

Published Opinion Pieces on Climate Change

Dr Paul Duignan

September 20 2019

Opinion pieces all available at
<http://parkerduignan.com/pwd/climate-change>
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What I am trying to do with this ongoing series of opinion pieces

The following page shows a DoView Strategy Diagram of what I am trying to achieve with my ongoing series of opinion pieces on climate change. On the right is the outcome (the 'why') and on the left how it can be achieved (the 'how').

The strategy diagram sets out the 'theory of change' that I am wanting to activate with these pieces to hasten action on climate change. The themes in the pieces are based on the key messages outline in the strategy diagram.

Published Pieces

5. Climate change – are we getting into emergency mode? *Radio New Zealand*, 20 September 2019.
4. Climate change – let's hear solutions, not just problems. *The Dominion Post*, 11 September 2019.
3. Public opinion may move surprisingly fast on climate change. *The Press*, 16 May 2019.
2. No, the heatwave isn't lovely - it's extremely worrying. *The Dominion Post*, 1 February 2019.
1. Forget the climate doom and gloom – it's time to be positive. *The Dominion Post*, 29 November 2018.



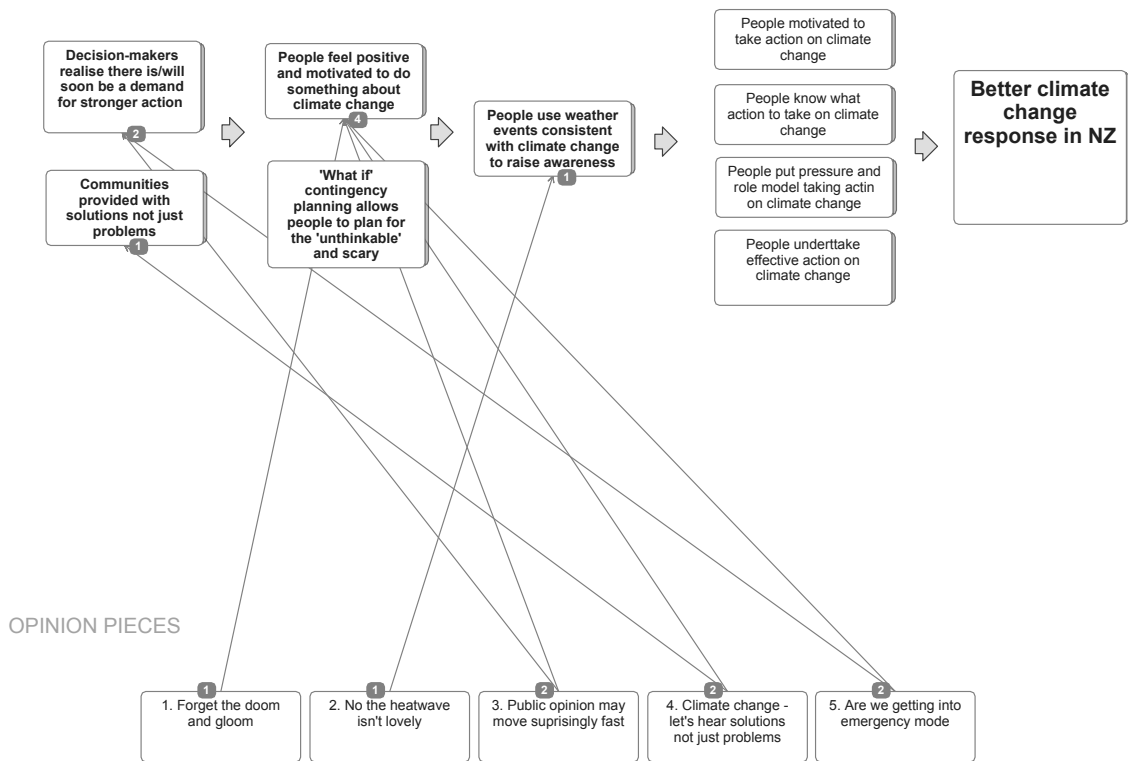
Climate Change Opinion Pieces DoView®

STRATEGY DIAGRAM

Built in DoView®
Software
Capturing strategy and
making it visual™
Modelled by
Dr Paul Duignan

HOW

WHY



Not all links and feedback loops are shown
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COMMENT & ANALYSIS ENVIRONMENT

9:39 am 20 September 2019

Radio New Zealand

Climate change: Are we getting into emergency mode?

