



The Activist Practitioner



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CALL FOR PAPERS





CULTURAL CONSULTATION

For each edition of The Activist Practitioner, we are lucky to have the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation provide cultural consultation on the content we disseminate. In this edition, members of the Baabayn community reflect on climate change and eco-anxiety. Contributors: Cassandra Ebsworth, Aunty Margaret Farrell, Leah Pearson

I.

Culturally, the main thing to remember is that when we do things, we're doing it for our future generations. It's for the children. We are community, we still gather as a community, we still do everything as a community, and we do it all to keep things going for our kids and to make the world okay for others.

We have a responsibility, culturally, to provide that for them. Whatever we bring back from whatever help we receive, we've got to be able to share that with our kids.

When it comes to my emotional wellbeing and the earth, as an Aboriginal woman, it's much more than a relationship. It's what I am. We don't own the land, the land owns us. We're born from the land. We don't just exist on the land, we are the land. Without it, we hurt.

When I don't have that connection with Earth, because I allow my head to get in the way, I get stuck. Without the elements, I'm nothing. I feel like I don't exist. It's in my soul. It is me. It's not a part of who I am. It is who I am.

It's as simple as literally, physically, touching Earth. Sitting on Earth. You can't do that in your cities of concrete. That makes it really hard, but you have to reconnect, to become present to Earth.

To reconnect with self is to reconnect with earth and to reconnect with earth is to reconnect with self. That's missing from the mainstream.

This is why we've got to do it for ourselves in community because it's not there.

Our elders are the most highly skilled psychologists on this planet

Our elders are the ones that guide us and lead us. When you have a problem, you come talk to them and they put it into perspective. Our elders are the most highly skilled psychologists on this planet. The way they do things is of such a deep psychological background, planting wisdom within you, without telling you what it is. They get you to think for yourself, they get you to understand. They do it in a way that's planting a seed. This is how they were raised. This is culture. It's not an obligation, it's a passion.

II.

Water is vital for all of us, for everyone to exist. The cotton farmers are being greedy with the water resources.



Water brings life, fisheries, all the things our people like doing.

The animals need water, so does all growth out there, so it isn't arid and dry. The people who don't want to move away from the country, they should still have their water system. It's where you learn to swim, where you learn to do things out there, in any country town.

The plants, the ground, the trees, they all need water too. You need the trees for air, for photosynthesis. You need all of that stuff for growth. The links between colonisation, land management, and emotional health: that's traumatic, how all of that works out. It's too traumatic to talk about.

The links between colonisation, land management, and emotional health: that's traumatic, how all of that works out. It's too traumatic to talk about





EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second edition of *The Activist Practitioner*, which is focussed on the critical issue of the psychology of climate change.

While this issue is being published in the middle of a global pandemic, we as the editorial committee made a decision to publish on the ecological crisis. This is a far greater existential threat and must continue to be at the forefront of our thinking as psychologists concerned with distress and recovery.

Both the climate crisis and Covid-19 also have much in common, eliciting global, rather than simply individual, dread and requiring new forms of thinking and practice beyond the traditional intrapsychic focus of the psychology industry.

Both crises cause us to reflect with greater humility on our anthropocentrism, challenging our dominant relation to other species, be they flora, fauna or the microbial.

Both crises require collective responses rather than individual solutions.

Both crises reveal structural inequality which has a direct impact on psychological distress.

Both crises cause us to ask existential questions

and provide an opportunity for a personal, professional and societal moratorium.

Psychology, as a science, has typically concerned itself with personal subjectivity, with formulations based on unconscious or cognitive pathology dissociated from culture and place. This approach is no longer sufficient to support those dealing with new forms of distress grounding the psyche in place. Eco-anxiety (Pihkala, 201), solastalgia (Albrecht, 2007) and pre-traumatic stress (Clayton, Manning, Krygsman, & Speiser, 2017) are all psychoterratic concepts that encapsulate the existential conditions related directly to the climate crisis and the disconnection of humans from nature.

Distress, however, is at its most pronounced when one becomes frozen, acutely aware of the reality of the climate crisis, but unable to shift from anxiety, to grief and then the re-creation of an identity tied to place, which can lead to direct action in terms of sustainability and activism. It is important to recognize the significance of this form of identity, one that mirrors Aboriginal conceptions (McManus, Albrecht and Graham, 2014) but is new to the history of mainstream psychology.



We hope that this issue supports the adjustments our field must make to respond to the climate crisis and that it might move you, both to grieve and to hope, and to come together to act.

While we read collectively over this editorial, we see a stark reality. As a group, we have once again spoken from a position of privilege to privilege. In our last edition, we said we would work harder not to do this. Why are we telling you this? Because it seems to say something important about the kinds of issues that can be seen and spoken about from the lens of psychology. Even when we try to move away from individualism in practice, the issue is that the mental health structures we are immersed in really only deal predominantly with privilege. The majority of people in the world deal with existential threat on a daily basis, whether it is because of poverty, lack of access to water, violence, denial of human rights, gender, race or ability discrimination or ecological disaster. We cannot imagine the ways in which these intersecting challenges magnify one another. Intellectualised concepts are all well and good, but really, this makes us want to get up out of our arm chairs, roll our sleeves up and get busy. At the end of this edition, we hope to find some ways for us all to connect and do this together.

Paul Rhodes and Ruth Wells (Editors)

***that it might move you,
both to grieve and to hope,
and to come together to
act***



We pay our respects to the traditional owners of the First Nations on which this issue of The Activist Practitioner was written and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

THE STORY OF THE COVER ART

AUNTY MARGARET BY MIA JACKSON

My name is Aunty Margaret Farrell and I'm Stolen Generation. Roberto Giunta asked me if I would like to tell my story as part of Murama Indigenous Youth Summit. Mia Jackson is an artist and is part of the Wirringa and Booris Art Group at Baabayn. Mia approached me and asked if I would like to tell my story.

The strands of my hair represent different phases throughout my life. It's difficult for me to tell anybody about my life and the events leading up to when me and my siblings were taken away.

Throughout my life, it's been very hard for us to reconnect with one another because we never had the love of two parents until we were much older when everybody started coming home in the late 1980s.

It's hard for any child to express themselves, and to see your siblings go to different homes and not know where they were, how lost they are. My youngest brother was only around the corner from me when I was at Glebe and the Boys' Home was just around the corner. Then he went to one of the Boys' Homes at Berry and later on, as the years passed, he was allowed out on leave to visit my mother. On the way out, we had the old Red Rattler trains then, a bunch of kids were coming home for the holiday, and there was a lot of mucking around. The doors were easy to open, the windows were wide open, and somehow my brother got pushed out of the train.



He was only 12. It had a big impact on my mother and on everybody. Losing your youngest brother, it's hard. And it's sad. Mum never had the opportunity of bringing him up. My mother had a nervous breakdown before we were taken away, it's why welfare stepped in and brought us all to Sydney. This is why we were all split up.

Everybody is talking all about the Stolen Generation. People have got to be accountable to what happened to Aboriginal families. It started in the 20s, was still going in the 70s. And today, the young ones, our babies are still going.

It's a cycle that just repeats itself. As much as they try, our young mums and dads, it still gets thrown in their face, DOCS going in and taking their babies.

I didn't have a mother's love and all that. We had fun when we were kids. We used to do everything together. And we all lost our childhood when we were all put in homes. And then running away from home, cause I couldn't connect to my mum when I got out. I rebelled and ran away and ended up on the streets of Redfern. It was hard for me to adjust back into that way of life.

For myself, when everybody else talks, when people ask you, has anyone been Stolen Generation, I basically say nothing. I don't want to put myself out there. But you should talk about the past, it's the only way to heal. Gradually, I'm coming to that, but it's still a long way off.

But you should talk about the past, it's the only way to heal. Gradually, I'm coming to that, but it's still a long way off.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND TERROR MANAGEMENT THEORY: COMING TO TERMS WITH OUR DREAD, OUR DEFENCES AND OUR INEVITABLE DEATHS

ISAAC SABEL

The existential threat that the climate crisis poses was brought close to home this summer when unprecedented bushfires engulfed half of our country in flames. Images of whole towns reduced to rubble, fire tornados, and ash falling from the heavens competed for airtime with the rising death-toll on our television screens. Our major cities were choked in hazardous smog for months on end – equivalent to smoking a ‘pack a day’ at its peak toxicity. An estimated 2-billion animal lives were lost. The Koala - one of Australia’s most beloved natives - has now been declared functionally extinct.

Inarguably, Climate Change, or Anthropogenic Global Warming is one of the biggest, and most terrifying challenges to ever face our world - posing a serious existential threat to our livelihood and continuity as a species and the creatures that we share this planet with. Recent reports from the International Panel on Climate Change warn that we have just over a decade to keep warming below 2 degrees from pre-industrial levels. In the absence of a widespread and expeditious adoption of environmentally sustainable practices and carbon-neutral technologies to halt this warming, we risk setting off irreversible feedback loops in the biosphere that may bring about near-term human extinction.

the urgency of the issue at hand – and at times, appears to contradict meaningful action. Over the past 5 years, we’ve seen a global shift towards political conservatism – electing figures like Trump, Bolsonaro and Morrison– all of whom pride themselves on selling off our precious natural resources to big forestry, oil and mining conglomerates. In Australia specifically, we now have bipartisan support for Adani – set to be the biggest coal mine in the southern hemisphere. At the individual and community level, conspiracy theories abound about how climate change is a hoax invented by the UN or the ‘deep-state’, or about how the planet is warming ‘naturally’ due to the earth’s oblong tilt. And even if people do accept the reality of climate change, and the material danger it presents, so often we see a failure to make any shifts in lifestyle practices - highlighting a powerful cognitive dissonance between what we believe in and how we behave. How do we make sense of these discrepancies, when the science is so clear that immediate and radical action is required?

