

In the heat of battle

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A judge has thrown out a legal challenge by climate change sceptics, which accused Government scientists of manipulating data. Catherine Masters examines the fallout.

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Others in the science world and a large group of doctors are delighted with Justice Venning's ruling.

The New Zealand Climate and Health Council, which says it has 150 medical professionals as members, said groups like the Climate Science Coalition were "still peddling lies that kill, they are delaying action essential to protect human health".

Council spokesman, oncologist and Auckland University lecturer Dr George Laking told the Weekend Herald the court case was "a pretty sorry chapter" in New Zealand's history.

Human-induced climate change is the number one threat to health this century, he says, and the approach of the sceptics is "incredibly, incredibly irresponsible".

Health risks would begin with injury from heatwaves and storms, go through more tropical illnesses and then impact with threatened food supplies and political instability.

"It's pretty basic stuff. Currently we think of health as cancer and other chronic conditions. But longer term, what we're talking about is pretty basic stuff relevant to people's health, like whether there's a food supply."

Laking believes the sceptics have done damage and affected policy, saying the provisions of the Emissions Trading Scheme have again been watered down, and thinks that because the potential consequences of global warming are so scary it is easier for some to believe it is not happening.

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See http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10834154 for the full article.