about the ‘gigantic leftist conspiracy’ in government, schools, etc.

Maybe they could video it. Be hilarious to watch in years to come. Kinda like a ‘room full of Santamarias’

• 19

tonyl

Posted Saturday, 13 July 2013 at 10:54 pm | [Permalink](#)

A couple of years ago a Newcastle Uni academic gave a climate change presentation, based on the last IPCC report, to the my local Rotarians dinner. I know the presenter donated his time. Shortly afterwards Carter gave his take on the subject and the cost was \$60 a head. Big crowd i nicely out of this Sceptic thing, as are others no doubt.

• 20

lulu2503

Posted Monday, 15 July 2013 at 6:51 am | [Permalink](#)

Macquarie U was right to sack Salby, if — as seems to be the case — he avoided teaching, devoting his time to promoting his climate change data he presented to back his sceptic claims, was deliberately tweaked to suit his ideology, then he does not deserve the right to remain in the community. He should become a political spin doctor instead. As for Bob Carter: well, he is not really a specialist in climatology, is he?

• 21

John Mashey

Posted Monday, 15 July 2013 at 3:34 pm | [Permalink](#)

Re Salby:
Try Graham Readfearn’s piece:
<http://www.desmogblog.com/2013/07/12/murry-salby-sacked-australian-university—banned-national-science-foundation>

or my longer one that has the US court cases also:
<http://www.desmogblog.com/2013/07/12/murry-salby-galileo-bozo-or-p-t-barnum>



CATHY ALEXANDER

FREELANCE JOURNALIST AND PHD CANDIDATE IN POLITICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

[@cathymalexander](#)

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