By **Paul Duignan***

Opinion - The poet T.S. Eliot once said that 'humankind cannot bear very much reality'. The truth of these words is about to be tested as humanity increasingly wakes up to the reality of climate change.



Wellington City Council declared a climate emergency in June this year. Photo: RNZ / Charlotte Cook

In the past, some experts have been concerned that if people are presented with the brutal reality of what may be the consequences of climate change, it may overwhelm them. There may be reactions of panic, denial, despair or a head-in-the-sand approach. However another school of thought, lead by ex-NASA climate scientist Dr Jim Hansen, is that scientists should actually be 'less reticent' when talking to the public.

We are now at an interesting moment regarding climate change and public reactions. Local councils are declaring climate emergencies and some national governments, for instance, the UK, have also. Meanwhile, civil society seems to be ramping up its angst about the climate. This is seen in recent protests by Extinction Rebellion and school strikes, another of which is scheduled for Friday week.

Is this uptick in public climate change awareness a temporary phenomenon or something else? There are two reasons why it seems unlikely that it will be temporary. The first is that according to the UK Met Office, the next five years are going to be unusually hot for most of the globe. There is even a 10 percent chance of spiking above the 1.5-degree target that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is trying to

avoid. Hot day-to-day temperatures and accompanying extreme weather events tend to sharpen people's concern about the climate.

Second, there is increasing disquiet that 'official' climate change estimates may be too low. A recent book on this topic called *Discerning Experts* includes a detailed analysis of the IPCC estimates regarding the stability of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. The authors conclude that the IPCC over-estimated the stability of the ice sheet in the face of higher temperatures. This should not be seen as a criticism of the dedicated climate scientists who have put so much effort into the IPCC correctly realising that it has been the most important game in town. Rather, it can be seen as the inevitable result of the current modus operandi of the institution itself - arrangements that could be easily fixed.

In any event, the combination of these two factors means that over the next few years we are likely to have populations of overly hot people being told that things are worse than was expected by officialdom. This is a sure recipe for growing escalation of public concern about climate change.

So as public worry about climate change increases, how will it be manifested? Mass panic maybe? Psychologist Dr Margaret Salamon has another theory. She believes that what is happening now, as evidenced by things like Extinction Rebellion and the school strikes, is that people are adopting what she calls emergency mode.

She sees this as a very positive climate change development that should be encouraged. She talks about how the US during the second world war moved full-on into such an emergency mode. It then massively transformed its economy and society in the face of an existential threat. Emergency mode is characterised by focusing on the problem as a top priority; making huge allocations of resources to attempt to reduce it; and, citizens pitching in with their talents and resources to address the predicament.

I have been tracking developments in climate change since first becoming aware of the possibility 30 years ago. I certainly sense a ramping-up of awareness and an enhanced willingness to act. In view of the fact that the IPCC believes humanity has perhaps a decade in which to implement significant change, moving into emergency mode is exactly what people

and governments worldwide need to do if there is to be any chance of significantly addressing the problem.

* Dr Paul Duignan is an Honorary Research Fellow at Massey University, a psychologist, organisational and social strategist, and tech entrepreneur.

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Climate change - let's hear solutions, not just problems

Paul Duignan 06:41, Sep 11 2019

The Dominion Post Opinion Piece

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/115672263/climate-change--solutions-not-just-problems-please>



AL JAZEERA

There were about 80,000 fires this year, more than an 80 per cent increase compared with the same period last year.

OPINION: When you walk into your doctor's office and they give you bad news about your health, unless your case is terminal, the diagnosis almost always comes with treatment options.

Behind the scenes, central, regional and local government are working on both the "diagnosis" and "treatment" options for climate change. However, working up climate change solutions can involve long lead times. So what ends up happening is that we are being drip-fed the first part of the process – work on the diagnosis – without there having been time to formulate clear treatment options.

How this is all playing out in the media is reflected in the article headed [How vulnerable is your home?](#) (Aug 5). It showed maps from a just-released Greater Wellington Regional Council report showing which areas are likely to be inundated. Such work is a sensible first step from the regional council. However, when the public see such maps, they give the message to anyone who lives in the possible inundation zones something like: "be afraid, be very afraid for your insurance and property values".

