

Scientist accepts 'cash for climate'

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A PROMINENT Australian scientist has rejected as offensive any suggestion he is doing the bidding of a US climate-sceptic think tank that is paying him a monthly fee.

Confidential documents leaked from inside The Heartland Institute, a wealthy think tank based in Chicago and Washington, detail strategy and funding for an array of activities designed to spread doubt about climate change science, paid for by companies that have a financial interest in continuing to release greenhouse gases without government interference.

The think tank has now issued a statement saying the strategy and budget documents had been stolen, and claiming one of them was faked.

"The stolen documents were obtained by an unknown person who fraudulently assumed the identity of a Heartland board member and persuaded a staff member here to re-send board materials to a new email address," the Heartland Institute said in a statement this morning.

Among the documents that Heartland does not claim to be faked, is a budget showing payments to selected scientists.

One of the recipients of funding is Professor Bob Carter of James Cook University, a geologist and marine researcher who spoke at the "convoys of no confidence" protests against the carbon price last year alongside the Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, and writes columns for News Ltd newspapers.

The documents show Professor Carter receives a "monthly payment" of \$US1667 (\$1550) as part of a program to pay "high-profile individuals who regularly and publicly counter the

alarmist [anthropogenic global warming] message".

Professor Carter did not deny he was being paid by The Heartland Institute, but would not confirm the amount, or if the think tank expected anything in return for its money.

"That suggestion is silly and offensive - a kindergarten level argument," Professor Carter told The Age.

"Institutions or organisations simply pay for services rendered - in the same way that an architect is paid for their work, so are scientists," he said. "What they may make any payment to me for, I'm not discussing with anybody outside of my family."

Altogether, more than \$US20 million had been spent funding and co-ordinating the activities of climate sceptics and bloggers since 2007, the documents suggest.

Other cash recipients include Anthony Watts, the leading US climate sceptic blogger, who is to receive \$US90,000 for his work this year. Programs slated for funding include new curriculum modules that teach science from a climate-sceptic perspective, to be sent to US schools.

The documents also set out some of the strategies that the Heartland Institute says it will pursue this year, one of which is a campaign to convince people that hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, for gas is safe and beneficial.

The plan says that, in 2010 and 2011, environmentalists "invented charges that fracking poses environmental and safety risks. The liberal media has uncritically reported these charges as though they were scientifically based, leading to pressure on national and state elected officials to ban or regulate the use of fracking".

This year, the document says Heartland would "approach dozens of companies and trade associations that are actively seeking allies in this battle."

The organisation's funding comes from 1800 donors, including many manufacturing and resources businesses, and also drug companies.

One anonymous donor has given a staggering \$US8.6 million to the think tank since 2007.

The documents were first published on a Canadian website, DeSmogBlog, which monitors the public relations efforts by some industry groups to discredit climate change science.

"An important message here is for the media to learn how to recognise this co-ordinated attack on science and to see through the PR pollution that Heartland and its network creates to cast doubt on climate change," said the website's executive director, Brendan DeMelle.

In its statement, the Heartland Institute apologised to its donors for allowing their identities to be revealed, and asked news organisations to stop linking to them.

"The individuals who have commented so far on these documents did not wait for Heartland to confirm or deny the authenticity of the documents," its statement said.

In fact the Herald sought comment from the Heartland Institute about the content and veracity of the documents yesterday, eight hours before the newspaper's deadline, and received no comment. Written questions sent to all 14 of the Heartland board members at 12.30pm yesterday are also yet to receive a response from the organisation.

View the original documents here

<http://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/scientist-accepts-cash-for-climate-20120215-1t7ho.html>

<http://www.desmogblog.com/heartland-insider-exposes-institute-s-budget-and-strategy>