

APS Environment News

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

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George Mason University
Center for Climate Change Comr

Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies

Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Roser-Renouf, C.,
Feinberg, G., Marlon, J. & Howe, P. (2013)

The report presents results from the latest national survey from the US on American's perceptions of climate change and cc policies



A large majority of Americans (87%), say the president and Congress should make developing sources of clean energy a priority
Most Americans (70%) say global warming should be a priority" for the president and Congress.
Six in ten Americans (59%) say the U.S. should reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions regardless of what other countries do.
Americans say that corporations and industry (70%), citizens themselves (63%), the U.S. Congress (57%), and the President (52%) should be doing more to address global warming.

The report is available at: [Public Support for Climate and Energy Policies in April 2013](#)



ARTICLES

How Psychologists Can Help Make Earth Day Every Day



April 19, 2013

*Behavioral expert **Elke Weber**, PhD, discusses the important role psychologists play in environmental protection. Drawing upon psychology and economics, Weber is an expert on behavioral models of judgment and decision making under risk and uncertainty.*

To see Weber's responses to the following questions, access the full article at the link below:

- Why do people make lifestyle decisions that they know will result in environmental harm?
- What can psychology tell us about the most effective ways to influence human behavior to protect or improve the environment? What are some of the techniques that have been tried but don't work? And what about those that do work?
- What have been the psychological impacts on human beings as we have degraded the environment with air and water pollution, litter, deforestation and the many other ecologically harmful consequences of development and industrialization?
- How are psychologists helping to make adaptations to the environment designed to improve people's mental and physical health?
- How do culture and income affect environmental behavior?

This article was produced by the American Psychological Association and is available at the following link: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2013/04/earth-day.aspx>

Dr Weber also co-authored a 2009 APA [report](#) (PDF, 10.94MB) and found a multitude of psychology impacts related to severe weather events believed to be linked to climate change. These can include acute and posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, elevated risks of child abuse and higher rates of suicide.

MINDSPACE

Influencing behaviour through public policy

The elements described are those considered to be the most robust effects that operate largely, but not exclusively, on automatic effects. They illustrate some of the main ways that individuals, communities and policy-makers can influence behaviour. Dolan and colleagues do not claim to cover all of the possible effects on behaviour, and nor do they deal with more traditional interventions that rely on legislation and regulation.

Nine robust influences on human behaviour and change are outlined (see below). These principles are underpinned by considerable research from the fields of social psychology and behavioural economics. They are therefore presented as **the most robust effects that policy-makers should understand and, if appropriate, use**. However, this abridged version can only give a short summary of these effects, go to the full report for more details.

Messenger	we are heavily influenced by who communicates information
Incentives	our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts, such as strongly avoiding losses
Norms	we are strongly influenced by what others do
Defaults	we 'go with the flow' of pre-set options
Saliency	our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us
Priming	our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues
Affect	our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions
Commitments	we seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts
Ego	we act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

This is based on a report by Paul Dolan and colleagues (March 2010) available at: http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/MINDSPACE-Practical-guide-final-Web_1.pdf

The Health Factor: Ignored by industry, overlooked by government

A new doctors' report reveals worrying evidence of likely health impacts from Australian coal and coal seam gas projects. The Health Factor by Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) reveals the costly legacy unfolding for Australia from under-regulation of the pollution caused by many resource projects. The Health Factor describes cases where coal projects have been allowed to pollute at levels known to compromise human health and where inadequate monitoring of air quality disguises the dangers.

The report describes how cardio-respiratory and other diseases in nearby communities are likely to be caused or exacerbated by pollution from coal mining and transport. The report also points out that the research and regulation on coal seam gas lags well behind these developments, and the degree to which they harm human health is not yet understood.

This report describes the **urgent need for better protection of human health from pollution by coal and gas**. The report is available online: <http://dea.org.au/images/general/DEA - The Health Factor 05-13.pdf> and the press release is at <http://dea.org.au/news/article/media-release-damning-evidence-on-health-impacts-of-coal-csg>

Post Carbon Pathways: Towards a Just and Resilient Post Carbon Future

Wiseman, J., Edwards, T., Luckins, K. (2013)

This report) draws on in-depth interviews with leading international researchers, policy makers and activists on actions needed to drive the rapid implementation of large scale post carbon economy transition strategies. The report is available at http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Post-Carbon-Pathways-Report-2013_Revised.pdf