The report went on to say that regional and local government want to "engage with coastal communities to develop options for responding to climate change". A fair enough approach.



STEWART NIMMO

A digger makes a sea wall at Cobden, near Greymouth. Coastal residents are crying out for information about what's technically feasible to alleviate climate change in their area.

However, as the public watch more and more news of the Amazon burning and polar ice melting, they may start to panic. If this happens then a drip-feed approach to climate change risk management may no longer be appropriate.

It might sound to the public a bit like your doctor saying: "Hey, the bad news is you've got a major lump. But, sorry the appointment is over now". Most of us would say, "Doc, can't we start talking about treatment options now so I don't go home and stew about what might, or might not, be able to be done".

It is going to be challenging for local and regional government to avoid a situation where the public hears a progressively more scary diagnosis combined with the much slower process of councils working through a longer-term dialogue with communities about possible solutions. As well as the fact that working out solutions takes time, I suspect there is a perspective on consulting the community which, while being laudatory, may not be the best way of framing up the climate change community consultation issue given the situation we now face.

As a strategist who has worked on other areas of government-community dialogue, I see that at one end of the consultation spectrum is the idea that government – whether central, regional or local – has to go to communities without formulated solutions in order to "just let communities speak". At the other end of the spectrum is the idea, now rightly discredited, that government can just turn up with a plan and "tell communities what is going to happen".



MONIQUE FORD/STUFF

As the Kapiti coastline continues to crumble, the district council works to shore up a temporary sea wall, built in 2016.

The best approach, especially for climate change, lies somewhere between these two extremes.

The problem with the "telling communities what the answer is going to be" approach is obvious.

However, the idea of local or regional government just saying to communities "what do you think should be done about this, we don't have any specific ideas" is unlikely to work. Communities may well respond with panic, a head-in-the-sand approach, or a shoot the messenger reaction and have no useful way to process what it is realistically possible to do about the problem.

A happy medium is for local and regional government, as soon as possible, to work up some possibilities they can take to communities addressing potential solutions. Given the political, media and legal ramifications they will obviously have to be careful how they frame such options.

The reality is that as soon as the average person realises the scope of the problem, they will be crying out for information about what might be technically possible. For instance, what height can sea walls feasibly be

built? Roughly how much would they cost? If things get really insane, could we dam the mouth of the harbour to spare us the expense of building sea walls all the way around? Or is this just impossible to do?

I would suggest that local and regional councils now prioritise working up such sets of possible – definitely not certain – solutions. In addition, they need to rule out solutions that lay people may have that are simply not possible from an engineering point of view. This regional council "solutions work" is at least as important as the ongoing technical work on specifying areas of vulnerability.

Given where we are at with rapidly escalating public awareness of climate change, producing such preparatory work on indicative solutions sooner rather than later is central to having a coherent discussion with communities. The other option may well just terrify them out of their wits as we drip-feed them what climate change is likely to bring.

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Public opinion may move surprisingly fast on climate change

Paul Duignan 16:18, May 16 2019

The Press Opinion Piece

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/opinion/112774946/public-opinion-may-move-surprisingly-fast-on-climate-change>



LUZ ZUNIGA/STUFF

An Extinction Rebellion climate change awareness demonstration in Nelson in January. Paul Duignan says such protests might be just the start.

OPINION: Extinction Rebellion's mounting civil disobedience and recent school strikes are two signs of increased public activism around climate change. Thursday's declaration of a 'climate emergency' by Environment Canterbury together with the Government's Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Bill show decision-makers are becoming increasingly focused on where public opinion is going on this issue.

Will the steady stream of news such as this week's announcement that carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have now reached an 800,000-year high create a further uptick in the level of public concern regarding the urgency and scope of climate action? Government, community and business leaders all need to factor in the possibility of such a major shift. In addition, entrepreneurs will be looking to see how fast public, and therefore consumers' and decision-makers', opinions change so they can identify potentially rewarding investment opportunities.

Of course it can be hard to predict the speed at which public opinion may change, but the British Met Office has recently predicted the world is going to be exceptionally hot over the next five years. In fact, it says there is a 10 per cent chance the average global temperature may temporarily spike over the 1.5C threshold level that is raising concern. The fact is research shows the hotter the weather becomes, the more worried the public gets about climate change.

