

Hal Colebatch and Climate Change

There's a danger in getting kicked in the head by a kangaroo.

I am indebted to blogger [Tim Blair](#) for pointing out one of the most deranged pieces of science-fiction masquerading as journalism about Australia I have yet read, "[Climate Change and the End of Australia](#)," by someone called Jeff Goodell in *Rolling Stone* magazine.

The article runs to nearly 7,000 ill-informed, panic-mongering words, but I will spare you all but the gist of it. It may stand as a neat, clinical example of eco-apocalypse-mongering, eco-nutty hysteria, bad research, and the eco-left's divorce from cognitive reality.

Under the shrieking headline "Climate Change and the End of Australia" the article demands: "Want to know what global warming has in store for us? Just go to Australia, where rivers are drying up, reefs are dying, and fires and floods are ravaging the continent ..."

It goes on: "I have come to Australia to see what a global-warming future holds for this most vulnerable of nations ..."

Of all the world's nations, *Australia* is the "most vulnerable"? More vulnerable than, say, Egypt, completely dependent on the Nile? Or Holland, much of which is below sea level and is vulnerable to floods? Or that darling of the ecological doom brigade, the allegedly sinking Maldives? The article goes on to invoke: "The sense that Australia -- which maintains one of the highest per-capita carbon footprints on the planet -- has summoned up the wrath of the climate gods is everywhere."

Climate gods? In my years as science and environment roundsman for a metropolitan Australian paper, I thought I'd heard every conceivable specimen of ecological idiocy, hysteria, and junk-science, but climate gods are a new one. Somebody better get Richard Dawkins onto them. The talk of "per capita carbon footprints" is meaningless, since Australia has a very small population for its size.

"Australia is the canary in the coal mine," says David Karoly, a top climate researcher at the University of Melbourne. "What is happening in Australia now is similar to what we can expect to see in other places in the future."

Borrowing from Tim Blair, you mean, like the record wheat crops we are having at present? Goodell also claims to be able to read Australians' minds, claiming Yasi (a storm) "seems to embody the not-quite-conscious fears of Australians that their country may be doomed by global warming."

Further, he claims "The Murray-Darling Basin, which serves as the country's breadbasket, has suffered a decades-long drought, and what water is left is becoming increasingly salty and unusable, raising the question of whether Australia, long a major food exporter, will be able to feed itself in the coming decades."

This is total nonsense. The rainfall patterns of Australia have been studied continually since the country was first settled, and farmers, as elsewhere, know to farm within certain rainfall lines. A few months ago I went up the Murray River on a paddle-steamer. From the beginning, the great problem for Australian farmers has not been to grow enough food but to find markets for their surplus production.

"The oceans are getting warmer and more acidic, leading to the all-but-certain death of the Great Barrier Reef within 40 years."

The imminent demise of the Great Barrier Reef has been predicted with tedious regularity for more than a century. I've been there, too, and it looks quite healthy. If the oceans were getting warmer, this would actually promote coral growth.

"Homes along the Gold Coast are being swept away, koala bears [sic -- they are not bears] face extinction in the wild, and farmers, their crops shriveled by drought, are shooting themselves in despair."

Actually, farming conditions are the best they have been in 20 years.

Then we are warned: "What is likely to vanish -- or be transformed beyond recognition -- are many of the things we think of when we think of Australia: the barrier reef, the koalas ..."

It would certainly be interesting to see koalas "transformed beyond recognition."

I have mentioned twice before in these pages in the last few weeks that the Murdoch press is being targeted by the left and by the Australian Labor Government. By some strange coincidence the pattern is repeated here: "Murdoch's papers also failed to point out that the more coal the country burns and exports, the fiercer its hurricanes are likely to become."

The established connection between coal-burning and hurricanes is non-existent. Most of Australia's exported coal goes to China, anyway. The Murdoch press's coverage of environmental issues has been thorough and professional.

It has been calculated that Australia is responsible for just over 1 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, quite apart from the fact that carbon-dioxide is both harmless and vital to plant growth. We could probably do with a lot more of it.

Elsewhere I have quoted Oswald Spengler, writing in 1932. Yes, 1932, about 80 years ago: "In a few decades most of the great forests will have gone, to be turned into newsprint, and climatic changes have been ... thereby set afoot which imperil the land-economy of whole populations. Innumerable animal species have been extinguished ..."

The article concludes with the self-indulgent pretentiousness apparently inescapable in this type of writing: "We walk for a while, watching all the happy people strolling along the boardwalk and drinking wine in cafes and surfing the waves. The sun is shining, and everything is lovely. Too bad that it all has to go."

And in his report of the matter Tim Blair concludes: "Too bad he had to show up. Bye, [Jeff](#)."