

Preface

Official Australian health statistics predict that a million of us will get bowel cancer¹ during our lifetime and a third of us won't know we have it until we are rushed to hospital with a ruptured or totally obstructed bowel. Some 20% of these emergency cases will be dead in a matter of weeks or months. A ruptured bowel spreads fecal contamination through your abdominal cavity and infection can then spread, via your blood, to any organ in your body.

The 2007 *Food, Nutrition and the Prevention of Cancer* (FNPC) report by the *World Cancer Research Fund* (WCRF) is the most thorough review of the scientific evidence relating to lifestyle, nutrition and cancer for a decade. It has over 150 contributing scientific authors, including experts from the *Cancer Council Australia* (CCA). Its judgement was absolutely clear. There were no ifs, no buts, and no caveats — red and processed meat cause bowel cancer. The report was equally clear that this isn't a “statistical association”, but causality. Alcohol was the only other “food” which it considered had convincingly been shown to cause cancer, not just bowel cancer, but a range of other cancers.

Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW), the official keeper of Australia's health statistics, calculates that alcohol causes about 3,000 new cases of cancer annually. Scientists from the biggest Australian study into nutrition, lifestyle and cancer at the Victorian Cancer Council calculate, based on data from that study together with the judgement about red and processed meat from the WCRF, that about half of all cases of bowel cancer are attributable to eating more than one red

¹bowel cancer is also called *colorectal cancer*, both terms are used interchangeably throughout this book.

meat serve² per week. This is 6,000 new cases annually. This is half a million of today's Australians getting cancer due to those extra serves.

Australia's top scientific research organisation, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), beginning in 2005, has sold over a million copies of a diet book, the *Total Wellbeing Diet* (TWD), telling people to eat large amounts of lean red meat. It was advertised as not *just* a diet book, but a "... *healthy eating plan for life*." The CSIRO Board was informed in 2006, by its own staff, that high red meat diets increased bowel cancer, but nevertheless allowed a second edition (**Book 2**) of the best seller to be published under CSIRO's name, explicitly telling people that red meat was not a significant risk factor for bowel cancer.

Perfidy is about that diet and about that "healthy eating plan for life". It will show that the best available scientific evidence is that CSIRO has made a major nutritional blunder. But more than that, the book will also show that the diet and lifetime eating plan are the height of environmental irresponsibility — a fundamental breach of the CSIRO's duty of care.

The core foods in CSIRO's TWD are red and processed meat, dairy foods and fish. Australia's livestock, primarily sheep and cattle, generate methane, a potent greenhouse gas. The methane from our livestock creates more warming than all of our coal fired power stations and the dairy industry uses more irrigation water than any other industry in Australia. It uses far more than rice or cotton. A CSIRO report, published the year before the initial TWD launch, calculated that the dairy industry used 9 times more water from the Murray Darling Basin than the fruit and vegetable industries combined. With ocean fisheries under stress everywhere, Australia already imports 55% of the fish we consume from someone else's ocean, but TWD recommends double the average fish consumption. If you were trying to accelerate global warming, kill the Murray Darling river system and drive ocean fisheries further into decline, you would have a tough time coming up with anything more damaging than CSIRO's TWD.

²Almost all epidemiological studies regard pig meat as red meat — but processed (preserved) meat is often made from pig meat.

I need to say explicitly that this book isn't an attack on TWD authors — Manny Noakes and Peter Clifton. There will be some criticisms, certainly. But nothing more than is common in scientific circles. These people are researchers, and like all good researchers they are obsessive, driven people. The serious criticisms in this book are directed at CSIRO management. Indeed, without faith in the accuracy with which Manny Noakes and Peter Clifton report their research results in peer reviewed literature, some of my criticisms of CSIRO would fail. I can only say that the diet was singularly unimpressive because I believe their research reports are an accurate reflection of the results. In large scientific organisations, it is the role of managers to keep a sense of perspective and look at the big picture. In any large research organisation, the research of many scientists will end in a dead end. These “failures” are an expensive but valuable and important part of research. The CSIRO high protein diet research succeeded in showing that high protein diets are, at best, totally unimpressive and absolutely ordinary. This is worth knowing.

But CSIRO, as an organisation, learned nothing. It didn't consider the big picture, it didn't consider what other researchers in its various environment research programs were telling it. It even ignored what its specialist bowel cancer researchers were telling it. It ignored a truckload of problems and threw the full corporate resources of the organisation into its goal of turning an ordinary diet centered around a dangerous food into a best seller to enhance the corporate brand. The best selling CSIRO *Total Wellbeing Diet* was, and is, a corporate production and a corporate failure. In a strong field, it is easily the most environmentally destructive popular diet on the planet. Why is it more destructive than the Atkins diet? The answer will surprise many — read on.

This book is about the *Total Wellbeing Diet* in the broadest sense. It is about why it succeeded in the marketplace after failing in the research lab. It is about global warming and will explain some science all too often ignored by both mass media and climate change activists alike. It is about methane, and again, the science may surprise you. Surprising or not, the global warming science in this book is absolutely mainstream with much of it coming from the decades of work by the US *National Aeronautics and Space Administration* (NASA) team led

by James Hansen. Over the past 12 months, Barry Brook, Professor of Climate Change at Adelaide University, has been gracious enough to co-author a couple of articles with me about methane and global warming. I need, unashamedly, to drop his name in this preface to persuade you that some of the more surprising statements in this book relating to methane and warming are absolutely rock solid mainstream science.

During the last 18 months, we have seen calls from the head of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC), Rajendra Pachauri, for a global reduction in the consumption of meat to help in the fight against global warming. James Hansen has echoed these with a call of his own, as well as a statement that he is following his own advice and is now 80-90% vegetarian. These calls are in addition to a major paper in the prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*, with authors including leading Australian epidemiologist Professor Tony McMichael, also calling for significant global reductions in meat production on both health and environmental grounds. Hopefully, CSIRO will follow these leads and issue a total recall of the *Total Wellbeing Diet* accompanied by a full and public apology to the Australian people.

Lastly, Australia's red meat producers will probably not be big readers of this book. If any of you are reading, then you need to see Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. Not just for its information on climate change, but for the gut-wrenching section where Gore's sister Nancy dies of lung cancer and the family sees, first hand, the fruits of its tobacco business. Similarly, your families are getting bowel cancer, just like other Australians, and you will eventually understand that your industry is exactly where the tobacco industry was 20 or 30 years ago — but with the added burden of climate change to deal with. You need to work with Government to steeply downsize your industries in a rapid, but organised and humane manner. The vicious crash of the sheep industry under market forces since 1990 is a perfect example of the *wrong* way to down-size an industry. When the writing is on the wall, it only increases the pain and suffering to ignore it.

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