If the Met Office is right, the sequences of hot days, fires, floods and storms will mount, which is likely to start focusing the minds of the average Joe and Jane in the street. At the moment people I talk to seem mainly focused on reducing future greenhouse gas emissions. But what might happen if many become convinced we need to do more – we need to also focus on actually reducing the amount of CO₂ in the air, not just stopping it increasing so fast?

In the middle of one of those hot spells predicted by the Met Office, an imagined conversation between the public and climate scientists might go something like: "OK climate scientists, you have been talking about climate change for a while now but we have not always paid close attention. But the recent stream of weather events are now starting to make us sweat - literally. Is it right if we summarise what you have been trying to tell us like this?"

"While it's often hard to attribute a single weather event to climate change, the current changes we are seeing - unusual heat, fires, floods, storms - are all consistent with the early effects of dramatic climate change. These will definitely worsen because more heat is already baked into the climate system because of absorbed heat that has not yet come out. In addition, if we continue emitting any more CO₂ into the atmosphere, we are going to make it even worse. Also, there may be tipping points out there that could spark some sort of runaway climate change but you do not currently have a good fix on the temperature rise that could trigger them, or how far we are away from these.

"So we know that the initial taste of climate change we are now experiencing is going to get worse. Given that, shouldn't we already be thinking in terms of attempting to not only reduce our ongoing emissions, but also, as soon as possible, to be sucking CO₂ directly out of the atmosphere through massive tree planting or new technological solutions? And shouldn't we continue to do this until we get to a level where you feel you can give us the 'all clear' that there is very little risk of us crossing any tipping points? Isn't this what we would do in any other risk management situation?"

The climate scientists are likely to reply: "Yes, you have it basically right. We can't give you any definite assurances regarding where those tipping points are. If this concerns you, as it does a number of us, you need to communicate your concern.

"You live in a democracy. Regardless of your leaders' personal views, they can only act decisively if you pressure them to do so. You need to convince them, whatever party they represent, that you will support them in taking the level of action required to responsibly manage the scale of the potential risk to yourselves, your children and your grandchildren's future.

"You also need to convince business leaders that they need to act more responsibly while at the same time you need to encourage entrepreneurs to take the risks that need to be taken so sufficient investment flows into reducing the risk of, or managing the impact of, climate change.

"If it ends up with things not panning out as dramatically as we currently believe they might, we as climate scientists will immediately tell you and

you can ease off. But until then, you need to have your foot hard to the floor on this issue if you don't want to risk leaving it too late to act."

If over the next five years Joe and Jane public are spooked by the playing out of the UK Met Office's temperature predictions, public opinion may move surprisingly fast on this issue. If so, Extinction Rebellion and global school strikes might be just the beginning. If public opinion does move fast, politicians, other leaders and businesses may find themselves having to quickly convince impatient voters and consumers they are deadly serious about climate change. At that point, those leaders not with the programme are likely to be left behind.

*Dr Paul Duignan is an honorary research fellow at Massey University, a psychologist, outcomes measurement specialist and tech entrepreneur.
<http://parkerduignan.com/pwd>*

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No, the heatwave isn't lovely - it's extremely worrying

Paul Duignan 05:00, Feb 01 2019

Dom Post 1 February 2019

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/110285913/no-the-heatwave-isnt-lovely--its-extremely-worrying>



CHRISTEL YARDLEY/STUFF

Te Kūiti shearers from CT Shearing push on in the heat.

OPINION: Despite being the Coolest Little Capital in the world, Wellington finds itself in the middle of a heatwave. The interesting thing is that, when I mention the heat to anyone, they tend to say: "Yes, wonderful isn't it?"

Doesn't anyone realise the terrifying things that could happen if the heatwave continues? We may all end up acting like Aucklanders, or worse

still, male public servants may break out their fathers' business shorts and walk socks that have been stored away since the 1970s.

But being serious, what is an appropriate response to people's obviously well-meaning comments about the heat?



MATTHEW TSO/STUFF

Locals doing manus at Taita Rock, on the Hutt River.

