

## **THE PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA (PPAA) PERSPECTIVE ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

The Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Association of Australasia accepts that climate change is a serious global threat affecting the environment and human health and safety, and that it is causally linked to human behaviour.

We recognise the complexity of this issue as well as the anxiety, fear and divisiveness it generates, and we seek to facilitate the kind of thinking and understanding that can support responding to this threat in a way that is proactive, adaptive and productive.

### **PPAA PERSPECTIVE ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Association of Australasia (PPAA) accepts that climate change and its associated natural disasters and loss of biodiversity is a serious global threat, affecting both the natural environment and human physical and mental health. PPAA also accepts that climate change is causally linked to human behaviour.

We recognise the complexity of this issue as well as the feelings it gives rise to, such as anxiety, fear, anger, guilt, grief, and hopelessness. These feelings can be understood as reflecting a collective trauma. Attempts to manage traumatic feelings can generate divisiveness between individuals, and in society at large, manifest in the split between disavowal and denial of the reality of the effects of climate change, and the wish to take action to avert further damage to the planet. This split can be both intrapsychic and societal.

Young people may be particularly troubled since they are the inheritors of the damage occasioned by unabated climate change. Many suffer ongoing stress due to their apprehension about the possible extinction of life on earth, and what they see as the inadequacy of actions to avert runaway climate change by those in power. They need our understanding and protection.

The PPAA seeks to facilitate psychoanalytic understanding of both adaptive and obstructive responses to climate change in order to deepen thinking about these issues, and thereby foster action to avert or ameliorate this threat to the planet and those who depend on it.

The PPAA also commits to developing therapeutic and consultative practices, informed by psychoanalytic understanding, that address the mental health impacts arising from the threat of climate change to both individuals and the wider community.

The Reading List below provides a selection of Psychoanalytic perspectives which contribute to the understanding of psychological and social difficulties arising from Climate Change.

### **READING LIST**

Abella, A. (2019). Panel on "Psychic dimensions of the climate crisis". *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 100(5):1029-1030.

Steffi Bednarek (2021) Climate Change, Fragmentation & Collective Trauma. *Journal of Social Work Practice, Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community*

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Bion, W.R. (1948) 'Psychiatry at a time of crisis', *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, XXI, Part 2, 181-189.

Brenner, I., & Brenner, L. (Eds.) (2019). Climate change and the human factor [Special issue]. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 16 (2).

Clayton, S., Manning, C. M., Krygsman, K., & Speiser, M. (2017). *Mental health and our changing climate: Impacts, implications, and guidance*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica. <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf>

[Climate Psychology Alliance, https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org](https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org)

( A wide range of references, suggestions and activities incorporating a psychoanalytic perspective)

Climate Psychology Alliance (2020) Courses on Climate Psychology for those who work with children and young people. <https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/support/youngpeople/479-courses-on-climate-psychology-for-those-who-work-with-children-and-young-people>

Cunsolo, A., & Ellis, N.R. (2018). Ecological grief as a mental health response to climate change-related loss. *Nature Climate Change*, 8 , 275–281.

Hall, K. (2014). How the outside comes inside: ecological selves in the therapy room. *Self and Society*, Summer 2014.

Harrison, S. (2012) Climate Change, Uncertainty and Risk in Sally Weintrobe (ed) *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London: Routledge

Hickman, C (2019) What psychotherapy can do for the climate and biodiversity crises Climate Psychology Alliance <https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/explorations/papers/357-what-psychotherapy-can-do-for-the-climate-and-biodiversity-crises>

Hickman, C. (2019) Children and Climate Change - Exploring Children's Feelings About Climate Change Using Free Association Narrative Interview Methodology, *Climate Psychology* pp 41-59

Hogett, P (2019) *Climate Psychology- On Indifference to Disaster*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

International psychoanalytical Association, Psychoanalytic considerations on Climate Change Introductions by: Sally Weintrobe, Delaram Habibi-Kohlen and Angela Mauss-Hanke. [https://www.ipa.world/ipa/en/comment/climate\\_change.aspx](https://www.ipa.world/ipa/en/comment/climate_change.aspx)

Jackson, C (2020) Facing the reality of climate change *Therapy Today*, March 2020 Volume 31 Issue 2

Lertzman, R. (2015). *Environmental melancholia: Psychoanalytic dimensions of engagement*. London: Routledge

Greenspun, W & Elizabeth Allured, E. Manhattan Institute for Psychoanalysis (2018) Using Psychoanalytic Understanding to Face Climate Change <https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/explorations/papers/130-psychoanalysis-and-climate-change>

PPAA Conference (July 2020) Working through our feelings about the climate crisis: From anxiety, rage and grief to action, Sally Weintrobe

Rust, M-J, (2008) Unconscious Processes in Relation to Our Environmental Crisis *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 6(3): 157-170

Seaman, E.B. (2016) Climate change on the therapist's couch - how mental health clinicians receive and respond to indirect psychological impacts of climate change in the therapeutic setting. Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA. <https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses/1736>

Weintrobe, S <http://www.sallyweintrobe.com/>

Weintrobe, S (2010) On runaway greed and climate change denial: a psychoanalytic perspective, Lionel Monteith Memorial Lecture, London: Lincoln Clinic and Centre for Psychotherapy, *Bulletin Annual of the British Psychoanalytical Society* and on [www.sallyweintrobe.com](http://www.sallyweintrobe.com)

Weintrobe, S (Ed) (2012) *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London: Routledge

Weintrobe, S (Ed.), (2013) *Engaging with climate change: Psychoanalytic and interdisciplinary perspectives*. London: Routledge

Weintrobe, S (2016) on [Frontier Psychoanalyst: Climate Change \(January 2016\)](#) podcast presented by David Morgan

Weintrobe, S (2020) Moral injury, the culture of uncare and the climate bubble, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 34:4, 351-362,

Weintrobe, S (2021) Moral injury, the culture of uncare and the climate bubble – in Press Published online: Taylor Francis 17 Dec 2020  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02650533.2020.1844167?src=recsys>

Weintrobe, S (2021) Psychological Roots of the Climate Crisis  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRihlezGXT0>