

APS Environment News

APS Public Interest - Dr Susie Burke - s.burke@psychology.org.au

MAY 2013



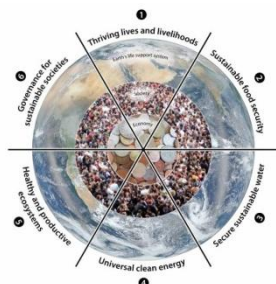
Environmental Psychologists at work....



Professor Helen Ross, member of the APS climate change and environmental threats reference group (CCRG) works on multidisciplinary projects, currently on psychology and the joining up with ecology bodies of literature on resilience. Together with a colleague Fikret Birkes, she has published an article Community Resilience: Toward an Integrated Approach, in the international journal : Society & Natural Resources. This paper is already one of the most downloaded papers in the history of this journal. To read more go to:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08941920.2012.736605>

RECENT articles on environment, psychology, health

Policy: Sustainable development goals for people and planet. David Griggs et al., 2013, Nature 495,305–307



This is an excellent article published in March in the prestigious journal, *Nature*. David Griggs (director of the Monash Sustainability Institute) and colleagues argue that Planetary stability must be integrated with United Nations targets to fight poverty and secure human well-being. This article presents a framework linking climate stability and the revision of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The idea for a set of universal sustainable development goals (SDGs) came about at last year's UN Rio+20 summit. These SDG would ideally replace the millenium development goals when these run out in 2015.

Grigg et al argue that the 3 pillars of of sustainable development – economy, society, environment – is now an obsolete model. Instead, they argue that it makes more sense to conceptualise sustainable development as the economy within society within Earth's life support system — the atmosphere and ice sheets, oceans and waterways, forests, deserts and rich diversity of life that combine to provide a place for us to thrive. We have reached a point at which future development is at risk if we fail to account for our pressure on the Earth system.

Using this framework, they have identified 6 goals for people and planet:

1. Thriving lives and livelihoods
2. Sustainable food security
3. Secure sustainable water
4. Universal clean energy
5. Healthy and productive ecosystems
6. Governance for sustainable societies

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v495/n7441/full/495305a.html>

Or read a review in <http://anthropocenejournal.com/2013/03/24/rethinking-sustainable-development-in-the-anthropocene/> Or watch a VIDEO of lead author Dave Griggs giving a keynote talk (UN video here).

Health effects from coal use in energy generation



This is a scientific literature review of all recent peer-reviewed reports and papers from biomedical literature around the world which estimates the death toll at 210,000 people each year—as well as two million serious illnesses, and 151 million minor illnesses.

Access to electricity has a positive effect on the health and well-being of people worldwide. However, the use of coal to generate energy has negative health consequences. There is evidence of coal's impact on human health during every stage of its use for electricity generation -- from mining to postcombustion disposal. In particular, the combustion of coal has been well-studied, with compelling evidence of widespread health effects on the population. Air pollution produced by coal combustion in power plants can affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems as well as cause abnormal neurological development in children, poor growth of the fetus before birth, and can cause cancer.

Coal used for heating and cooking indoors, generates pollutants in indoor air that are known to cause respiratory ailments and cancer. Moreover, coal combustion contributes to climate change, which can harm human health on a global scale. This document includes scientific evidence of health effects from the use of coal for energy generation.

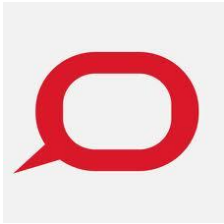
Radio interview:

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/study-finds-coal-pollution-kills-210000-people-a-year/4633894>

Report:

http://www.noharm.org/lib/downloads/climate/Coal_Literature_Review_2.pdf

Articles from The Conversation



Green hypocrites? Behaviour change in a consumerist society By Peter Newton - Research Professor in Sustainable Urbanism at Swinburne University of Technology

Many Australians are happy to declare their interest in sustainability, to reducing their environmental impact. But how many of them are prepared to reduce the amount they actually consume? We recently explored whether Australian households have an “attitude-action gap” on environment and consumption...

We recently explored whether Australian households have an “attitude-action gap” on environment and consumption. We surveyed 1200 households, examining attitudes, intentions and opinions related to the environment and urban living. We also recorded objective data on actual household consumption of energy, water, housing space, urban travel and domestic appliances.