Imagine this: you are living in a forest and in recent evenings there have been some wonderful sunsets. Everyone is saying, "Lovely sunsets, aren't they?" But the problem is that they only look so good because of the smoke in the atmosphere. There is a large forest fire steadily making its way towards you. At some stage you are going to have to stop staring at the sunsets and start packing.

It's the same with Wellington now. Before anyone chimes in with: "Of course, you can't say anything about climate change from just one weather event", we have heard that phrase repeated endlessly.

From now on, let's put it like this: "What we are seeing with recent weather events like this heatwave are absolutely consistent with extremely serious climate change.

I can understand people wanting to minimise the risk of making the wrong prediction. But risk management is about trying to avoid leaving decisions too late, rather than being 100 per cent right in any prediction.

Take the example of two doctors out walking who come across a person lying on the footpath clutching their chest. Once the patient learns they are doctors, he or she asks: "Am I having a heart attack?"



ROBERT OSBORNE/SUPPLIED

Detector dog Lilly cools down in a pool as the heatwave continues. Lilly works for the Ministry for Primary Industries in Auckland with dog handler and photographer Sophia.

The first doctor is of the "no one event can prove it" school, and might say: "Well, you have some symptoms consistent with a heart attack. But we can't be certain, so we had better wait to see what happens before we make a determination. This is so we can be certain we get exactly right what is happening to you."

The other doctor says: "No way. I have called an ambulance. If we wait around to say whether you are definitely having a heart attack or how severe it is, it will be too late to save you. Your symptoms are entirely consistent with a heart attack, so let's get you to hospital as soon as possible."

Not only are increasingly frantic climate scientists producing exhaustive reports warning us about what is happening, we are also now

experiencing weather events first-hand that are entirely consistent with extremely serious climate change.



CHRISTEL YARDLEY/STUFF

Shearers feel the heat as Te Kuiti had a record high of 33.33 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.

It is time for every single one of us to use the current heatwave to get deadly serious about climate change action. The Government is acting, but because of the major changes that need to take place, it can only proceed at a pace consistent with demands from the public.

So next time someone comments on the warm weather, I think my response is going to be: "Well, this heatwave is actually very worrying and consistent with extremely serious climate change. The problem, of course, is not Wellington getting a little warmer.

"The problem is what happens when temperatures in India, for instance, spike up to insane levels. Or when the temperatures over Antarctica and the Arctic rise further and melt more of the ice caps. Or, heaven forbid, when 24 million Aussies turn up saying, 'She's a bit hot back home, mate, we've run out of Eskies to put the kangaroos in'. So what I've done in the last week to make progress on climate change is ... what are you planning to do this coming week?"



DAVID WALKER/STUFF

Beachgoers at New Brighton, Christchurch, on Wednesday.

So let's all get moving much faster and much more seriously. And once we are doing more things ourselves, and pushing for more at the political and business level, there is absolutely no reason why we can't bike around to Oriental Bay, or get down to Petone beach for a swim in the warm evenings.

** Dr Paul Duignan is an honorary research fellow at Massey University, a psychologist, outcomes measurement specialist and tech entrepreneur. <http://parkerduignan.com/pwd>*

