
QUADRANT

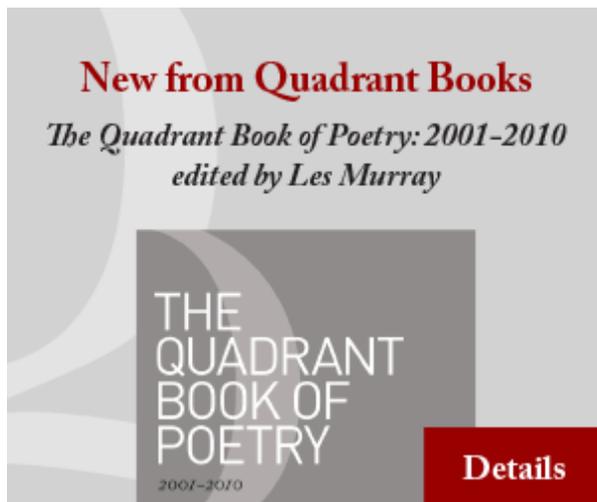
February 21st 2014 [print](#)

[Home](#) \ [Opinion](#) \ [Doomed Planet](#) \ Climate Science, How She Is Done

Tony Thomas

Climate Science, How She Is Done

A widely touted report detailing the current death toll from rising temperatures -- which aren't rising at all, just by the way -- is even more dubious than the provenance of the 14-year-old academic guesstimate on which the current alarms are based.



With the Australian Academy of Science's climate team now re-writing its 2010 booklet on dangerous climate change, it's time for a bit of investigation. The original, 24-page booklet went out to nearly a million users, mainly schoolkids and teachers, so the current re-writing team has a heavy responsibility to treat the climate controversies fairly.

The Academy's then-president, Kurt Lambeck, had gone cap in hand to the Department of Climate Change for funding of the first edition, walking away with \$55,000. Sorry, Kurt, not a good look.

The 2010 document, by a working group of two AAS Fellows (Dr John Church and Dr Mike Raupach, co-chair), and seven non-Fellows brought in to lend a hand, often lapsed into

advocacy, [as I discussed here](#). One of those was Professor David Karoly, one of Australia's most frequent climate-catastrophe publicists.

The 2010 document says the draft was “reviewed” by an Oversight Committee, of six Fellows and one non-Fellow. Asked who is re-writing and reviewing the 2014 version, the academy's PR person informed me,

“Both groups are the same as for the previous booklet, with the exception that Professor Garth Paltridge has withdrawn and his place taken by Professor Kurt Lambeck.” (Actually Paltridge, a highly-qualified sceptic, never ‘withdrew’. He wasn't asked to participate in the 2014 re-write).

In the case of Karoly, let's look at his handling of some internal business of the 2010 report. In mid-2011, [he published an essay](#) on the university/CSIRO-funded blog The Conversation. His essay was the 12th in a 13-part (no less) Conversation series, each an assault on climate sceptics. In the 13th essay, Karoly and other signatories endorsed the interesting claim that 140,000 people are being killed annually by climate change.

There seems a real risk that this improbable factoid could worm its way into the Academy's re-write, terrifying the schoolkids. In his essay, Karoly writes,

“This [2010 Academy] report was thoroughly reviewed by an independent Oversight Committee, comprised of a number of Fellows of the Academy and a well-known climate change sceptic.

They all approved the whole report, including its key conclusions:

- *“Global average temperature has increased over the last 100 years.”*
- *“Human activities are increasing greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere.”*
- *“It is very likely that most of the recent global warming is due to this increase in greenhouse gases.”*
- *“It is very likely there will be significant warming through the 21st century and beyond.”*
- *“Climate change will have significant impacts on our society and environment, both directly and by altering the impacts of other stresses.”*

Karoly's claim is quite specific — and checkable. Who was the lone sceptic on the AAS' “Independent Oversight Committee”? Clearly, AAS Fellow Dr Garth Paltridge, an atmospheric scientist. Paltridge was a chief research scientist of CSIRO's Atmospheric Research Division, and from 1990 until his retirement in 2002 he was director of Tasmania University's Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean Studies. He continues with honorary and visiting roles in atmospheric science.

According to Karoly, who ought to know, Paltridge endorsed the whole alarmist story of the AAS document. That endorsement might be taken by some to show how sound and persuasive the alarmist story is.

First check – a simple one: Where is Paltridge's name on the document's listing of its Oversight Committee members? Seven names are listed, but no mention of Paltridge. Strange. I emailed Paltridge in Hobart this week for clarification.

Paltridge agrees he is the sceptic referred to by Karoly, further noting that he has gone public, [including this recent Quadrant essay](#), with his sceptical views on the climate story — a breaking of ranks which he says is ‘not cricket’ in these days of political correctness. He observes that it is, generally speaking, a career-limiting move for anyone in government-funded climate research to voice scepticism too loudly “even within the restricted earshot of their own work colleagues.” His email continues,

“The then Academy President Dr Kurt Lambeck told the Oversight Committee members right at the start of the process that their role was to act purely as reviewers.