1. The probability and risks of global warming of four degrees or more are rapidly increasing. This is, however, an argument for visionary leadership and decisive action - not political paralysis and buck-passing.
2. The technological and economic roadmaps showing the actions we need to take to avoid catastrophic global warming are now widely understood.
3. The biggest roadblocks preventing implementation of large-scale de-carbonisation strategies at the speed required to prevent runaway climate change are primarily political not technological, and include: Climate science denial, the power of the fossil fuel industry and its allies, political paralysis, unsustainable consumption of energy and resources, path dependencies and outdated infrastructure, financial and governance constraints
4. The key actions needed to overcome these political roadblocks are:
 - clear understanding of the necessity and possibility of an emergency speed transition to a
 - just and resilient post-carbon future;
 - broad recognition of the potentially enormous social and economic benefits of switching
 - investment from fossil fuels to energy efficiency, renewable energy and carbon
 - sequestration;
 - game changing social and technological innovation; and decisive leadership and skillful implementation by communities, business and government at every level of society.

NEWS

Federal Budget Implications for Action on Climate Change

This budget missed a golden opportunity to consolidate Australia's transition to a low carbon economy and cut pollution. While there is good news - the carbon price brought in \$8.3 billion in 2012/13 - this is being undermined by the government giving away more than \$10 billion per year on programs which encourage carbon polluting fuels.

GOOD: THE CARBON PRICE IS WORKING

The carbon price is working. Since its introduction, carbon emissions are down by about 10million tonnes, and renewable energy is up around 30% during same time period.

BAD: MODERATE CUTS TO CLEAN TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

Cutting important elements of the Clean Energy Future Package including delaying \$370m in renewable energy funding for ARENA and cutting \$98m from the Low Carbon Communities Program.

UGLY: BIG POLLUTERS BREATHE A BIG SIGH OF RELIEF

The government failed to seize our best opportunity in years to get rid of the billions in incentives and subsidies to big polluters to keep on polluting. There's some good news: closing tax loopholes for mining exploration will save \$1.1m but over \$5b in fossil fuel subsidies remain in place.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Modest reforms are not getting to the heart of the problem. Ongoing opportunities to end polluter handouts include the federal election, the G20 meeting in Australia in 2014 and next year's federal budget.

REFERENCES AND LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

GetUp! www.getup.org.au/budget2013

Australian Conservation Foundation: <http://www.acfonline.org.au/news-media/media-release/priorities-federal-budget-2013-14>

Environmental Victoria: <http://environmentvictoria.org.au/media/budget-misses-chance-end-fossil-fuel-subsidies-gives-clean-coal> and <http://environmentvictoria.org.au/media/renewable-energy-projects-lose-budget>

The Government's take re the carbon price, including five fact sheets:
<http://minister.innovation.gov.au/gregcombet/MediaReleases/Pages/CleanEnergyFuturepackageworkinginAustraliasinterest.aspx>

The Conversation – Expert reactions to Federal Budget: <http://theconversation.com/federal-budget-2013-expert-reactions-14211>

Green Party's budget reply: <http://greens.org.au/content/christine-milnes-2013-budget-reply-speech>

NEWS

Coal Seam Gas

The Australian Medical Association has expressed concerns about coal seam gas in a recent issue of Australian Medicine – online here: <https://ama.com.au/ausmed/coal-seam-gas>, referring to the [Roundtable Joint Statement](#). The AMA Public Health and Child & Youth Health Committee has said there is “a critical need for health implications to be a key part of the CSG approval processes”.



Joint statement from Alliance of Small Island States and the Least Developed Countries

3 May 2013: Bonn, Germany— The Alliance of Small Island States and the Least Developed Countries groups represent 83 countries and over 920 million people that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As the latest session of UN climate change negotiations ends today, the two groups together call on negotiators to come back in June ready to move expeditiously from talking about solutions to implementing them.

The groups jointly released a statement which can be viewed at

<http://ldclimate.wordpress.com/>



Climate change: How it will put women's health at risk globally

Fiona Armstrong made a Keynote Address on the 'Implications of Climate Change for Women's Health' to the 7th Australian Women's Health Conference in Sydney: 'Gender Matters: Determining Women's Health' on 9 May 2013.