Although structural and economic factors are undeniably at play, alongside these considerations it is useful to consider such discrepancies at the level of the human psyche - examining the conscious and unconscious mechanisms in the mind that may facilitate or inhibit climate action.

And yet, the global response lags seriously behind



Amongst other frameworks, Terror Management Theory (TMT, Becker, 1973; Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Solomon, 1999) has been used as a theoretical and empirical lens by social psychologists and philosophers to understand, and potentially combat some of these resistances.

Based on the early work of Ernest Becker (1973), a cultural anthropologist cross-trained in psychiatry and philosophy, TMT proposes that the unique human capacity for symbolic thought- while giving us language, and imagination and all our precious executive functions - also curses us with the ability to recognise that we are mortal; subject to the same processes of aging, death and decay that all other living beings undergo on this planet.

terror-management impulses lie at the root of all human cultural projects

As our central psychobiological objective as mortal creatures is to ensure our own survival, Becker proposes that this recognition is powerfully anxiety-inducing and has the capacity to overwhelm us with existential dread. His central hypothesis is that we try to abate this anxiety through behaviours and defences that serve to repress this realisation and justify our existence in a meaningless universe - thereby 'managing the terror'. According to Becker, terror-management impulses lie at the root of all human cultural projects that serve to give us a sense of meaning and 'symbolic immortality' - like religion, art, and group-identities.

In the 1990s, Pyszczynski, Greenberg and Solomon from the University of Arizona proposed a dual-process model for how this 'terror-management' typically takes place: translating Becker's work into an empirical paradigm that could be tested in social psychology labs around the world. They showed that when presented with reminders of our own deaths, or 'mortality primes', we as humans appear to resort to two kinds of defences. Proximal defences are the frontline defences and are drawn upon when death thoughts are accessible within conscious awareness. These include strategies designed to neuter and repress the threat into the unconscious mind- such as outright denial, rationalization, or thought-suppression. Distal defences, in contrast, are employed when death-thoughts are still present, but exist outside focal consciousness - and often are examined when a delay, or distraction task has been presented after the mortality prime to draw death thoughts into the unconscious. Distal defences may include strategies such as self-esteem affirmation, in-group protection or worldview defence - anything that affirms our sense of ourselves as beings with worth, inclusion and purpose.

TMT is now supported by thousands of peer-reviewed studies worldwide showing that, when reminded of our own deaths, we reliably and predictably respond with a range of proximal and distal defences designed to abate this existential threat. Research in diverse cultures, such as Indigenous Australians (Salzman & Halloran, 2004), East Asians (.e.g Heine, Harihara & Niiya, 2002), and North Americans (e.g. Norenzayan, Dar-Nimrod, Hansen & Proulx, 2009) has shown that death-reminders affect a wide variety of



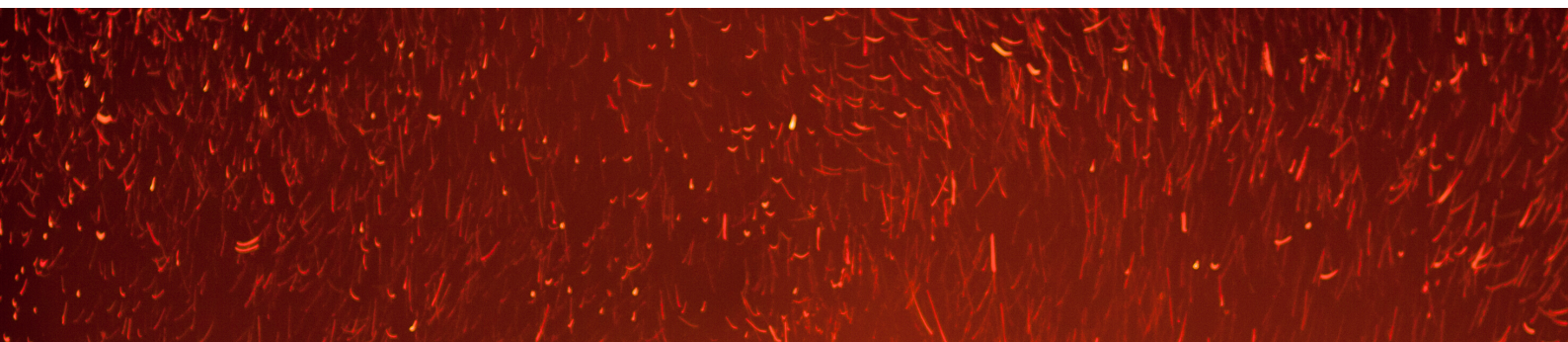
behavioural outcomes, from creativity and artistic expression (e.g. Greenberg & Kosloff, 2008) to test-performance (e.g. Landau, Greenberg & Rothschild, 2009). However – what relevance does TMT have to the climate crisis? And what understanding can it bring to changing our relationship with the natural world in this time of urgent need?

A concerning trend in TMT research that has been observed in the Western world is that reminders of death often provoke defences that take an ‘anti-environmental’ form. For example, research on death-defences in Western undergraduates has shown that mortality primes can evoke behaviours that seemingly serve to widen distance between ourselves and natural world – engendering disgust appraisals to animals, others and wilderness landscapes, decreasing the desire for experiences outdoors, and increasing the preference for cultivated urban environments (Goldenberg et al., 2001; Koole & Van de Berg, 2005). Goldenberg and colleagues (2001) argue that such distancing represents a misguided attempt to deny our own ‘creatureliness’, and thereby transcend the material reality of death. Moreover, a large body of work has shown that reminders of death in the West can lead to increases in materialistic and profiteering tendencies as sources of solace and self-esteem (e.g. Mandel & Heine, 1999; Dar-Nimrod, 2012; Mann & Woolfe, 2016), and support for right-wing authoritarian and individualistic motives (e.g. Weise et al., 2011). As the climate crisis necessitates the widespread adoption of ecologically sustainable practices, instead of the profit-motive, and a collective humanitarian response that goes beyond the actions of an individual – this is concerning.

In consideration of this fact - that death reminders can incite defensive reactions that are often at odds with meaningful climate action - the question then becomes, can messages about climate change themselves function as death primes given the existential burden the climate crisis undeniably imposes? More recent work has begun to explicitly investigate this question by exposing people to messages and images that feature scenes from the unfolding reality of the climate crisis to see if they incite the defensive reactions.

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Alarmingly, the answer to the question appears to be yes. Lowe et al. (2006) and Dickinson (2009) have shown that exposing people to messages about imminent climate-catastrophe has the capacity to incite a suite of proximal defences. These include a) outright denialism of its existence, b) a rejection of its anthropogenic character– i.e. accepting that climate change is a reality but rejecting that human activity is its cause, and c) distorted rationalizations and temporal discounting – where the impacts of climate change are minimised and projected far into the future where they no longer represent a personal danger.



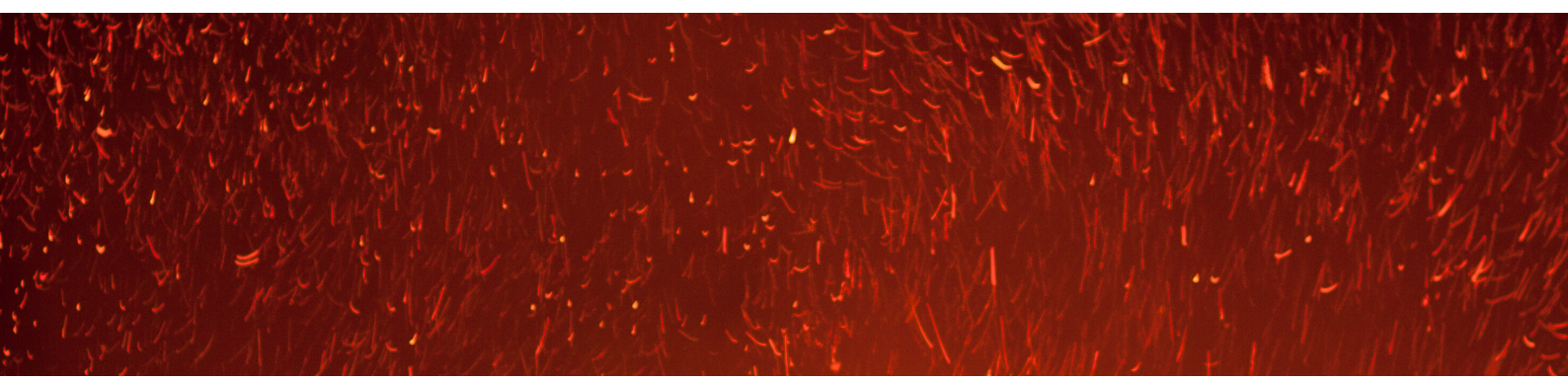
This work has also been extended to distal defences using the traditional TMT paradigm. Fritzsche, Cohrs, Kessler and Bauer (2012) found that reminding people of the material-dangers of climate change unconsciously increased their preference for charismatic, authoritarian leaders, and decreased empathy for socially derogated outgroups – such as the homeless, immigrants and criminals. Similarly, Akil, Robert-Demontrod and Bouillé (2018) and Woolfe and Tubi (2019) showed that providing people with anxiety-provoking messages about climate change increased their preference for pro-materialistic consumer choices over environmentally friendly, or neutral alternatives.

