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Using nanotechnology to 're-engineer' our environment? With federal funding??

'Geo-engineering' is the ultimate in pursuit of high risk 'techno-fixes' to the world's big ecological problems. Its proponents want to use technology to attempt to 're-engineer' the environment, for example by fertilising the ocean to produce huge algal blooms that supposedly will absorb carbon dioxide, or by polluting the upper atmosphere with nanoparticles in an attempt to deflect UV radiation and stop global warming. **191 countries recently rejected geo-engineering** as environmentally reckless. But this week an **announcement for the Australian Government's "Climate Ready Program"** suggested that geo-engineering projects using genetic engineering or nanotechnology may be eligible for federal funding. [Click here](#) for a thorough report of the field of geo-engineering from the ETC Group.

Geo-engineering took a blow in June when 191 countries, through the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), supported a de facto moratorium on ocean fertilisation. But this was no thanks to efforts from the Australian Government. **Reuters reports** that Australia, China and Brazil blocked the moratorium until the 11th hour. Australia's support for geo-engineering was despite several companies planning to dump large quantities of tiny, perhaps nanoscale, iron filings into the ocean to produce algal blooms that could supposedly suck up carbon dioxide - enabling the companies to claim carbon credits worth millions of dollars.

The **June 12 issue of "New Scientist"** notes that concerns about the huge environmental risks of ocean fertilisation proved prescient. A researcher from the University of California, Santa Cruz, has recently presented findings that in the ocean, iron encourages the growth of large populations of some algae species that produce domoic acid - a potent neurotoxin. German Environment Minister and **CBD president Sigmar Gabrielle told Reuters**, "It's a very strange idea that technology can solve everything. It's very risky and shows what humans are ready to do. I'm glad we came to a de facto moratorium."

Despite this high-level denouncement of geo-engineering, yesterday's release from Innovation Minister Carr suggests the Australian government is open to funding geo-engineering projects that use genetic engineering or nanotechnology. It advertises "grants from \$50,000 to \$5 million for the costs of research and development, proof-of-concept and early-stage commercialisation activities in eligible projects". Among other areas, applications are invited that "us[e] biotechnology or nanotechnology to address the effects of climate change on humans and the environment..."

Friends of the Earth is extremely concerned that environmentally risky technologies like genetic engineering and nanotechnology are being given the green light for fast track commercialisation in the name of responding to climate change. We are even more concerned that the federal government is open to funding nanotechnology-enabled 'geo-engineering' projects - like that for which the UN's CBD has called for a moratorium.

Please email **Environment Minister Peter Garrett** and **Innovation Minister Kim Carr**. Let them know that you don't want any public money supporting high risk geo-engineering using nanotechnology or genetic engineering, and that you don't want any intentional release of nanomaterials into the environment until thorough research can demonstrate environmental safety.

Environment Minister Peter Garrett: peter.garrett.mp@aph.gov.au
 Innovation Minister Senator Kim Carr: senator.carr@aph.gov.au

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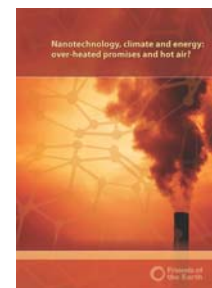
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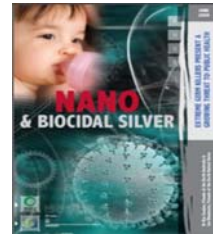
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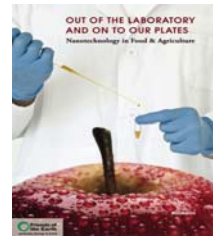
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