

# Quadrant Online

<http://www.quadrant.org.au/blogs/doomed-planet/2011/01/climate-looters>

## Doomed Planet

*"Today's debate about global warming is essentially a debate about freedom. The environmentalists would like to mastermind each and every possible (and impossible) aspect of our lives."*

Vaclav Klaus  
Blue Planet in Green Shackles

### Climate looters

by **Walter Starck**

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#### Climate alarmists join looters in exploiting flood tragedy

Disasters bring out the best and worst in humanity. For most, it's a time to set aside petty differences and unite in a common cause. Altruism becomes the norm and genuine heroism common. For a rancid few, however, the temptation to take advantage of tragedy and chaos cannot be resisted. As always, the recent floods have been accompanied by a smattering of looting and price gouging amidst overwhelming acts of selflessness.

Nor has the looting been restricted to property and purse. Some have seized the chance to blame climate change and push the alarmist agenda. They are what might aptly be described as climate looters. To their credit, the majority of proponents of global warming have not attempted to claim the floods as due to human induced climate change. However, for a few it seems the temptation was too great to resist and, as might now be expected, the media have afforded them prominent coverage. Also not unexpectedly, the ABC has been prominent in propagating this blatant alarmist opportunism.

Interestingly, both here and overseas the alarmists who have attempted to promote the idea that these floods are due to human induced climate change have taken such a noticeably similar line of presentation one might be forgiven the impression they were following an agreed upon approach. They first cite a brief disclaimer stating that the cause of individual weather events such as this cannot be known with certainty. This is immediately followed with the suggestion that, of course, increasing incidence of extreme weather events is exactly what we should expect from climate change. The remainder of the discussion then accords with the assumption that this is the cause.

The ABC was a first responder along this line in a news [story](#) dated Friday, December 31, 2010 and titled, "**Climate expert says more extreme weather likely**". To assure the viewer received the desired message it was helpfully sub-titled, "*Nobel prize-winning scientist David Karoly says Australia's current extreme weather is evidence of climate change.*"

This was followed up by a similar item on the Midday Report of 20 January 2010. This one featured Prof. Matthew England of the UNSW Climate Change Centre speculating on the role of CO<sub>2</sub> in the floods.

Not to be outdone by the similarly named Oz network, the American ABC ran a similar [story](#) on 13 January. In this one Derek Arndt of the NOAA National Climatic Data Center and Richard Somerville from Scripps, UCSD were interviewed. This report went for a Hat Trick in which the floods here, in Sri Lanka and in Brazil were all attributed to GW with the recent blizzards in the U.S. tagged on for added impact.

Another [example](#) in the same vein appeared in *The Australian* of 11 January. It featured an interview with Professor Will Steffen, the executive director of the ANU Climate Change Institute. In it he said, "...there was no direct link between global warming and the tragic flash flooding in Toowoomba...."; but, then went on to say that climate change would lead to heavier, more frequent rain. However, the headline was, "Global warming will cause further extreme weather patterns, climate change chief says" and the subtitle, "*ONE of Julia Gillard's top climate change advisers has warned that global warming may cause more extreme rain events.*"

As to any possible merit to these claims, let's briefly consider but a few important facts. The Bureau of Meteorology has posted on its website a most interesting [document](#) entitled, "*Known Floods in the Brisbane & Bremer River Basin, including the Cities of Brisbane and Ipswich*". For Brisbane it shows 10 previous major floods since 1840. Eight of these were in the 60 years from 1840 to 1900. Six of these were higher than the current flood. The record for Ipswich shows 21 major floods with 9 between 1840 to 1900 and the longest period free of major floods being the past two decades. If an increasing greenhouse effect is having any influence on the frequency and height of floods in this region it would seem we might benefit from more of it.