A perspective shift is needed so that nature, and its protection, rather than materialism and individualism, can become a source of self-esteem and psychospiritual fulfilment

The implications of this emerging research are real and profound. If evidence suggests that TMT is operational in our global discussions of climate change, does this account somewhat for the counter-intuitive individual, societal and political responses we have seen around the world? Does this help explain the paradoxical rise of the Trumps, Bolsonaros, Scomos of the world? Do these 'big-daddy' figures help provide us with a sense of in-group security that wards off fears of death and vulnerability? And what does this mean for our capacity to approach this crisis with a rational and humanitarian response as it unfolds and the impacts become more tangible... especially if some of these reactions may be outside of conscious awareness?

The good news is that death reminders, including those that climate change messages appear to foreground, do not necessarily elicit environmentally deleterious defences if people's self-esteem is aligned with environmentally sustainable norms. Fritzsche, Jones, Kayser and Koranyi (2010) found that priming environmentally sustainable norms before reminding participants of their own deaths increased pro-environmental behaviour. Similarly, Vess and Arndt (2008) found in their study that in the small minority of participants whose self-esteem hinged on environmental altruism and concern, mortality-priming actually lead to increases in displays of pro-environmental behaviour. Although preliminary, such findings point to the need in the West to reconfigure our relationship with the natural world so that we can derive self-esteem, worth and meaning from cultural projects that lead to the protection of nature, rather than the triumph over it. A perspective shift is needed so that nature, and its protection, rather than materialism and individualism, can become a source of self-esteem and psychospiritual fulfilment.

Another avenue to combat such resistances is empowering people to sit with the existential anxiety that climate change engenders so that defensive reactions on both conscious and unconscious dimensions are not deployed. Arguably, this requires looking at knowledges outside Western, Judaeo-Christian paradigms of death-denial and immortality-striving. Meditative traditions, such as those within Buddhism, have perennially encouraged the contemplation of our own mortality and an acceptance of the reality of our own human finitude as a motivating force for livelihood and vitality.



Indeed, emerging evidence suggests that the practice of mindfulness – the systematic cultivation of a present-centred, dispassionate and openhearted state of awareness, often through Eastern-derived meditative exercises– can quell the full-suite of defensive reactions that TMT so often provokes in us (e.g. Niemic et al., 2010; Kashidan et al., 2011). Such findings deepen our understanding of the fact that different modes of conscious processing, outside of the dominant individualistic and striving Western mindset, have a potentially powerful healing role to play in terror management.

The threat of climate change is hard to fully comprehend on a human scale, and the desire to deny, repress or escape from its material reality is understandable. However, the immensity of the problem is not abated by attempts to wish it away, deny its existence, or self-soothe through material, authoritarian or anthropocentric means that provide a temporary balm at best, and at worst exacerbate the problem. What TMT and the climate crisis can teach us is our culture is in need of a radical transformation – beyond systems of material accumulation, exploitation, symbolic immortality, and self-esteem striving – towards a system that rewards, rather than reprimands, our synergy with nature and accepts death as an inevitable fact of life. Ironically, it is only through a radical acceptance and recognition of climate change's threat to our livelihood and continuity as a species, and a capacity to sit with this without recourse to defensive reactions, that we might begin to take meaningful and rational action.

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CULTURAL CONSULTATION - ELEMENTAL BEINGS

LEAH PEARSON

Creator and The Mother don't need us, they want us.

Together they hold an unbreakable weaving of us back and forth constantly.

Our ancestors weaved our culture. They provide us eternal connection. They are permanent threads of all elements.

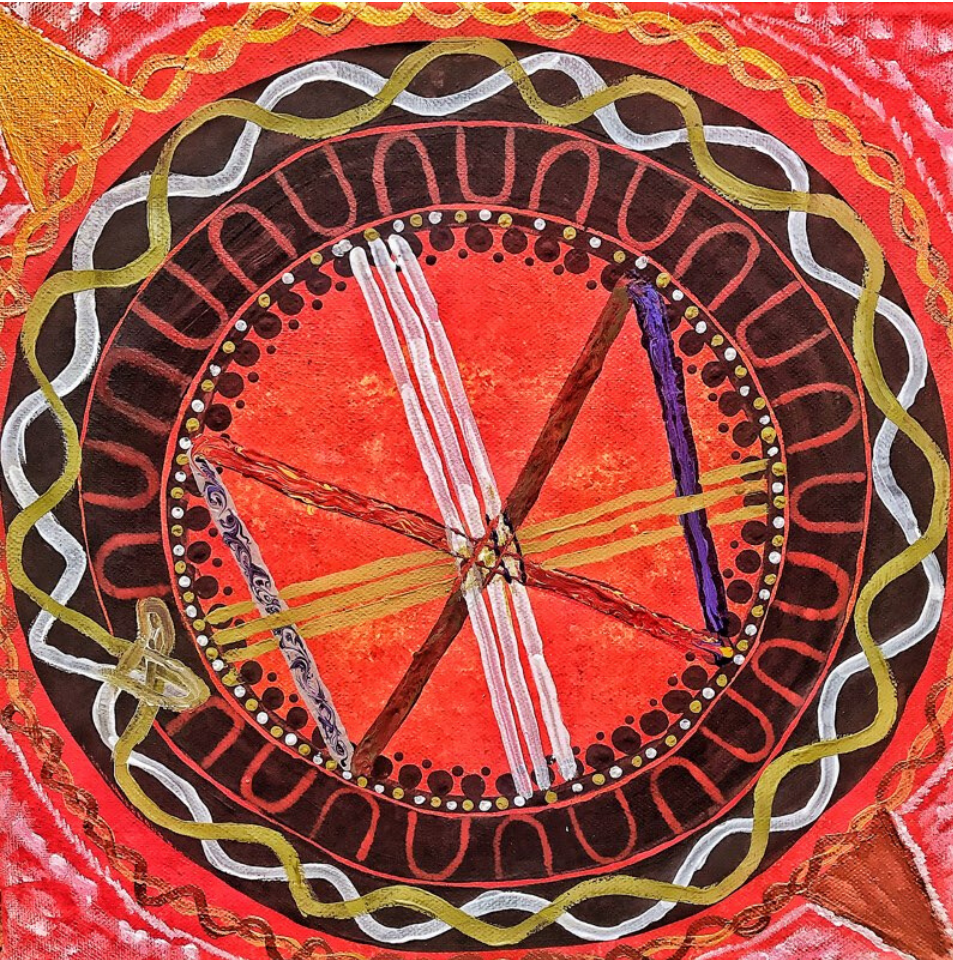
We continue this weaving, passing threads to our children to continue their own.

We plant seeds through everything we do, leaving threads for these seeds to grow and take over that weaving.

We are elemental beings. Without the elements we are nothing. Without Creator and The Mother, we do not exist.

Spirit, Air, Fire, Water, Earth, Healing all work together to keep us going.

We are connected no matter what. No matter where we are, we are firmly held by connection in many ways that all connect to each other and bring us back together.



HEARING

HENRY BRIFFA

while eating risotto at Serena's our conversation turned to the fires
& within minutes Bianca her soon-to-be-married daughter

*on that hike where we'd miscalculated
we used the remaining light to set up camp*

requested three times that we change the subject
before bawling "I just can't cope with what my future holds."

*while Rob & Serena dropped down a gully
in search of water to replenish our depleted supplies*

Serena told her that it was important that we talk of these things
insisted that she be rational

*Rob's the most experienced hiker I know
7 or 8 multi-day trips a year while still working full-time*

said if she was worried she should do something useful like join the Greens
Bianca dropped her fork & ran to her room

*it's as though walking in pristine bushland is what he lives for
& when he returned with water I tried to engage him on that*

to conceal her young face that was wet & fire-hydrant red
Serena persisted preaching about her activism in Stonnington

*"one day" he said "I won't be able to" then he paused
"perhaps it's my work or just getting old"*

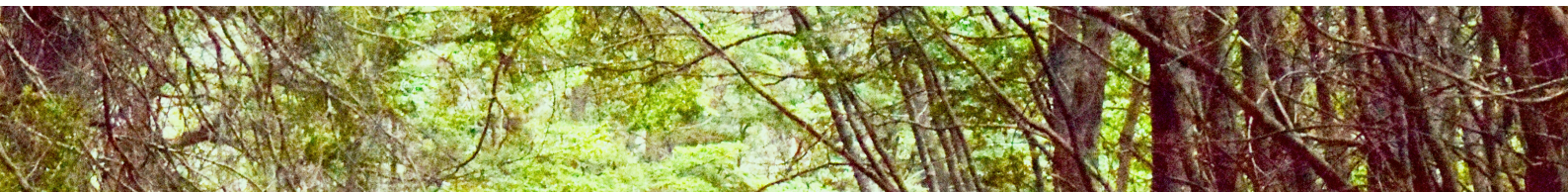
their behaviour in council chamber while I sat feeling for her daughter
wishing I had somehow acknowledged her fear

*we all knew he works on models
that he's pretty senior at the Bureau*

*something was in the air
& before long he was talking about hearing loss*

*"It's hard for people to understand" he said
"how important hearing is."*

- Henry Briffa is an experienced Psychologist & Psychotherapist and accomplished published poet. In addition to his published and performance work, he runs poetry workshops with a focus on poetry writing as a form of personal therapy.