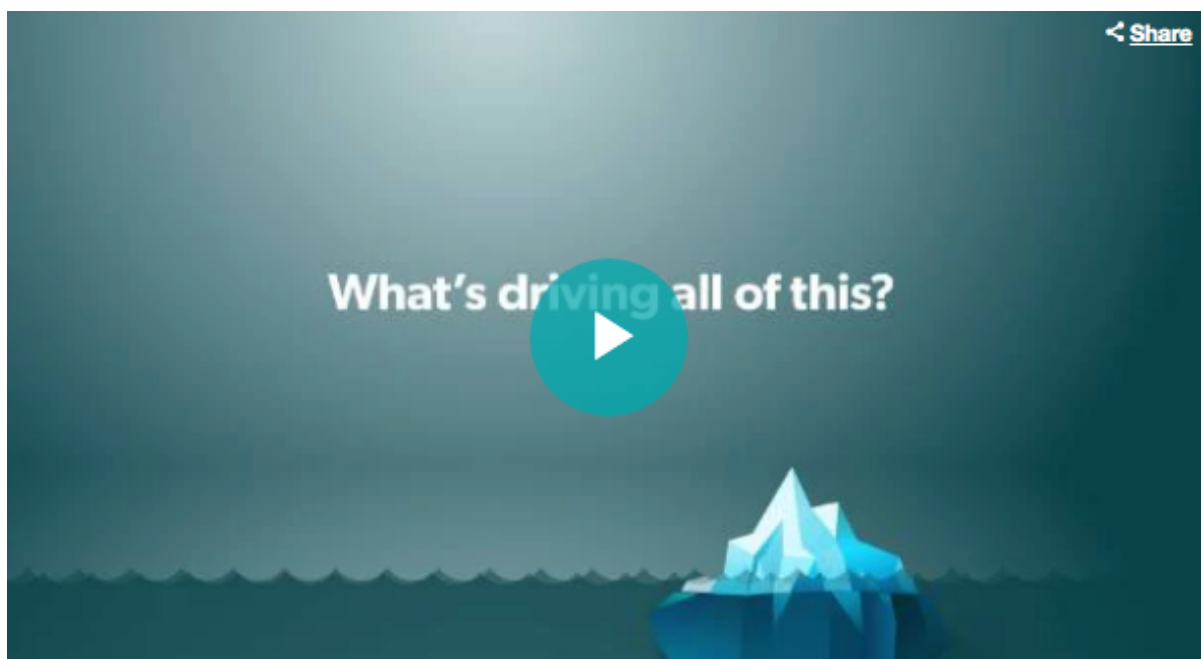
1

Forget the climate doom and gloom - it's time to be positive

Paul Duignan and Kena Duignan 05:00, Nov 29 2018

The Dominion Post

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/108923058/forget-the-climate-doom-and-gloom--its-time-to-be-positive>



AARON WOOD/STUFF

Why exactly are "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes" needed to combat climate change? Here are the facts.

OPINION: In every action movie there's always the moment when the hero makes an inspiring speech to the assembled troops or, having made a plan and geared up, finally "goes in".

Think Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*, or Sigourney Weaver in *Aliens*.

This is where climate action is now. A few weekends ago, we participated with 200 other people in the Wellington Climathon Challenge. It was a 24-hour frenzy at which groups of people around the world come up with startup ideas for climate change action. Our group was working on building a generic DoView visual strategy model of how a city can get on top of climate change, for use by cities around the world. There were heaps of other wonderful ideas.

It was positive, it was fun, it was exciting, it was inspiring. It is the future.

We realise that people sometimes find themselves a tad gloomy about climate change news, but look at it this way: we are really lucky that climate change is hitting at this particular moment in human history.



Sigourney Weaver gears up in *Aliens*. This is where we're at in climate change policy right now.

Dip into the hundreds of pages of amazingly detailed hardcore science in the latest IPCC report. It's a magnificent tribute to the legions of climate scientists who have camped out in Antarctica, fired satellites into space,

and crouched at supercomputers to tell us exactly what's happening and exactly what we need to do about it. Imagine what it would be like to be flying blind, trying to grapple with this beast, 100 years ago with no satellites and no supercomputers to help us.

And it's not just satellites and supercomputers. Technology has put us in a fantastic position to deal with the radical steps we will no doubt need to take on climate change.

Let's do a thought experiment. Say, disruptive though it would be, we decided that we needed to turn off passenger air travel tomorrow. Would it be the end of the world as we know it? Because of technology, every couple of days we Skype family living in the United States. Imagine if you turned off passenger air travel and poured just some of the US\$700 billion spent on air transport each year into truly immersive and seamless video conferencing. Would we really be that much worse off? No jet lag, not having to sit next to that guy with BO for 12 hours, and not having to line up in those security queues?



SUPPLIED

Mel Gibson in Braveheart. We need to similarly motivate the troops for the battle ahead.