“We could advise, but not insist on, alterations to the content of the working committee’s document. We were to be the equivalent of normal reviewers of a manuscript submitted to a scientific journal. Normal reviewers of such things are anonymous – precisely because (among other things) a particular reviewer can object strongly to something in a manuscript while knowing and accepting that the editor might not take his advice. The reviewer would not be in danger of having his name publicly associated with a finally published research paper with which he is not happy.

“The idea of putting the names of the oversight committee members on the Academy’s climate document came out of the blue right towards the end of the review process. There could be no reason for the move other than it would expand the ‘impressiveness’ of the document in the minds of the public. It would enable advocates for the cause to imply exactly what Professor Karoly is now saying – namely, that a number of Fellows of the Academy, one of whom was a well-known sceptic, ‘all approved the whole report, including its key conclusions’.

“Suffice it to say that I refused to have my name put on the document. If I had known about the naming ploy early in the process, I would have been far less civilised (flexible?) in expressing opinions throughout the meeting.

“For the record, I would not have agreed then, and do not agree now, with three of the five “key conclusions” quoted by Professor Karoly – namely:

- *It is very likely that most of the recent global warming is due to this increase in greenhouse gases.*
- *It is very likely that there will be significant warming through the 21st century and beyond.*
- *Climate change will have significant impacts on our society and environment, both directly and by altering the impacts of other stresses.”*

Well, I’ll leave *Quadrant* readers to make up their own minds about Karoly’s narrative about his colleague Paltridge.

What of the claim by Dr Karoly and his team attributing 140,000 deaths a year from climate change? It seems inherently unlikely. Global temperatures in the past 100 years (ignoring dubious early temperature measurements and recent official adjustments), have risen 0.8degC. Of that, “the dominant cause” in the past half-century is “extremely likely” (IPCC) to be human activity, i.e. at most 0.41degC. That’s less than the difference in temperature between 11 am and 11.30 am in Melbourne on a recent mild day. And this 0.41deg rise is killing 140,000 people a year?

For the marvelous 140,000 annual death toll, the essay cites the World Health Organisation (WHO). Let's chase this rabbit down to its burrow.

First, who's who in WHO? WHO is just like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – it is run by the 194 member states of the UN, nearly half of them kleptocracies and corrupt dictatorships. WHO's current supremo is Australia's own Professor Jane Halton, long-time permanent head of the Federal Health Department. Her huge board includes reps from Albania, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Chad, Cuba, Iran, Lebanon, Nigeria, Panama, PNG, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Suriname and Uzbekistan. And the Maldives (pop 338,000).

Well of course the Maldives must have a seat! The Maldives is also a vice-chair of the top-level Bureau of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which wants the world to transfer trillions of dollars from the First World to phony Third World 'climate victims' like, well, the Maldives. With such a WHO board, any politico-climate publicity merits a sniff test.

So here we go. Karoly has signed on to The Conversation piece, co-authored by the celebrated ex-UWA psychology professor [Stephan Lewandowsky](#). The paper is generously titled "The false, the confused and the mendacious: how the media gets it wrong on climate change." Lewandowsky is also the author of the peer-reviewed survey last year published as "[NASA faked the moon landing—Therefore \(Climate\) Science is a Hoax: An Anatomy of the Motivated Rejection of Science.](#)" That is, Lewandowsky's 'proved' that sceptics are [conspiracy-believing moon-fakist loonies](#). These flat-earth types would include, presumably, avowed AGW sceptics Charles Duke and Harrison Schmitt, who actually walked on the moon in 1972.

Anyway, Lewandowsky, Karoly *et al* wrote,

Climate scientists are likewise motivated by the fact that climate change kills [140,000 people per year](#) right at this very moment, according to the World Health Organization.

Their reference clicks through to [a WHO "Fact Sheet"](#), which looks very sciencey. Specifically, the Fact Sheet says,

"Measuring the health effects from climate change can only be very approximate. Nevertheless, a WHO assessment, taking into account only a subset of the possible health impacts, concluded that the modest warming that has occurred since the 1970s was already causing over 140 000 excess deaths annually by the year 2004."

Strange, but deaths "by the year 2004" in the document have become to Lewandowsky, Karoly et al "right at this very moment, according to the World Health Organisation." In 2004, 2011, whatever. Whence did the WHO Fact Sheet get its 140,000 deaths in 2004? [It is footnoted as](#), "Global health risks: mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks. WHO, Geneva, 2009. "

In that study, the only basis for the climate-death number is a WHO Comparative Risk Assessment, published in 2004 and using data as at the year 2000. That 2000 work was led (with 11 assistants) by our very own climate mortality guru [Emeritus Professor Tony McMichael](#) of the ANU. Using a four-function calculator, WHO projected McMichael's results from 2000 to (sort of) establish climate mortalities in 2004.