DROPPING INTO COLLABORATION

SALLY GILLESPIE

IDEAS THAT CHANGED ME

In 2008, I organised a panel about depth psychology and climate change for the Jung Society of NSW. It went well, but life was busy. It was time, I thought, to move on to the next thing. But then came a dream which changed my thinking forever. This dream was a terrifying depiction of global chaos caused by climate catastrophe. In it, I swung on a rope above the Earth as land masses shifted beneath me. Millions of people in the oceans desperately clung to fast disappearing land. I knew I had to join them. I let go of the rope and dropped into this catastrophe, becoming one of many attempting to hold onto heaving shores.

My dream catapulted me out of my habitual life and view of the world. I shook for the vulnerability of all beings on Earth, as my consciousness opened up to the realities of collective fate. Any possibility of distancing myself from climate reports collapsed. While I did not believe my dream was precognitive or prophetic in any literal sense, I did feel that my world, the one I knew as a reality, was ending. My dream crashed through denials and rationalisations, breaching the walls of habitual thought and rupturing foundational beliefs about personal autonomy and independence. I woke from it knowing that the rest of my life would be focused on climate issues.

Over the next few years my attention shifted from my clinical practice as a Jungian psychotherapist into the

emerging questions of climate psychology, like what drives climate denial, and what nurtures climate engagement? I embarked on a PhD, facilitating a collaborative research group of campaigners, artists, policy makers and community workers.

They were all willing to explore the psychological experience of their climate engagement and realisations. Our discussions were absorbing and stimulating, ranging widely through emotional, political, philosophical, practical and spiritual realms as we dived deep into the complexities and fluxes of the individual and collective psyche.

***I shook for the
vulnerability of all beings
on Earth, as my
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to the realities of collective
fate***

We also shared dreams to tune into our unconscious feelings and perspectives, and were rewarded with both nightmares and dream images of bridging divides. At the end of this research, the consensus from participants was that our reflective group conversations fostered mindfulness, emotional



resilience, psychological maturity and a transformation of worldviews, all of which empowered ongoing climate action.

We can only step up to collective crisis through collective means and practices. The focus of my work now is writing about, and facilitating, reflective group conversations in response to ecological crises.

Now the question I hold is “how do we respond to this?” – whether “this” is climate emergency or COVID19

Such conversations enable people to articulate and listen to a diversity of experiences and understandings, while grappling with and processing the grief, despairs and fears of living in times of profound change in world and worldview. Only through sitting and listening to one another can we ask fundamental questions about what matters most in life and death, while sharing and exploring painful emotions, deep-seated assumptions, values, conflicts, images, dreams and meanings. Safe and open dialogues engender warmth, tolerance, validation and a diversity of understandings on how to engage with collective crises. They also prevent burnout and fuel activism. With its holding together of both personal/individual and socio-political/collective perspectives, this collaborative psychological work nurtures maturity and psychological resilience within individuals and communities.

When I woke from my despairing dream of drowning in a disintegrating world twelve years ago, all I could think was “how do I respond to this?” Now the question I hold is “how do we respond to this?” – whether “this” is climate emergency or COVID19. Only by engaging in open dialogues where we can share our thoughts, feelings and imaginings together, can we become fully present, laying the foundation for communities capable of bearing uncertainties and loss, honouring differences, experimenting with change and cultivating compassion.

Dr Sally Gillespie facilitates workshops on climate psychology and ecopsychology, and is the author of Climate Crisis and Consciousness: Re-imagining our world and ourselves.



NEGATING SOLASTALGIA: FROM THE ANTHROPOCENE TO THE SYMBIOCENE

GLENN ALBRECHT PHD.

Glenn Albrecht is an eco-philosopher who created the term Solastalgia. He is well known for his book *Earth Emotions*, which looks at the myriad of new emotions that are needed to explain our sentiments during this era of climate change. The following piece is an presentation that Glenn did for the February 2020 meeting of Psychologists for Social Justice.

I don't have much to do with psychology at Wallaby farm in Dun's Creek (my abode), however, I do have 'conversations' with koalas and wallabies. Yet, to get to speak to psychologists with a justice focus is truly amazing.

Let me tell you a bit about myself. I'm a transdisciplinary philosopher. So, I regularly transgress into the field of psychology without knowing it. It's wonderful when psychology discovers what I'm doing and is then interested enough to see how the Venn diagrams create a zone of intersection. So, I'm an environmental philosopher, but I've never worked in the philosophy department. It's not that I don't like philosophers, I just like applied transdisciplinary thinking a lot more. I've worked in transdisciplinary health contexts where I've taught complexity theory and ethics and also in environmental science. Now I'm working on the emotions that we have with respect to our relationship to the Earth.

It started in 2003 when I began to think about the impact of open cut coal mining on the minds and psyches of people in the Upper Hunter Valley. It was also prompted by my own reaction to seeing this devastation or desolation of the landscape around me. I'd been reading the history of the Hunter Valley from the perspective of early explorers and the ornithologists like John and Elizabeth Gould. They wrote eloquently about the beauty of the Hunter Valley and what a fantastic place it was for landscape, for its natural productions such as birds and mammals. I was filled with this vision of the Upper Hunter area as the Goulds had described it. Of course, when I got there, I found a moonscape, a place that was being desolated on such a scale that you can see it easily on Google Earth. At that time, it was around about 500 square kilometres of open cut mining power stations and rail infrastructure. It was a shock to the system.

I write about what I call my 'sumbiography', which is the sum total of influences on my view of the relationship I have to nature. My sumbiography growing up in Perth predisposed me to beautiful landscape birds and natural productions. I was a Greenie from a very young age. At the age of two I ran away from home to see a neighbour's cockatoo. So that's how early my encounters with nature have been. I originally wanted to be an ornithologist, so I went to university at UWA to study it but failed dismally.



It was the same old story of sex, drugs and rock and roll. Plus, opposing the Vietnam war and fighting for free University tuition and we got it! This is how old I am. It was out of ornithology and into epistemology, ontology and philosophy. So that's my brief, biographical story.

My term 'solastalgia' comes from this engagement with the place that I loved vicariously through reading the historical journals of people like the Goulds. I spent the time understanding the Hunter and then the shock of finding the reality of the area was where 'solastalgia' as a concept comes from. To understand where my sentiments come from you have to delve into the concepts of the Anthropocene. I'll briefly explain what this is it.

Crutzen and Stoermer (2000) came up with this idea that humans have exited the Holocene, a period of relative stability in the earth's climate and the systems that are driven by it and drive it. There was roughly 11,000 years of Holocene stability and then we moved into the Anthropocene. Anthropocene comes from 'anthropos', meaning 'human', and is a period where humans began to dominate all known geological, biological and evolutionary forces on the planet. So powerful had we become that the geologists needed to define a new era where the human imprint on the planet was so great that it was worthy of a named geological era. I don't know if they've actually come to a conclusion about that, they seem to meet every year and say "maybe next year". Whether we like it or not, I think from a philosophical, sociological, psychological point of view, we're actually in the Anthropocene.

My aim in life is to get out of it. If you want to see the Anthropocene, go to the Upper Hunter Valley.



These are the empty carriages going back to the valley to be filled, and the filled ones going to the port of Newcastle to be exported as greenhouse gases to the rest of the world. The valley lies below. Further in the distance are the towns of Singleton and Muswellbrook and in between those two towns is where the really concentrated effort to extract black coal takes place.

This is the Anthropocene in action. It's terraforming the landscape. It's creating climate change, and the climate change is exported. It's then returned back to the valley in the form of drought, dust, noise, psychic disturbances. And, of course, the drought, the fires, all of these things, in a sense, are being returned to the area that's producing them. What I wanted to argue is that there's a relationship between the distress of the earth and the distress of human beings, both physical and mental. I'm not talking about anything that's diagnosable or treatable from a biomedical point of view. The argument is that as the earth is subject to distress, given that we once lived in this period called the Holocene, which was like the Goldilocks era: just right for humans.



Now we are in a new state or new era called the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is having a really negative impact on our biological being as a species. Of course, it's doing that to other types of beings, all the way from microscopic to the biggest things alive on the planet. So, the correlation that I'm interested in is this one between human physical and mental distress in the state of the environment. This is an old story. I mean, Hippocrates was interested in describing the state of the environment before giving a diagnosis of the health of the citizens. He would advise to go and check the winds, taste the water, look at all the physical foundations of health and then he would tell you whether people are physically healthy. Then we'll be able to talk about how they're handling their social, cultural and mental health as well.



This is another photograph exemplifying the Anthropocene in the upper Hunter. There is a phase waterpower station in the background with an active coal mine in the foreground. It's so grainy and difficult to see because the dust is terrible. I'm actually taking the photograph through a barbed wire fence, which has a sign saying, trespassers will be prosecuted, survivors will be taken to court. I've taken lots of journalists out there to have a look at that same scene. They've started taking drones with them and to take images of inside the mine from above. Now there's a new sign which is drones will be shot down with military hardware. I'm actually responsible for a new drone sign.

There is a change now where the distress that we're dealing with is global in scale. I know humans in the past may have had to deal with some fairly large events, like volcanic eruptions from Krakatoa in the 1880s. However, we're now looking at global warming as a universal impact which, however, is not equally distributed on Earth (for example, we've just seen Australia get more than our fair share with respect to the fires). I would argue that we're now in a new era when it comes to looking at this relationship between the state of the earth and human distress. I don't think humans have ever had to confront that issue before. This is also one of the reasons why I create new terms.

