

The author himself concedes that this may appear as a rather pessimistic view of the state of play. Perhaps the problem derives from where the analysis begins – in the realm of orthodox economic theory. Starting from there significantly limits where you can get to in understanding ecological concerns. There is an old joke that comes to mind in this context: one person, when asked in the street by a stranger about how to get to particular place, replies ‘well, if I wanted to get there, I wouldn’t start from here’...

Mark Diesendorf

Climate Action: a Campaign Manual for Greenhouse Solutions

UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, 256 pp., \$34.95.

This is a well-targeted book for concerned citizens who want to be personally active in confronting the challenge of climate change. The author is an environmental scientist who has had considerable experience with community and professional groups struggling for a more sustainable future. His approach is refreshingly ‘down to earth’, looking at what can usefully be done within the sphere of non-violent action to confront the corporate interests who would ‘put their profits before the planet’.

The book considers how these vested interests are in what he dubs the ‘greenhouse mafia’. It goes on to examine the fallacies they have advanced to justify inaction despite the emergent scientific consensus on global warming. Seventeen such fallacies are systematically reviewed and refuted. Diesendorf thereby provides powerful ammunition for activists who might otherwise not quite know how to respond.

The book also reviews what could be done in practice to produce more sustainable outcomes. It considers the array of policies that could help to reduce energy consumption, accelerate the switch to renewables, stabilise population growth and foster a socially just transition. A multi-pronged approach is advocated. Equally important is the author’s review of strategies and tactics for winning campaigns – developing goals, organising groups, forming coalitions using the media, taking non-violent direct action, and so on. No environmental activist can afford to ignore the issues that this very readable book addresses.