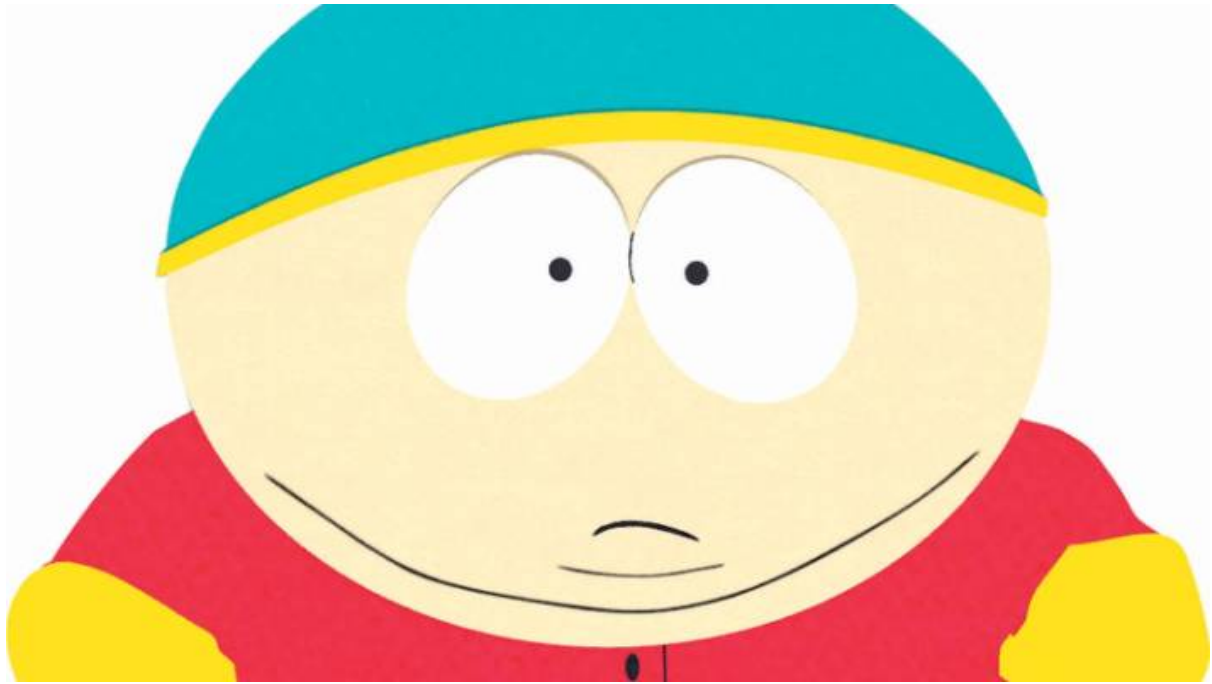
How lucky is it that, at the very moment when we are trying to reduce people's carbon footprints, more and more of us are content to sit most of

the day in a small room? Just moving our eyeballs and pecking away now and then at our keyboard or Xbox controller.

And the innovation and rollout of technology directly focused on climate change is amazing. This year, for the first time in history, renewables became cheaper than coal and oil. Electric cars drive up and down our streets. Solar panels spring up on our roofs. A team in the US is currently developing a way to suck carbon dioxide right out of the atmosphere and turn it into jet fuel.

Every day, a growing army of millions of people across the globe are busy contributing in one way or another to figuring out innovation and responses to climate change. We are now like an army of people running across a field all just focused on getting to the other side – a world where climate change is stabilised and we have a convivial sustainable society and economy.

Of course, there are still the groups of denialists, and some leaders who have not yet got with the programme. But the direction is so clear and so exciting that those of us who are now running are not even bothering with anyone who has not got it together enough to understand what is happening while we run past them creating the future. Even the stay-behinds are now starting to back off and will soon be joining us as they realise what is happening all around them.



When South Park apologises to Al Gore for mocking him about climate change, you know that attitudes are shifting.

For instance, *South Park* just had an episode apologising to Al Gore for mocking him about climate change. What, *South Park* apologising?

The IPCC says we have only got a decade or so to get this done. That doesn't seem very long, but think of the fact that Google opened its first office only 20 years ago. And now we could hardly function without it. We don't even know what climate change's Google moment will be yet. We just know that today is the day to start laying the path for it.

All that we are now focused on is the unlimited business, social enterprise and community possibilities that climate change means we can be involved in. And making sure that no-one, especially those of us who have the greatest need, is left behind.

So join the climate change Positivistas – there is not a moment left for any downer doom and gloom. Yes, of course it will be hard work, and we will need to do things in radically different ways. But let's all get Sigourney and Mel Gibsoned-up, get out there, and take this beast down.

** Dr Paul Duignan is an honorary research fellow at Massey University. Kena Duignan is the social innovative lead at Wesley Community Action, Wellington.*