



Environmental future the hot topic as experts attempt to tackle climate change concerns

A global warming warning delivered

By **GARY THOMPSON**

IT was 6.45am yesterday and about 150 engineers had gathered at Gladstone's Rydges Hotel to hear science journalist and broadcaster Robyn Williams.

He was in the city to deliver the breakfast address to the Engineers Australia Central Region Conference staged once every three years in Gladstone.

The conference was themed "Dealing with an Inconvenient Future" and was aimed at exploring the changing nature of engineering and industry that will result from the community, corporate and government response to climate change as well as the role that engineers can play in shaping that future.

He said his role as a journalist was to report the science that supported the theory behind global warming.

He also said scientists tended to understate the problem and are more likely



Robyn Williams.

to be restrained about the subject of global warming because the public tend to lose interest.

Such was the case now as the importance of the subject in the public's mind had dropped down the list of priorities.

A Lowy Institute survey has found that climate change has dropped from first to fifth in public consciousness.

The prospect of global warming, a phrase which Mr

Williams refers to as a cliché now because of its constant use, was first raised after Dr Carl Sagan did a study into the planet Venus almost 40 years ago.

Since that time the science had been growing to a stage now where the debate is over

He said the very best of

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— Science journalist and broadcaster Robyn Williams

science now claims climate change as fact.

Likening the capacity of the world to respond to crises as it has to the all consuming recent financial storm he said

“if we had 5% of the \$700 billion raised to bail the banking system in the last four days there would not be a problem now.”

When it comes to renewable energies, the possibility of drawing power from various sources that are not carbon emitters adds up to more than 230% of our needs and that for the price of a cup of coffee each day the United States could reduce its carbon emissions by 90% cent by the year 2030.

Solar thermal technology will have an acceleration component akin to that of the information technology (IT) revolution and will in 20 years have the capacity to provide 100% of energy needs.

In Western Australia, a small company known as the Carnegie Corporation has harnessed wave power with a system of generation attached to the sea bed that when operational sometime after 2010 will produce 50 megawatts of electricity or about enough power to power 30,000 households.