Now, at last, we reach the rabbit's burrow: How did McMichael get his results in 2000? His study is a 106-page chapter, "Global Climate Change" in a 2200-page WHO compendium "[Comparative Quantification of Health Risks](#)".

McMichael cheerfully concedes his key climate figures are "at this stage, predominantly a model-based exercise ... rather than direct experience" (p1561). He also concedes that "little emphasis has been given to the validation of models relating climate change to health." (p1549). And concerning health, "several outcomes can only be estimated by crude adaptation of the outputs of available models."(p1556).

The 1999 Hadley Centre climate model McMichael used is the equivalent in today's terms of a T-Model Ford. McMichael believed it was 'validated by back-casting', i.e. while purportedly explaining past trends it had no track record in regard to forecasting (p1553).

His graph of the 1999 Hadley temperature forecast, based on business-as-usual CO2 emissions, shows rocketing temperatures after 2000 rising at about a 60-degree slope. The reality, we now know, has been a flat-line.

Even today, after mega-millions spent in tune-ups, the official climate models are still duds: [the IPCC says 111 out of 114](#) of them have overestimated temperatures from 1998-2012. (p769.)

McMichael conceded that he put all his eggs into one basket by trusting this 1999 Hadley model, rather than averaging a suite of independent models. (Although it's hard to see why the average of 10 unvalidated models is any more realistic than that derived from a single and unvalidated model).

For some reason, the key table in McMichael's study shows 166,000 climate-change deaths in 2000, rather than the later version of "over 140,000". McMichael's deaths are 77,000 from malnutrition, 47,000 from diarrhea, 27,000 from malaria, 12,000 from cardiovascular and 2000 (would you believe) from floods caused by sea-level rise attributable to climate change (p 1606). He mentions that climate change long term will create mental illnesses but doesn't factor that in to his year-2000 deaths (p 1583). He concludes,

"Considerable uncertainties surround these estimates. These stem partly from the complexity of climate models, partly from gaps in reliable data on which to base climate-health relationships, and, most importantly, from uncertainties around the degree to which current climate-health relationships will be modified by biological and socio-economic adaptation in the future." (p1545).

To sum up: The 140,000 annual death toll from climate change which Karoly and Lewandowsky cite is drawn from stuff cobbled together on the basis of 2000 estimates by McMichael and based on clumsy and unvalidated models for both climate and health.

Other disease specialists have given short shrift to the warming/disease linkages. An expert on malaria and dengue is medical entomologist Professor Paul Reiter at the Institut Pasteur in France. As [he emailed one IPCC stalwart](#), "In my field there is a lamentable dissemination of unsubstantiated statements that are not supported by any observations." Worth noting: McMichael cites Reiter five times in his study.

Six dengue fever researchers wrote in the *Medical Journal of Australia* in 2009 [a refutation that global warming would promote dengue fever](#), as claimed by McMichael, who has been broadcasting the health horrors of climate change for 20 years. In 1993 he wrote a book, *Planetary Overload: Global Environmental Change and the Health of the Human Species* which drew heavily on an early Greenpeace report on global warming, and put out the green message that environmental challenges require a massive ‘reordering of social values’.

McMichael then landed the job of heading the health chapter of the 1995 IPCC Report, and [according to fact-checker Donna Laframboise](#), he cut and pasted eight bits from his book into the IPCC Chapter. But he did not include his ‘selfie’ book among the 182 references he cited, she says.

In a review in May, 2010, McMichael was happy to endorse double or treble the 4-6degC IPCC warming forecasts (based on the IPCC’s non-performing models), [writing](#):

“To date, we have not had to think seriously about a foreseeable future world that is 10–12 °C warmer than today. However, as (the authors) point out, such temperature increases are not off the predictive scale if current trajectories continue and if full consequent global heating is realized over the next three centuries.”

Let us now draw all the threads together:

Professor Karoly, in his enthusiasm to destroy sceptics’ credibility, scores an own-goal by peddling an inaccurate account of his colleague Garth Paltridge’s role on the Academy of Science’s definitive booklet on climate change.

Karoly in the same series of essays endorses a bit of climate porn, claiming that 140,000 deaths a year from climate change are occurring. This claim is based on laughably crude modeling exercises, dating to 2000, by a fellow activist/scientist, Professor Tony McMichael.

Karoly is now assisting the Academy of Science to re-write its polemical booklet on the catastrophic global warming hypothesis, to be read, presumably, by further legions of Australian schoolkids.

Notwithstanding all these efforts by Karoly and the Academy, [the CSIRO this month ascertained by survey](#) that in July-August 2013 (during tenure of the Labor government and the six years of heavily funded climate propaganda it fostered):

- Australians ranked climate change 14th out of 16 concerns, the list being led by health (1) and living costs (2).
- Less than half of all Australians (47.3%) thought climate change was happening and humans were causing it.

You have to feel a bit sorry for Karoly and the Academy.

Tony Thomas has been a journalist for 50 years. He blogs at tthomas061.wordpress.com