I think we just don't have the terms in our past language to help us understand what's going on. I'm made more confident in this when I see that indigenous people are also struggling with the language that they have to describe unwanted change to their own environments. One word I like is "uggianaqtuq" (pronounced OOG-gi-a-nak-took). It's an Inuit word. Uggianaqtuq means 'a friend who is acting strangely'. Inuit people would use that word to describe somebody who's becoming unreliable and doing strange things. Well, they've had to use that word to describe their cryosphere, their world of ice. It's become so strange to them that they didn't have a word in their physical geography to describe it. Famously, they have 20 different words for snow. You'd think if there was a word in their language for their own environment acting in a way that was unpredictable or strange then they'd have it. Instead, they've had to shift the word from their cultural context and put it into the climate context. So that's an indication that they are dealing with a novel stress in their home environment.



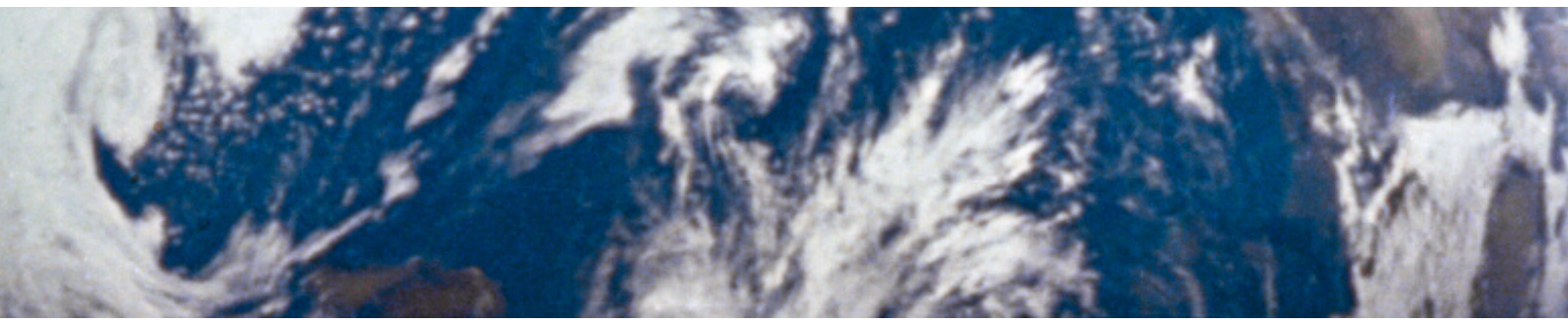
Moving on, I'm reasonably well known for creating this term 'solastalgia', and it's similar to Uggianaqtuq in a sense. It's my response to the need to create a new word, a neologism to describe something that I thought at the time in 2003 didn't exist in the English language. There was a term that I thought was closely related, which was the old medical definition of nostalgia from Hoffer in 1688. It was defined as a form of serious psychophysical disturbance when you were absent from home and wish to return and as a result, for example, if you a soldier fighting on a foreign shore. Hoffer thought that you could die of nostalgia. Later, nostalgia came to mean a sentimental desire to return to a place or time that you previously loved (like wanting to return to the era of Elvis Presley). So, Hoferian nostalgia was close, but I was looking at something that involved people who are emplaced, who were at home, they hadn't gone anywhere. Yet they feel as though their home had packed up and gone away from them. That was a strange feeling, Freud would have called it uncanny and there would have been other ways of describing it. I thought, since there's no word for it, I'm going to create one. So I created the concept of solastalgia. The bumper sticker version is 'the homesickness you have when you're still home and your home is leaving you'.

You can experience that feeling when your home is subject to mining. It could be that you had a nice peaceful little place in Sydney and suddenly somebody puts up a metro-rail or airport right through it. There are plenty of instances in the natural and built environment where your home becomes so seriously desolated that it affects your quality of life and hence becomes solastalgia. It's an existential distress.

Your existence is no longer one that delivers solace when your home is one that's been desolated. I've also defined Solastalgia as an attack on one's sense of place. Your identity and sense of belonging is tied to where you live. We're not all global hipsters that just don't care where we are, we actually do have a lot of people that are quite homely. As a result, if your home is being attacked, you find that to be a form of psychological desolation. That's probably an important word. "To be desolated" applies to both the mind and the landscape. It's also a political concept, I have written about solastalgia being a point where you shift from being stressed, distressed, grieving, or mourning to one where you either sit in the corner of the room, put your hands over your head and rock back and forth, or you do something.

The bumper sticker version is 'the homesickness you have when you're still home and your home is leaving you'

I also wrote about the politics of solastalgia. It is a point where you realize that your stress or distress is so great that you can't take it any longer. You can either flip towards clinically defined depression or towards the politics of repair and restoration. Obviously, that was my reaction when I saw the Upper Hunter: the Anthropocene in action. I thought, well, I want to transform this. I want to shift from this grand scale desolation, destroying people's quality of life, sense of place, destroying the quality of the biophysical environment, the Hunter river, the vegetation, the birds and the mammals. [The river used to be a place full of freshwater mussels. That's why the town of Muswellbrook is aptly named.



You won't find them there now because they're filter feeders and can no longer cope with the levels of water pollution.

Solastalgia has been around for over a decade. It's now, unfortunately, doing well as a concept so I feel vindicated that I created it. Missy Higgins named an album after my concept and there are punk rock and heavy metal band tracks named after it. People are actually headbanging and referencing solastalgia and other negative psychoterratic terms as part of their Tibetan throat roaring. I think that's an indication that I've made an impact on the cultural front. It's also being used by artists to create exhibitions. It's just another example that solastalgia is alive as a concept and people are doing something with their art as a response. I think art is transformational, art is radical, art contains within it a challenge to everything that's connected to social justice. You're forced to look at something that sometimes you'd rather not confront. We tend to want to evade the Anthropocene in action where it's at its worst. Artists force us to look.

The people living close to this mine experience the impacts of the largest forms of terraforming, using the largest machinery on earth. If you go to the Upper Hunter day and night all you hear is the roar of these huge diesel engines, the banging of truck gates and the dumping of rocks into the trucks. Then people who live next door, like 'Dora' (not her real name) have to figure out to live with this imposition. They didn't want it and now they can't get rid of it. They're now neighbours with the most powerful people on earth, companies like Peabody Coal and Yancoal, The State government also has a huge vested interest in coal because of royalties.

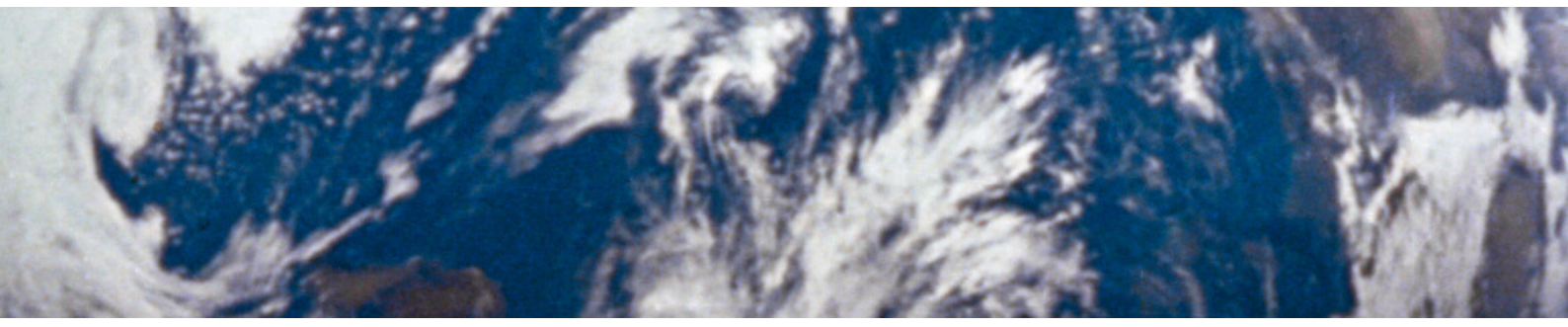


Here's an open cut mine about two kilometres long, half a kilometre deep and half a kilometre wide. That's one of the world's largest machines. It's an electric shovel or drag line. It would be bigger than this building. The trucks that service it have wheels that are bigger than the average car.

Then that goes into the state coffers and then there are large brown paper bags full of money that go from companies into the cycle of stuff that we call politics. This system is designed for self-destruction.

We've done interviews, focus groups, and a whole lot of qualitative social research to try tell us something about how people are responding to the stressors that we see in the Upper Hunter. What's going on like in Australia is showing the rest of the world what the Anthropocene is like when it comes to bite you.

I felt solastalgia during the bushfire crisis. Everyone used the word 'unprecedented' when describing the fires. It's a truism that we have never seen such extensive fires in eastern Australia in written history (250 years) however, under the impact of warming, the drying under the drought, the winds, and the fact that there's now 25 million Australians living mainly



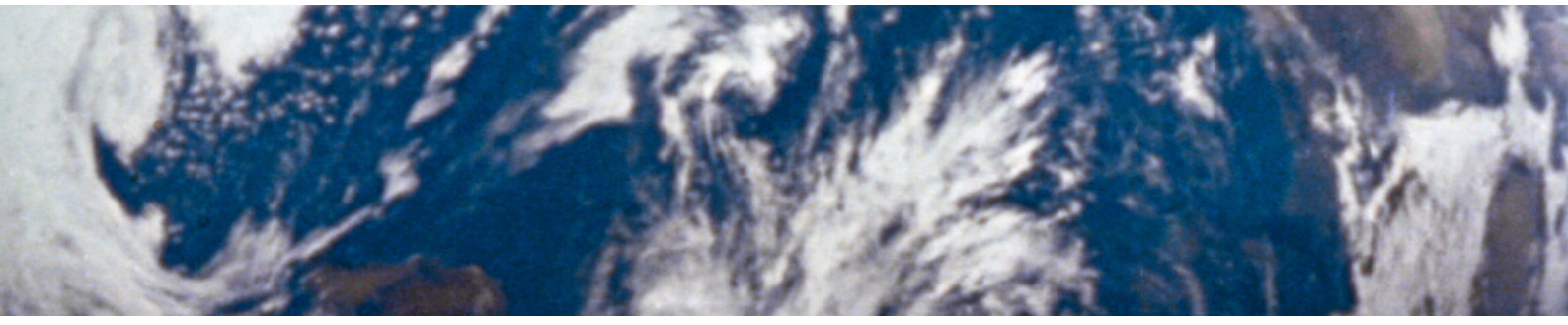
on the east coast it seems that all the conditions for wildfire were there. I had a personal experience of that event.