Women's Agenda ran an edited version of Fiona's: ***Climate change: How it will put women's health at risk globally***: Find the article at <http://www.womensagenda.com.au/talking-about/opinions/climate-change-how-it-will-put-women-s-health-at-risk-globally/201305092120>

NEWS

The Next War Won't Have Guns Tasmanian Times, 25 May 2013

The Third World War will not be fought with guns. It's the battle for the earth, not its ownership this time, but its existence. Who would have thought that of all the shortages our profligate living would lead to, it would be the very coolness and calmness of our planet's skies. For the full article, click on the following link: [The Next War Won't Have Guns](#)

Steve Biddulph, Adjunct Professor of Counselling at Cairnmillar Institute, Melbourne, and author of Raising Girls, Raising Boys, and The New Manhood.

Greenhouse Gases Reach Level Unseen for Millions of Years

Scientists at the Mauna Loa observatory in Hawaii have confirmed (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/may/10/carbon-dioxide-highest-level-greenhouse-gas>) that the heat-trapping greenhouse gases in our atmosphere have reached unprecedented levels, unseen for more than 3 million years. New data released today by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows (<http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/weekly.html>) that concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) have passed the ominous milestone of 400 parts per million (ppm). According to experts (<http://keelingcurve.ucsd.edu/what-does-400-ppm-look-like/>), when our planet was last exposed to equivalent levels of greenhouse gases, global temperatures were 3-4°C hotter and sea levels were 5-40 meters higher than today. Scientists are particularly alarmed at the fast-pace of rising emissions levels. Some of them have expressed hope that this moment could provide leaders with a much needed wake-up call.

A range of high-profile voices are now urging decision-makers to tackle rocketing emissions and prepare for unavoidable climate impacts.

Crossing the 400ppm threshold is being heralded as a symbolic milestone.

Links and tweets and resources for use in communicating this information from Global Campaign for Climate Action (Tck Tck Tck) are available at: <http://tcktck.org/>

INSPIRING STORIES

Over 50? Save a future - Lawrence MacDonald

Hi, I'm Lawrence MacDonald and I created FiftyOverFifty.org with a group of like-minded friends. I am a former journalist and policy communications specialist by training whose day job involves grappling with two key facts: the terrifying urgency of the climate change threat and the surprisingly large number of potential technological and policy solutions available. As a society, we have the ability to avert catastrophe but we are not acting. Why?

The problem is not lack of technology and policy solutions but an inadequate sense of urgency. Hugely powerful vested interests led by the coal, oil and gas lobbies use all the means at their disposal to block sensible climate policy. One of their most important tactics is to encourage a sense of complacency ("climate change isn't really happening or if it is happening the impacts won't affect me or my children") and hopelessness ("there is nothing I can do about it anyway").

Many people turn away from the mounting evidence that we are already experiencing runaway climate change, telling themselves privately "it can't really be that bad or somebody would be doing something. People would be getting arrested to sound the alarm."

That's why peaceful civil disobedience can make a difference, creating a sense of political urgency to match urgency of the climate crisis.

President Roosevelt, pushing through the New Deal, is said to have told union representatives "make me do the right thing, go out and build popular support." Similarly, President Johnson is reported to have put his arm around Martin Luther King and said "Dr. King, go out there and make it possible for me to do the right thing." Two years ago, President Obama told Maura Cowley of the Energy Action Coalition and a group of climate activists, "Your job is to push me."

President Obama: "Your job is to push me."

Cowley and her coalition of youth-led groups, together with Bill McKibben's 350.org and a wide array of other climate groups, are doing all that they can to push the president. I see fiftyoverfifty.org as a sort of Boomers Auxiliary to these efforts, with a focus on civil disobedience, because that's how a relatively small number of people can have the largest impact on the national debate.

I'll be honest: I am relatively new to organizing and civil disobedience. Living near Washington, I have participated in a large number of climate protests and rallies and I was among the more than 1,200 people who were arrested outside the White House during two weeks in August 2011 urging President Obama to reject the Keystone XL pipeline. That was my first and so far only experience with civil disobedience leading to arrest. It was a personal high point -- it felt like one of the most important things I had ever done.

As you probably know, the arrests helped to build public awareness that led to 15,000 people surrounding the White House the following November. Soon afterward President Obama announced that he was delaying approval of the pipeline and would take into account "all scientific evidence" of its potential impact in his (still pending) final decision.

I have been thinking about the power of peaceful civil disobedience ever since and wondering what it would take to spark a nationwide movement along the lines that McKibben described in "The Last Best Chance for the Boomers" (available in [The Bill McKibben Reader: Pieces from an Active Life](#)). I kept hoping that somebody else would organize such an effort but it hasn't happened so I am taking this plunge.