Another most important consideration with regard to the frequency and intensity of floods in this area is the major and now well documented influence of natural climatic cycles, specifically El Niño/La Niña and the Inter-decadal Pacific Oscillation (IPO). In particular Dr. Stewart Franks and colleagues from the Newcastle University School of Engineering have published a series of studies on this. They have clearly demonstrated a strong correlation between the frequency of severe flooding and La Niña events occurring in the negative (cooler) phase of the IPO. As the phase length of the IPO is about 3 decades and the positive (warmer) phase has just recently ended, it should be expected that over the next few decades increased flooding is likely. (For more on these studies click [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).) For a recent (24 January) ABC radio interview with Dr. Franks click [here](#).

Despite multiple publications in peer reviewed journals, the climate alarmists must be either unaware of this whole body of highly relevant work or have chosen to not mention it. It would seem that if their expertise is not lacking, their honesty must be. The only apparent reason for ignoring key evidence offering significant capacity to predict the broad pattern of frequency in flooding events is that it is founded on natural cycles and thus does not support the claims of the climate alarmists.

The attempt to attribute these floods to global warming is only a rerun of a similar attempt with tropical cyclones after hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Since then several years of below average storm activity plus statistical studies showing no recent trend of increase have left the warmists looking for a new alarm. The floods have provided it, if they can just insert GW as the suggested cause and keep ENSO/IPO unmentioned.

At least with politicians the matter of ignorance or dishonesty tends to be easier to decide. Usually it is both. In the matter of the floods, leader of the Greens, Bob Brown, has provided a generous example in proposing that the coal companies be forced to pay the cost. He apparently accepts as unquestionable fact that their possible contribution of about one hundredth of a °C to global temperature over the past century is the sole cause of the floods and that those of us who travel in vehicles, use electricity and eat food are entirely blameless.

That the coal mining companies are a critical element in our economy and have themselves suffered several billion dollars in losses from the floods would appear to have escaped his awareness. His longer term aim of closing down coal mining entirely is equally dim-witted. As Australia supplies about 52% of world exports of metallurgical coal, cutting off this source would pose a critical threat to China and might well make it seem necessary to them to take action to secure ongoing supplies. Presumably Mr. Brown may be looking forward to a green retirement working in the rice paddies of Aodaliya province.

While on the topic of muddled thinking by politicians, Prime Minister Gillard had already pre-empted herself in this respect with carbon and resource taxes already proposed. However, not wanting to miss out on an opportunity for another tax, she has come up with the idea of a flood levy. This not very bright idea should have a healthy depressing effect on the voluntary outpouring of help from the private sector. Contributors now need to consider how much they can afford to give if they are also going to be forced by the government to stand and deliver at tax time. After the debacle over the ill-conceived profit penalty on mining, one might have expected a few more minutes thought would be given before stumbling into another tax quagmire.

Regardless of all this, for GW to remain credible temperature must keep increasing. It's pretty hard to sell catastrophic warming when millions of people all over the world are suffering from bitterly cold weather. At this point all we have is a purported 0.7°C increase in average global surface temperature over the past century. This is about the same increase as may be encountered in moving a hundred miles closer to the equator or while eating breakfast on many mornings. It is, however, not nearly so certain.

The global temperature record is fraught with multiple uncertainties. These include poorly maintained and badly sited stations, an increasing sampling bias in favour of urban over rural weather stations and unexplained "adjustments" to data. All of these have contributed to warmer readings over time irrespective of any change in the actual climate. Not only is the margin of uncertainty larger than the purported warming, but there is also no means to determine what portion of any warming trend might be due to natural variability and what, if any, is due to human influence. Worse yet, there is good reason to suspect that much, if not all, of the claimed warming trend is an artefact of deliberate selection and manipulation of data such as has been found to have occurred in the fabrication of the infamous hockey stick graph and just recently in the New Zealand national temperature records.

Although the claimed warming is highly uncertain, the unadjusted raw data from numerous rural stations demonstrate no clear warming trend and those from urban areas show a distinct warming with increasing urban growth. Whatever contribution increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> might be having on a global scale, it must surely be very small.