Three lifestyle segments emerged: a majority (40.3%) of those who responded to this survey were defined as “material greens”, 33.5% “committed greens” and 26.3% “enviro-sceptics”.

To read more go to: <http://theconversation.com/green-hypocrites-behaviour-change-in-a-consumerist-society-13002>

Your MP doesn't 'believe' in climate change? Ask the tough questions by Brad Farrant, Fiona Armstrong, Karen Kiang, and Mark Edwards.

“As we head into an election, you'd be justified in asking what your local member is basing their climate change decisions on....

The risks posed to the Australian and international communities by the uninformed opinions of our national leaders are significant. They cannot ethically choose to rely on their own uninformed opinion or ideology instead of science. Because of those risks, the role of responsible and well-informed media is crucial. The media has the civic and moral obligation to be a watchdog on society and its institutions.

Journalists have a duty to question politicians who oppose action based on uninformed opinions. The public has a right to be informed, and to question, a politician's justification for putting current and future generations at risk”.

To read more, go to <http://theconversation.com/your-mp-doesnt-believe-in-climate-change-ask-the-tough-questions-13432>

RENEW ECONOMY

Just how many climate skeptics are there? By Graham Readfearn.

When Julia Gillard announced that former Woodside executive and lobbyist Gary Gray was Australia's new energy and resources minister, questions turned quickly to his position on climate change. Did he accept the science, or was he a denier?

For the record, Gray told journalists that he was a reformed sceptic and now accepted that humans were influencing the climate. Gray's publicly stated view puts him with the majority of Australians. But regular readers of The Australian newspaper, News Ltd columnists and even the broader Australian public might think otherwise.

"The media will often report on what the public thinks about climate change – and they are getting it wrong," says **Professor Joseph Reser**, of Griffith University's School of Psychology, who has led one of the most extensive and detailed surveys into Australians' attitudes to climate change and the underpinning science.

After asking 7,500 Australians about their attitudes to climate change and their acceptance that humans are having something to do with it, Reser says the vast majority of people accept the science – it's happening and humans have a hand in it.

Read more at: <http://reneweconomy.com.au/2013/just-how-many-climate-sceptics-are-there-27041>

What does Climate Change Have to Do With Health Care? By Gary Cohen,

7/4/2013

Gary Cohen is Co-Founder and President of [Health Care Without Harm](#) and Practice Greenhealth. He is a member of the International Advisory Board of the Sambhavna Clinic in Bhopal, India, established to help heal people affected by the Bhopal gas tragedy. He is on the board of the American Sustainable Business Council and Health Leads.

This article was published as part of a [special series](#) for World Health Day and in advance of the [2013 Skoll World Forum](#). Watch the live stream April 10-12 by [clicking here](#).

In the last six months, we have witnessed Superstorm Sandy flooding New York City, New Jersey and surrounding areas, a massive Midwest drought impacting 40% of the US corn crop, and unprecedented air pollution from burning fossil fuels that forced Chinese authorities to tell Beijing residents to stay in their homes. When we think about climate change, we are no longer thinking about polar bears stranded on melting ice caps. Climate chaos has come home and its impacts are being felt all around the world.

What health scientists are telling us is that climate change will bring increased asthma, more virulent allergens, medical emergencies from heat stress, the spread of water- and vector-borne diseases and increased severe weather events. *The Lancet*, Britain's premier health journal, calls climate change "the biggest global health threat of the 21st century."

Given these dire warnings, one would expect that the healthcare sector would be prepared for the coming public health storm. Nothing could be further from the truth. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, the hospitals were completely flooded along with everyone else. But because they all had their electrical equipment as well as their back-up generators in the basement, they lost all power. And because none of the windows in the hospital were operable, hospital staff had to break all the windows in the hospitals' upper floors to get air into the facility.

To read more go to: <http://skollworldforum.org/debate/what-are-some-of-the-biggest-challenges-in-global-health-today-and-how-do-we-address-them/>

the guardian

Carbon bubble will plunge the world into another financial crisis – report by Damian Carrington.