Here's a picture (see above) of water bombing helicopters over Duns Creek where I live. They are trying to extinguish a fire that's going straight up the mountainside that was rainforest. It took a week and a half to put that fire out. It was put out every couple of days and then every time it become hot and windy the fire would roar up again. So, I'm standing there watching this fire wondering, "is the wind going to change from the south to the north? If so, we have to go". We had our suitcases packed for a month ready to leave. My wife left three times because we were either in a 'Watch and Act' or an emergency situation. I have a firefighting pump and hose and if we became under ember attack, I'll stay and try stop my house from burning. However, if I see flames, I'm out of there and there's only one way out. That was my lived experience of negative environmental change. I've not lived in the Upper Hunter, but I now live in a place where I experienced 47-degree days two summers in a row. 45 is now common, 40 is almost like oh geez, it's nice and cool today isn't it.

The old 38 (100F) has now become a 'cool change'. Anything under that then I'm reaching for a jumper. We've now got a lived experience of this climate change so we now have to talk about it in the past tense. The climate is changed and we are now experiencing the negative impacts that come from that change.

Solastalgia is not the only term used to experience earth emotions. 'Necrophilia' is not what you think, it's a more sophisticated notion than that. It's a love of the creation of death and dead things rather than any kind of weird abuse. 'Global dread' is another term that I've contributed. Instead of operating in the present, or the past, you wake up in the middle of the night thinking about what the future is going to be like for your own children or grandchildren. Not just your own children but anyone's. It's a projection of panic into the future. Dread is, by definition, a future orientated psychological state. 'Nature Deficit Disorder' from Richard Louv, the American journalist is the gradual removal of children from biophysical environments such that we now have this deficit or disorder. Others have called it 'Environmental Generational Amnesia'. A brilliant scholar about 40 years ago called it the "extinction of experience". What a horrendous idea that we could actually begin an era like that. 'Ecoparalysis' has been around for about a decade as well. That is where the news is paralyzingly bad that you don't know what to do. Changing the light bulbs is not sufficient. You need to be able to respond in some way, but you don't know how. 'Eco-anxiety', that term is being used everywhere now. That was created by a journalist in America to try and help people in her local community who were worried about pollution to the local lake.



These concepts don't always come from academia, they can come straight from the way people are experiencing their lives in the ordinary world (If I can compare that to the academic world). 'Tierratrauma' is another term I've created that because I thought solastalgia was a chronic condition. Climate change doesn't happen instantly. Of course, if somebody chops down the tree outside your house, that's instantly traumatic. Therefore the 'earth trauma' is one that I created about a decade ago. I created a neologism yesterday or the day before, I think it was two days ago. It's 'meuacide' which is defined as the extinction of emotions. It comes from the European root word meuə- connected to words like 'to remove' and from from emotion'. Obviously, 'cide' means to kill.

What happens is that as the Anthropocene bulldozes or metastasizes its way through even more of the things that we hold to be good ... it kills. In a sense, we can only experience these negative emotions if we have within us a strong sense of their opposites. You can't experience solastalgia unless you have a love of place. It's not possible to have that distress, otherwise "you just couldn't care".

There are many other terms like ecological grief, environmental grief, climate grief, climate trauma, ecological trauma, climate mourning, climate anxiety that are now being used. Ecological grief is an interesting one because I didn't know ecologies could grieve? I think the idea of trauma is appropriate now. We're moving out of the fact that the climate may be changing and into "oh, shit, the climate has changed". Now we're trying to escape from wildfire. That's traumatic and needs to be described as such.

Your Australian Psychological Society has recognized the issue of climate and its impacts as incredibly important. They include solastalgia in their written description of the psychosocial wellbeing list that they would want psychologists to be constantly paying attention to. The American Psychological Association and other professional bodies have also recognized solastalgia is something that hopefully is deserving of a place when looking at the impacts of climate change.

So how do we get out of the Anthropocene? I'm not entirely sure but I'll give it a red-hot go. My idea is based on the concept of the Symbiocene. The root word for symbiosis is the Greek 'sumbiosis'. S-U-M.

We're moving out of the fact that the climate may be changing and into "oh, shit, the climate has changed"

When the scientists got together to create the new discipline or the new body of knowledge, called symbiosis, they've changed the wording and the spelling to S-Y-M. Don't know why but they did. When I looked at the origin of the term, I realized that it comes from the Greek, 'sumbios' – to live together and bios meaning life. If I'm going to create a new period in history, then we have to put the -cene on the end of it, which is the idea or 'era'. Symbiosis is a key term I use to explain why it is that the Anthropocene is going wrong and where we need to change in order to get out of it.



We have to move in the direction of a more symbiotic, mutually inclusive, a companionship relationship with the rest of life, rather than one of gross exploitation. I think we're in an extremely parasitic relationship with the rest of the planet. I want this idea of symbiosis to be the basis for the next period in human history. I'm interested in biomimicry as a way of beginning the process of shifting out of the Anthropocene. It might begin with the living wall on the exterior of a building down in George Street. However, just copying what nature looks like is not enough. In my book I talk about sumbiomimicry, which is not just the form of life, but also the processes that make life possible. That means that we need to begin to design buildings and our technologies in a way that seamlessly intersects with the rest of life.

We have to move in the direction of a more symbiotic, mutually inclusive, a companionship relationship with the rest of life

That might seem impossible right now but I think we lived that way as humans for the bulk of our existence. We're not prepared to go back to the cave and wearing hair shirts and as a result, we've got to come up with a new intelligent way of symbiotically reconnecting. I don't think we've got any choice in that matter, because there are now close to 8 billion people on the planet. By 2050, there'll be at least 10 billion people, disease and pestilence aside. We've been around for a while. As a species we're persistent. There are all sorts of interesting things that we can learn from past cultures.

What I'm saying here is that let's not do stupid things like pollute our environment. Let's not use things that are toxic and that can't be got rid of. Let's not make things that can't be recycled or at least so ephemeral that people just throw them away. No single use plastics. We must respect the role of other species, that's fundamental. If we don't do that, then our ecosystems will fail. Protection of symbiotic bonds between and within species at all scales. We've got the microbiome in our guts. Without it, we can't live. Apparently. According to some research that I've looked at, the gut microbiome symbiotically helps us by dealing with our food and nutritional requirements, but it also affects our moods. It can profoundly affect the way that we relate as a human being to other human beings. This idea of protecting symbiotic bonds is not some external relationship that our bodies have with the biome that we happen to live in. It's happening at other scales; it's happening within us. It's happening within other organisms within us. There is a world inside us that is absolutely profound and cosmic. This might all sound far removed from the culture, the society and concepts of justice. So, I guess there's a kind of Maslowian hierarchy here: get this stuff right and then the rest of a good life will follow it. Without the basics that life needs to survive we don't really get into philosophy or psychology classes. It just won't happen. We've got to have some kind of hierarchy that says, food, water, the microbiome, the way we interact with other species is foundational to the rest of life, foundational for human wellbeing.

Some examples of biomimicry and sumbiomimicry: they're now making bricks out of fungi. Some of them can self-repair.



It would be nice to have a house that was made out of fungi that repaired itself every time something broke. Another example is the fact you can finish your fast food down at the uni eatery then eat your plate. It's not just biodegradable, it's bloody tasty. I want a wall full of microbes that generates the electricity in my house. They're now producing electricity from a micro-organism to a house scale in a new study. You can envisage that instead of solar panels and lithium and we might be able to have living systems that generate electricity. We can actually do it now. The fashion industry is making cool stuff out of mushrooms. That's the sort of shift in thinking that we need to have. Living things can produce what we need in a way that's completely seamless with the rest of life and that is non-toxic.

I'm into the beauty of decay. I'm decaying at a rapid rate and I'm just going to have to accept that at the age of 66. I realized as I walk up the hill from train station to here that I'm not quite as fit as I used to be. However, the idea that we should celebrate decay is something that most find really odd. One of the reasons why I think that we have our death-defying culture is that this culture has somehow sought to impose itself on life in a way that is an attempt at permanence. Yet, as a species relatively newly involved evolved on the planet, we evolved in life structures in biomes that pre-existed us by millions of years. I mean, koalas were in Australia 25 million years ago. So, it's probably worthwhile for us to begin to think about how our culture and technology can fit within that framework rather than imposing 'artificial' permanence, pollution and change on the rest of life. I'm also interested in 'symbiofacts': the things that replace every single polluting, nasty 'artefact' on the planet.

