INCREASING NUMBER AND SEVERITY OF STORMS?

We are inundated with stories of increased numbers and severity of storms in Australia and the rest of the World. Accepting alarmist stories like this, without critical thought, encourages everyone to use their vivid imagination and to then see storms everywhere – some even under our beds.

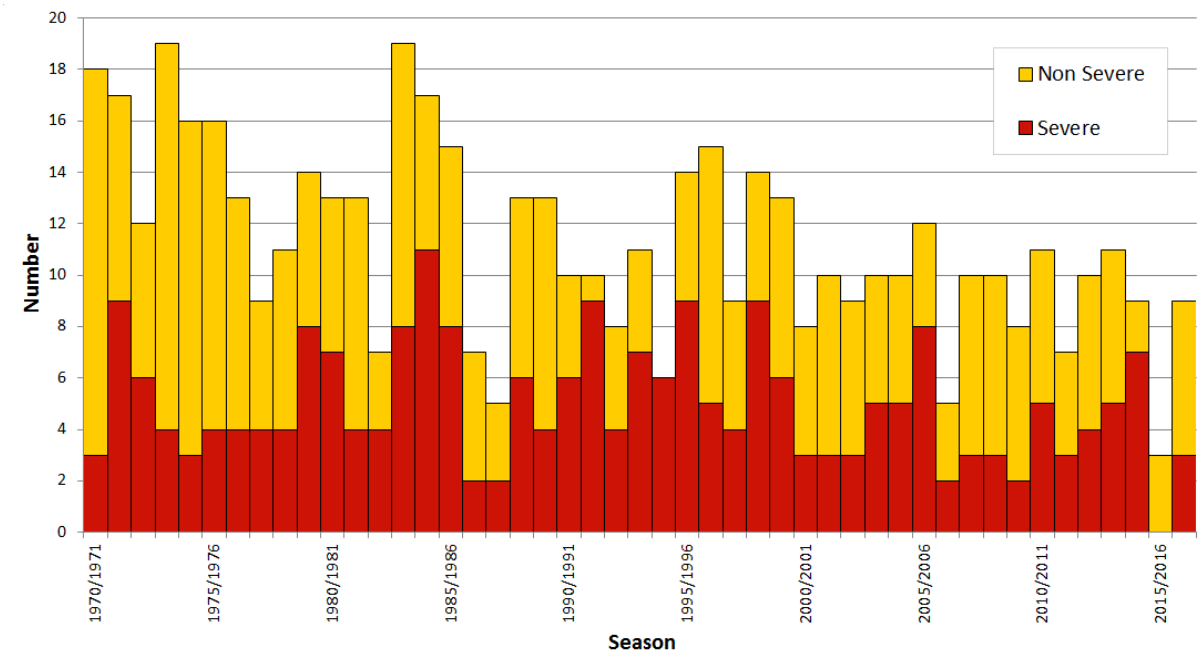
Remember we did have a multi-decade period of warming from 1970-1998 so, if the Greens' theory was solid, one would have expected the storms to have increased at least in that period.

Below is a graph using data from both CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology that shows a decline not an increase in such storms in Australia. This is unfortunate data for the Greens, but the trend could reverse tomorrow.

Like everything in our weather there is a continual state of change – sometimes this is cyclic. Consequently, we must understand what is normal before we declare something is abnormal.

Can you imagine how the Greens will react when there is a natural increase back to the level in the 1970s. Will people carefully identify what is normal before declaring this abnormal and then stop telling us "The sky is falling in".

In Reading 3.1.2 we learnt that there is not enough additional energy (0.25-0.3%) since 1900 to change the number and severity of storms in any way that we could recognise.



Source: http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/climatology/trends.shtml

Such a small increase would see a cyclone with 400kph winds in 1900 becoming a cyclone with winds of 401kph in 2020. We also should remember that most of that small percentage increase is natural. So, Man's contribution is best described as trivial or insignificant.

Remember that the alarmist predictions of temperature rises of 3-5 degrees by the year 2000 did not occur yet we only saw a natural rise of 0.3^{o}C. Even if the 3-5 degree rise eventuates, in say 100 years-time, we would still have difficulty detecting its effect on storms.

In America, a paper published by the National Hurrican Centre in 1996 also made the point that storms just happen to be down in the past five decades. An abstract of this report is below.

"There is concern that the enhanced greenhouse effect may be affecting extreme weather events such as tropical cyclones. The North Atlantic basin offers a reliable, long-term record of tropical cyclone activity, though it may not be representative of tropical cyclones throughout the rest of the tropics.

The most recent years of 1991 through 1994 have experienced the quietest tropical cyclone activity on record in terms of frequency of tropical storms, hurricanes, and intense hurricanes. This was followed by the 1995 hurricane season, one of the busiest in the past 50 years.

Despite 1995's activity, a long-term (five decade) downward trend continues to be evident primarily in the frequency of intense hurricanes. In addition, the mean maximum intensity (i.e., averaged over all cyclones in a season) has decreased, while the maximum intensity attained by the strongest hurricane each year has not shown a significant change."

Because we are irrational and fail to identify what is normal, there is a vast amount of graphs and data on the web that can be selectively chosen to support any argument about storms. Consequently, we must keep on reminding ourselves that there is not enough additional energy to increase the number and severity of storms to an extent that anyone could call it "catastrophic".

Even as far back as 2011, the IPCC was acknowledging this as we see in the following quotes.

"*For many decades to come, and probably longer, mankind's influence on the frequency of extreme weather events will be insignificant.*

According to a preliminary report released by the IPCC, there will be no detectable influence of mankind's influence on the Earth's weather systems for at least thirty years, and possibly not until the end of this century."

And then;

"*If and when mankind's influence becomes apparent it may be just as likely to reduce the number of extreme weather events as increase them.*

Surveying the state of scientific knowledge IPCC scientists say they cannot determine if mankind's influence will result in more, or fewer, extreme weather events over the next thirty years or more."

Conclusion

Global warming, both natural and any man-made component, has not provided enough additional energy to increase the number or severity of storms in the past 120 years.

The Greens need to identify the two following points before any of us should start running around claiming the sky is falling in.

1. What is "normal". That is the number and severity of storms over a long period – say 150 years all over the World.
2. They should precisely define what they mean when they use the word "Catastrophic".

Once that is done, there might be a productive conversation about storms – rather than a hysterical rant.