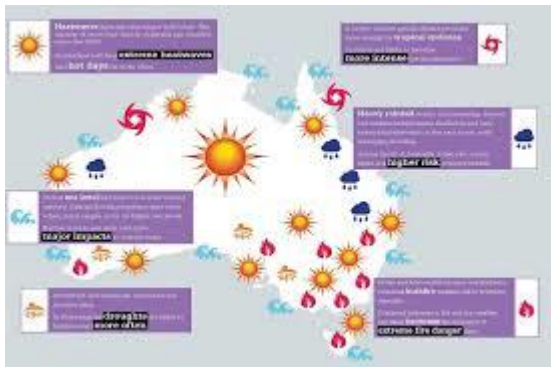
This story about the global "carbon bubble" (the result of over-valuation of oil, coal and gas reserves held by fossil fuel companies) was the front page of The Guardian in April, 2013. The full report is titled "Unburnable Carbon 2013: Wasted capital and stranded assets" . The executive summary of the report makes the following points:

- Using even a fraction of proven fossil fuel reserves will breach the global carbon dioxide budget
- The scale of this carbon budget deficit poses a major risk for investors
- 60% -80% of coal, oil and gas reserves of listed firms are 'unburnable carbon'
- Capital spent on finding and developing more reserves is largely wasted

To read more go to: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/apr/19/carbon-bubble-financial-crash-crisis>

Research Reports

Climate Commission's 'The Critical Decade: Extreme Weather Report



When extreme weather events occur the Climate Commission is consistently asked questions about the link to climate change. This report unpacks their current knowledge about different types of extreme weather events: extreme temperatures, rainfall, drought, bushfires, storm surges, cyclones and storms.

There is an accessible guide to extreme weather to accompany the report that is available here: <http://climatecommission.gov.au/report/extreme-weather/>

The Climate Commission has also released a two minute animation to go with The Critical Decade: Extreme Weather report. It's a simple explanation of how climate change fuels extreme weather, and its impact on Australia. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNdF-eVRWX4>

CAMPAIGNS to CONSIDER

GREENPEACE

A few days ago, six Greenpeace activists did something incredibly brave for the future of our planet. In an act of defiance and civil disobedience they boarded a fully-loaded coal ship as it left the Great Barrier Reef – a daring but necessary act to help stop Australia's coal exports driving catastrophic global warming. These activists have come from China, India, USA, New Zealand and Australia – countries where the actions of coal companies are having a drastic effect on our lives. As dirty coal power plants are making our air unbreathable, destroying forests, and are fuelling climate change, billions of people are suffering the consequences. They are taking this courageous action because they don't believe the industry should be able to profit from threatening our future. Neither do we.

Can you stand in solidarity with these activists by signing on to our statement of support?

When we reach 10,000 names, we'll publish the statement nationally in the Australian Financial Review – read widely by investors and decision makers – to show the business community we won't stand for coal exports fuelling global warming.

Click here to read the statement and sign on now: <http://bit.ly/endcoal>

PAID TO POLLUTE

This week, some of the biggest and most influential environment and community groups from around Australia have launched a new campaign to end fossil fuel subsidies. The Australian Government provides \$10 billion worth of subsidies to support fossil fuels every year. These subsidies make the use of fossil fuels (like coal, gas and petroleum) that harm human health artificially cheap and help stall the necessary transition to clean safe renewable energy systems.

This national alliance of Australia's leading environment and community organisations is calling for fossil fuel subsidies to be cut in the upcoming federal budget. The campaign <http://paidtopollute.org.au> centres around a joint statement signed by leading organisations and includes a petition to the Treasurer and all federal MPs.

The \$10 billion given as fossil fuel subsidies by the federal government each year is more than double what they spend on government schools. This handout to polluters increases emissions and pollution from energy sources that cause substantial harm to human health, blocks the transition to clean, safe, energy, and drives climate change. It makes no sense and it must stop.

Will your organisation sign on to the campaign? Please read the joint statement and add your name as a health group to call on all political parties to commit to cut fossil fuel subsidies in the upcoming 2013-14 federal budget. It would be very powerful if every MP in Australia heard about this campaign to end fossil fuel subsidies. If your organisation, and its members, were signing the petition it would help it get the attention of every member of parliament.