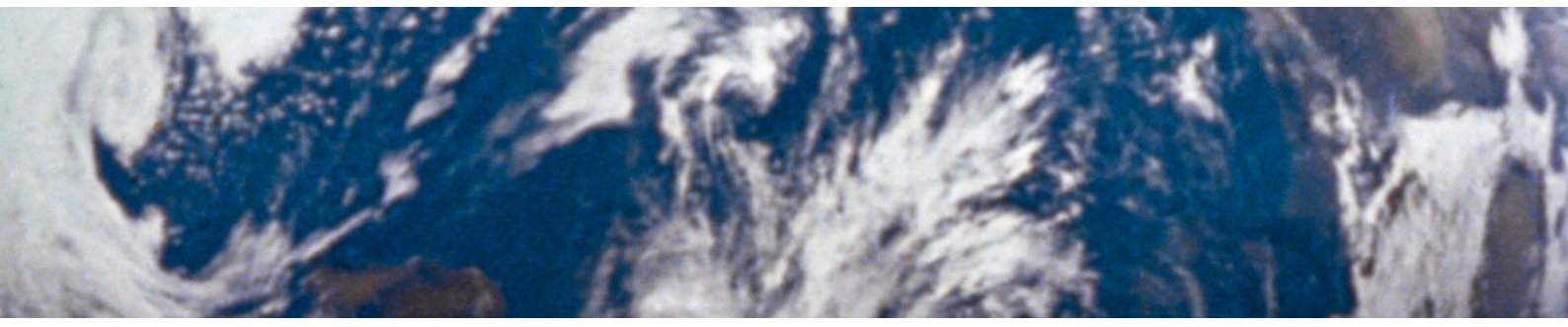
what that means, we're going to have to be really busy! It's going to take architects, engineers and designers, full time creative work to actually make this transition. It should be exciting.

So now you've got the idea of the symbiocene and it looks good on paper but it delivers something other than mushrooms and fashion. It delivers the space that we need for good earth emotions, the positive ones that I said had been sublimated. They had been sitting there while the Anthropocene has been bulldozing our consciousness. The Symbiocene is a place where we recreate the opportunity to experience good earth emotions. The question is, what are they? What are these good emotions?

It would be nice to have a house that was made out of fungi that repaired itself every time something broke

'Biophilia' is from E.O. Wilson who used it to describe the love of life. 'Ecophilia', is the opposite of ecocide and other death and destruction concepts.

'Symbiophilia'; that's me creating a term which is the love of how things interconnect, the love of relationships. 'Topophilia': the geographer, Tuan, created 'love of place'. 'Topos' meaning place and 'philia' meaning love of. 'Soliphilia' I created to describe the love of working with other people to try and stop despots from pulling the joint apart. It's a political concept.





Here's a picture of me 10 years ago at Gooralong Brook in the Darling Ranges above Perth experiencing 'Eutierria'. "Eu" means good 'tierra' is the earth. You can say that when you are experiencing something that is bringing you to be at one with the earth, where there's no divide between the knower and the known you are experiencing a state which is completely at harmony with your exterior environment.

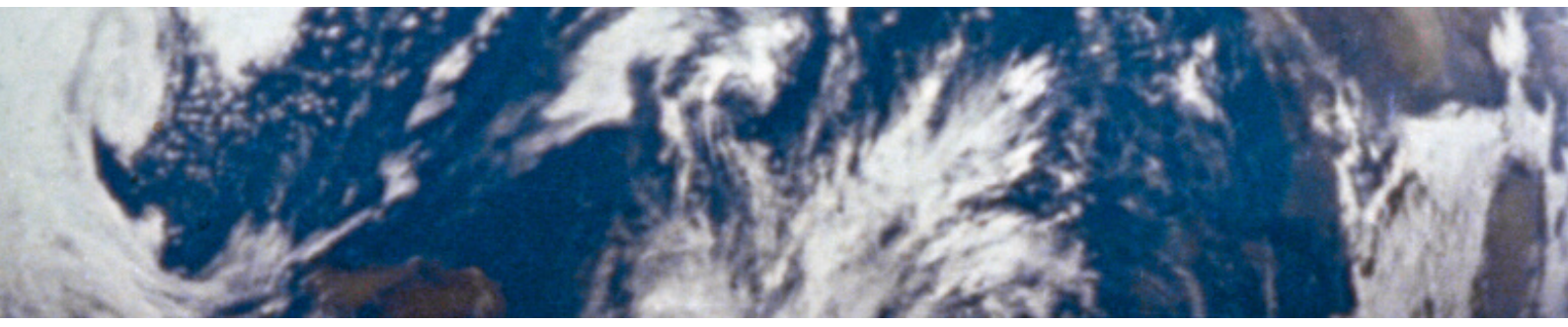
The Symbiocene is a meme which I hope is powerful enough to counter the Anthropocene. I can invite you all now to join, it's free. Once you're in it, you can't ever get out. It's completely beguiling, as you can't think of a future without it because if you're all thinking of the Anthropocene still, you must have a death wish. I'm sure you're all young enough to not want one of those at the moment. The dismantling of the Anthropocene is beginning to take place. We're seeing it psychologically, even in Australia, where there seems to be a schism, a shift in consciousness to "there's something going really wrong". We have to do something. It's not that all of us are to blame. I think children are definitely not responsible for what's going on. Yet the injustice is profound. The 1% that are doing the moving and shaking, those in the

advanced industrial wealthy world, are the ones that are going to have the most change imposed upon them.

I support 'Generation Symbiocene'. I'm hoping that it's not just the young marching but also baby boomers like me. Some of us boomers might actually do the right thing. I learned that Pink Floyd's guitarist sold a guitar and donated the profits to Extinction Rebellion. There's no rule that says that Generation Symbiocene can just be "Z", "Y" and a few "Xs". Hopefully, there are plenty of us that want to join Gen S. As a result, I'm looking forward to your transformation of injustice to justice through Gen S. The reason why I'm so keen on this: that's my four-year-old granddaughter. Look, she's running into the future ... I mean, 'who wouldn't want to look after her?'



'who wouldn't want to look after her?'



NATURES TAROT

SOPHIE RHODES
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Tarot cards have been used for centuries to tell people's fortune and predict the future but in the present age and our future, collectively they are not just psychic but instead psychoterrific (Albrecht, 2017). In other words, our psychic life is linked inherently to the future of terra, the earth. In this piece I have drawn a series of ecologically-themed cards depicting Victorian-esque images of biological animal drawings, plant cells and botanicals to exemplify this - cards which when assembled inevitably continue to fall. There can be little solace in a fortune told of the ecology given the current dire environmental implications we are facing. My piece aims to capture our status in pre-traumatic times, art for the coming Apocalypse, built on nostalgia.



MENTAL HEALTH CLINICIANS PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE WITHIN THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES – AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRE CRISIS.

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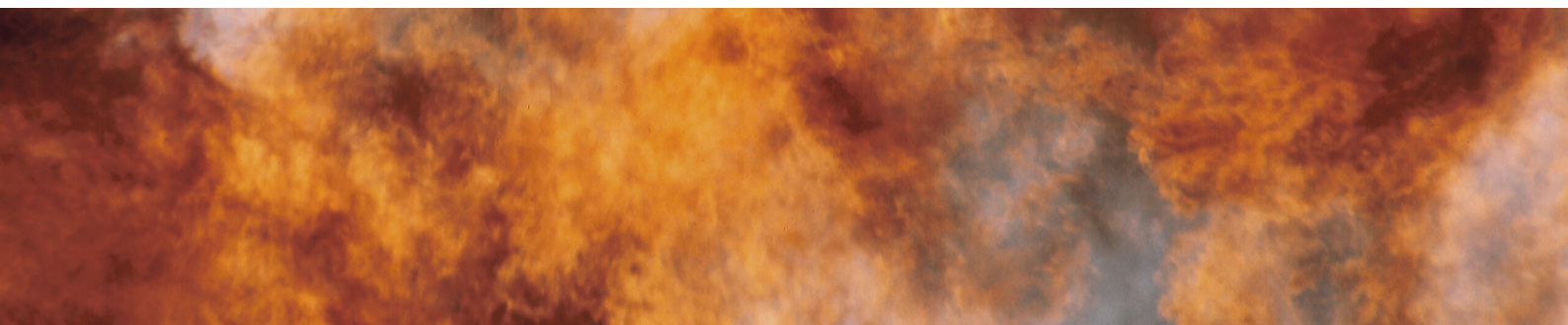
SIDIS, A. E.*, TAYLOR, E.** RIVER, J.^

Abstract

Between November 2019 and February 2020, Australia experienced unprecedented bushfires. Approximately 27 million acres of Australian bushland was lost with an enormous consequence for biodiversity. Around 3000 homes were destroyed or damaged, and 33 people and billions of animals died. Thousands of people were forced to evacuate their homes, and hazardous levels of smoke in major cities led to physical and psychological distress for many. This occurred in the context of the hottest and driest year in Australia on record. Clinicians working in bushfire-affected towns were called upon to provide mental health support for those impacted in their communities. This paper is a reflection on supervision conversations with a small group of clinicians working in southern New South Wales who found themselves struggling to hold their own despair about the fires while attempting to support others. This reflection includes a critique of the conceptualisation of vicarious trauma to describe clinician's distress in this context, and stands alongside the work of Vikki Reynolds in resisting the effects of individualism in how clinicians see others and themselves in their work.

Catastrophic events, such as bushfires and extreme weather events linked to climate warming, can severely challenge the world-view and stability of members of a community (Huggard, 2011). Often this relates to such phenomena being outside an individual's or community's capacity to control, which creates feelings of fear and helplessness, particularly when events threaten people and loved ones with death or severe injury (Ehrenreich, 2002). Mental health clinicians (clinicians) providing support to clients experiencing distress in relation to these events are often intimately exposed to narratives of trauma, as well as the emotional sequelae of traumatic events. Additionally, clinicians who are members of affected communities, may provide support while dealing with their own experiences of distress and loss.