The expenditure on and level of concern about climate change has been out of all proportion to the barely detectable and highly uncertain warming trend of the past century. Attention and resources have been diverted from the very real and dangerous natural variables and events of climate. It has also distracted from the far more urgent political and economic problems now threatening most developed nations. It is time we take a deep breath, get a grip on ourselves and start to reconsider what should be our most urgent priorities. It is also time to begin exercising some healthy disregard for unverified computer models, priggish academics claiming to be experts, ill-informed concerns of urban greens over things they know nothing about and the self-righteous bleatings of sundry activists who presume to know better than we do about how we should conduct our own lives.

It is past time to start waking up to the proliferation of bureaucracy and development of the nanny state with accelerating loss of personal rights and freedoms along with the subverting of the constitution and other fundamental legal guarantees.

Even more imminent is the situation of our food supply as more and more primary producers are finding it impossible to continue operating under the increasing costs, restrictions and demands being imposed by government while at the same time coping with nature and being squeezed unmercifully on prices by a market oligopoly.

As for the recent floods, regardless of cause, they pose several important matters warranting careful consideration. Among these are:

- Dams for flood mitigation need to be maintained at low water levels. Those for water supply need to be kept as full as possible. To achieve both purposes, more dams are going to be required.
- Where houses and buildings have suffered total or near total constructive loss, the advisability of rebuilding should be considered. Having now entered into the negative phase of the IPO we should expect a probability of more such floods over the next two to three decades. It may be wise to limit use of such land to parks, market gardens or other purposes for which a flood is not such a disaster.
- In many areas the damage to homes could be avoided by elevating them 2.5 – 3m. This adds little to the cost of new homes and is possible at moderate cost with many old ones. It also affords a large expansion of undercover area useful for a variety of purposes for which an occasional inundation is not a catastrophe.
- In the 1974 flood average house prices were in the neighbourhood of \$25,000. Now they are closer to \$500,000. Insurance losses will be huge. Many owners without insurance may not be able to afford to rebuild and new buyers may be reluctant to buy into this situation. Lenders are also likely to be hesitant to lend without flood insurance and, if available, it will be much more expensive.
- Rather than trying to accommodate the bulk of future growth by expansion of the existing major cities, it might be a good time to start thinking about encouraging the development of a few new ones. The undeveloped land and suitable sites are available. Cheap land, tax incentives and a bit of relief from mindless bureaucracy would assure a booming development.

The leading scientific proponents of catastrophic climate change have overwhelmingly been researchers benefiting from generous funding for climate research and those whose prominence and authority have been founded on climate alarmism. The so-called "science" of climate change has been tainted by revelations of selective use of evidence, ignoring of conflicting evidence, unexplained manipulations of data, refusal to make data available for critical examination, false claims of consensus, self-proclaimed authority, gross exaggerations and even outright fabrications. Anyone who has dared to dissent has been subjected to personal denigration. This situation has grown into a deep and systemic corruption of climate science with considerable collateral damage to the credibility of science itself.

Over the past year increasing public awareness of this corruption has resulted in a strong reversal in public opinion regarding the credibility and seriousness of anthropogenic climate change. This has been accompanied by a massive loss in political traction. The pathetic attempt by climate alarmists to try to use the floods to revive attention and credibility smacks of desperation. No shred of credible evidence exists to indicate a causal relationship between any extreme weather events and anthropogenic climate change and there is no evidence for any increase in the frequency or intensity of such events which is outside the bounds of historical variability.

The entire developed world is now suffering from a systemic economic malaise. This is already critical and promises only to become worse. The fantasy of clean green renewable energy is a delusion we cannot afford. In actual practice it has proven to be not nearly so friendly as imagined. It has also proved to be too costly, meagre and inconsistent to be a viable solution to our energy needs. The ongoing push to squander billions of dollars and sacrifice our economies on the altar of climate change is dangerous nonsense. Like sundry other isms, Climatism is a triumph of belief over evidence, of righteousness over reason. Whether the prophets of this one are destined to be rendered into harmless fools or dangerous fanatics ultimately depends upon the power we accord them.