It's hard not to feel overwhelmed in the face of the climate change threat. The beauty of the 50 over 50 plan is that it doesn't need a huge number of us to make a difference. I suspect that there are at least 50 of us boomers who understand enough about the issue that we are ready to find each other, organize, and if necessary risk arrest to sound the alarm. If each of us can find 50 more we will have 50 over 50 x 50, that is, 2,500 boomers prepared to risk arrest.

If that happens, there is a chance we can transform the national debate on climate action and push our politicians to stand up to the fossil fuel companies and do the right things. Will you [join us](#)?

Not yet ready but still curious? Maybe you want to start at the [FiftyOverFifty.org homepage](http://FiftyOverFifty.org). Or read this short summary of our [March 2013 kickoff conference call](#), which includes an audio recording of my opening remarks.

MORE INSPIRING STORIES



**Village in India plants 111
trees every time a girl is
born
by Stephen Messenger**

Find at [Tree Hugger](#)



**Food Shift: Feeding People
Not Trash Cans
by Dana Frasz**

Find at [Foodshift.net](#)

TRAINING



In 2006, Climate Reality Chairman and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore sparked an international conversation on climate with his Academy Award winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Later that year, Climate Reality launched a training initiative to create a global network of concerned citizens working to alert their communities to the reality of climate change. Since 2006, over 4,000 volunteers from 58 countries have been trained.

The Climate Reality Project delivers an intensive three-day training to teach volunteers how to be effective communicators, efficient organizers, and active leaders. They learn the latest climate science and best practices for connecting the dots between the facts about climate change and the daily lives of their audiences, in simple and accessible terms.

One full day at the training is dedicated to learning a current version of the slideshow presentation featured in *An Inconvenient Truth* from Chairman Al Gore, focusing on talking points and scientific explanations of each climate change topic. Climate Leaders also meet in small-group sessions with seasoned veterans who serve as mentors and provide practical advice on the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Climate Leaders emerge from training sessions as energized and skilled communicators with the knowledge, tools, and drive to educate and empower diverse audiences and communities.

APPLY TODAY FOR A TRAINING [June 14-16 in Istanbul](http://climaterealityproject.org/leadership-corps/)
<http://climaterealityproject.org/leadership-corps/>

- Climate Reality Leadership Trainings are completely self-funded by attendees. There is no fee to attend the training and you will need to pay for your own travel and lodging.

You will learn: The latest science of climate change, best practices in public speaking, social media, leadership skills, communication strategies, community outreach and organizing.

RESOURCES



Useful template to use leading up to the federal election

A good initiative and useful template to consider using for a national strategy to advocate on climate and health among other things in the lead-up to the federal election, from the Union of Concerned Scientists. For the letter go to: <https://secure3.convio.net/ucs/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=3629>. For an associated blog, go to: [Dear Mr. President: UCS Letter Outlines Concrete Steps Obama Can Take to Address Climate Change](#).

CONFERENCES

Australia's Climate Action Summit



Registration now open for the Climate Action Summit, 21-23 June, in Sydney

You may have heard that the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere is about to reach 400 ppm. The warnings that we have heard are certainly coming true with more frequent and extreme weather occurring across the world, including the hottest summer ever in Australia.

We are clearly in the critical decade for taking strong action on climate change, as recognised by Australia's Climate Commission.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Come to the 2013 Australian Climate Action Summit in Sydney from 21-23 June. Join with climate activists to share our experiences and knowledge to help build an even stronger Climate Action Movement!

Go to ClimateSummit.org.au for details, including the full program.

PETITIONS

Fund Community Energy

Right across Australia local communities are working hard to set up community-owned renewable energy projects to power their towns and buildings. But, like any new industry, they need financial assistance to achieve this.

We are calling on the federal government to establish a \$50 million grant program to support the development stage of community renewable energy projects.

By signing this petition you can help make community energy a reality. We have lined up meetings with Liberal and Labor politicians in June and we want to take your support with us! [Sign Here!](#)



SAVE THE PLANET

I thought you might be interested in an online petition calling on Australia's political and community leaders to urgently create emergency plans to restore a safe climate.

See the petition at:

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/886064709>

It's time that our leaders took the climate emergency seriously. Some have fallen asleep at the wheel and others are actively blocking effective action. The tiny handful who know that much more is required need more support and encouragement.

For more information go to: <http://www.voteplanet.net/>