Figley (1995) and others (e.g. Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995) have argued that clinicians can indirectly experience trauma when attending to clients' testimonies, and can be affected in much the same way as those exposed directly. It is proposed that clinicians are impacted via empathic engagement, which includes deeply listening and entering into the worldview of the client (Wilson and Brwynn, 2004).



Clinicians, as human beings, can experience a variety of responses to narratives of trauma, including changed perception of the world (Pearlman & Saavittine, 1995), heightened anxiety and sense of personal vulnerability, low mood, exhaustion, headaches, and professional self-doubt (Watts and Wilson, 1999). These indirect trauma responses have been referred to as secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Stamm, 1995) or vicarious trauma (VT) (Pearlman & Saakvitine, 1995). Additionally, terms such as compassion fatigue and burnout have been used (Diehm, 2015).

Clinicians are encouraged to engage in a combination of self-monitoring, self-care, training and supervision, often heralded as the antidote to the stress and distress experienced. This can include measures such as being vigilant to symptoms of distress, maintaining a work-life balance, challenging negative thinking in themselves, doing relaxation and physical exercise and seeking social and supervisory support, and further training to 'manage boundaries' (Meichenbaum, 2007). Services are also expected to respond to the needs of clinical employees working with trauma-affected clients. This often involves a mix of supervisory support and training (Meichenbaum, 2007).

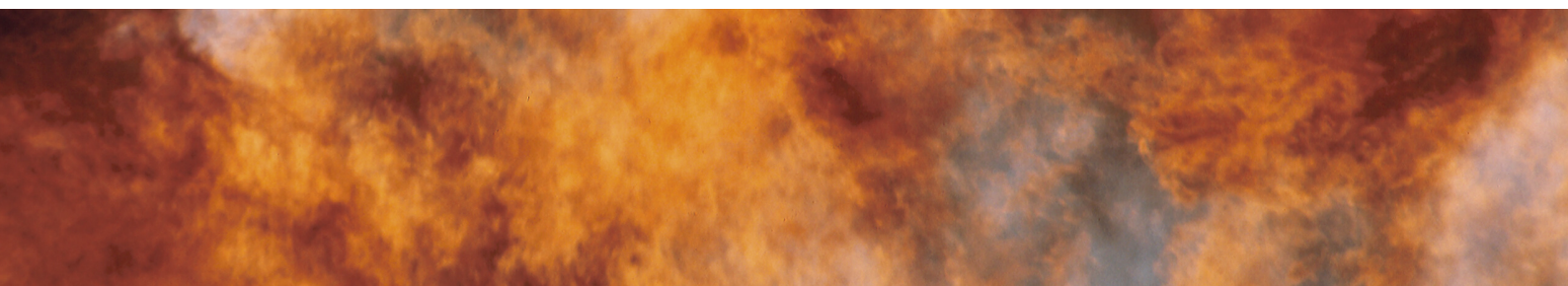
However, clinicians immersed in communities affected by catastrophic events face particular challenges that might make an individualistic focus on self-monitoring and self-care less achievable, and training and supervisory support less relevant. Individualist approaches place pressure on clinicians to be unaffected in order to be providing treatment to others who are receiving it. Yet, clinicians in catastrophic situations such as the bushfires, are

often impacted on a personal and community level while being tasked with providing mental health care and support for others. Clinicians may also have increased work pressures due to community need, as well as due to personal impacts of catastrophe within their own lives, such as accommodation issues. Clinicians are also exposed daily to the lived reality of a catastrophe, including destruction of the local environment, facilities, and road closures. Therefore, they may experience extreme feelings of anxiety and solastalgia, which have been described as feelings of existential threat and grief about ecological breakdown (Albrecht, 2005; Askland & Bunn, 2018; Eisenman, Donatello, McCaffrey, & Marshal, 2015).

Clinicians are encouraged to engage in a combination of self-monitoring, self-care and training and supervision, often heralded as the antidote to stress and distress experienced

In short, for clinicians, there is a 'tangling' of personal, community and professional concerns in their interactions with clients. They can experience a sense of personal connectedness to, and solidarity with, the traumas of those seeking support as well as with their wider community.

Within services, clinicians are also navigating the dual provision of emotional support alongside expectations to practice within medical models of care that position distress as psychological dysfunction or mental illness (CSTS, 2011). Training and support offered within such services, particularly



if they emphasize biomedical frameworks of care, might create tensions within clinicians who find such approaches inconsistent with their own needs as well as the needs of their clients and community.

The complexity of experience for community immersed clinicians, while potentially having overlaps with experiences described as STS and VT, are far more involved than such terms provide for. A more nuanced understanding and theorising of clinicians' 'tangled' experiences is required. In particular, there is a need for an alternative to the dominant individualist paradigm associated with notions of 'self-care', which may be less available to clinicians in these contexts. Finally, training and provision of supervision needs to attend to the particular needs of clinicians who are themselves impacted by traumatic events.

I felt a leaking of boundaries, the grief and loss of climate change was big and desperate

Studies investigating factors influencing these responses have identified the value of reflective supervision, and the importance of workplace and community supports, as well as personality factors, including a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others (e.g. Reynolds, 2011).

In this paper, we now provide some detail on reflective supervision which was undertaken with clinicians who were supporting clients in a bushfire affected area. We begin with the personal reflection of one clinical supervisor (AS), who is a clinical psychologist and one clinician (ET), who was a participant in the supervision session.

Both are authors on this paper. These reflections provide the context for re-thinking supervision work. We then outline theories and ideas from systemic and constructivist therapies and approaches that helped to re-conceptualise supervision in the context of responding to clinicians who found their lives tangled with those they aimed to support. These were ideas that could be brought forward in supervision, to create a dialogue with clinicians that supported them to reconsider their response and practice in a new, and more helpful light, compared to ideas such as VT or STS, and notions of self-care and boundaries, had been able to offer them.

Reflections on supervision meetings

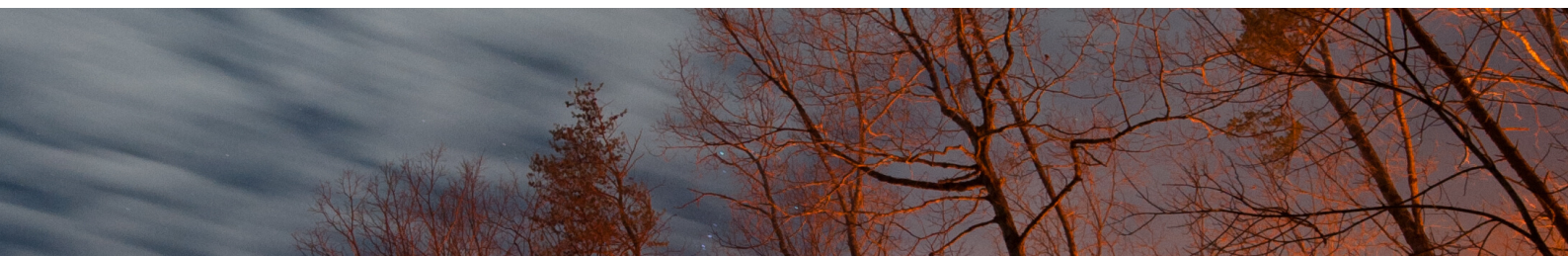
I (AS) was asked to provide supervision to a group of clinicians working in southern NSW in response to their organisation's recognition of stress and suffering associated with the work, and the wider social context.

Participants of this supervision group were invited to co-author and to review this document before being submitted for publication. Supervision was provided by teleconference in order to reach as many clinicians as possible in rural and regional areas. Group size varied from five to twelve participants. Statements below are phrases from clinicians that caught my (AS) attention or were significant for me in my own attempts to be helpful, and to create an accompanying space (Reynolds, 2013) for members of this group.

How can we do our work when we are involved in it?

I felt a leaking of boundaries, the grief and loss of climate change was big and desperate.

I wanted to help in a different way than we normally help.



Participants of this supervision group were invited to co-author and to review this document before being submitted for publication. One clinician (ET) offered the following reflection:

In early January 2020, the smoke was so thick that the sky went deep red, and then black. ... As clinicians, we would be sitting in our office, looking out the window into the thick red smoke. The smoke was getting into our lungs, burning our eyes, and filling our office space. ... clinicians would be leaving the office to defend their homes. Some clinicians were camping in consultation rooms, unable to return home. Others were leaving the area with their children. ... clients and colleagues would be reporting the loss of friends and family, pets, livestock and wildlife, as well as property and natural areas. There were runs on petrol and food, and at times it was uncertain when supply trucks were going to be able to enter the area safely.

During this time, many of us were shouldering the weight of these events whilst still being available to clients. Several of our team were juggling with the grief of loss. Clinicians would be shocked to discover the loss of towns like Cobargo or Yowrie – and then have to go into a session with a client. Many of us were in shock. Thankfully, senior clinicians, managers and supervisors were available to offer support and guidance. Clinicians were doing their best to support each other. But there was a distinct air of uncertainty in the office. How were we as clinicians supposed to support our clients? Clinicians and clients were sharing this immense and life changing event – but how were we to offer support and guidance whilst being in the thick of this event ourselves? Traditional psychological boundaries – limiting self-disclosure, avoiding physical contact and limiting emotion – seemed inadequate.

Rethinking practice: Bringing in system and social thinking

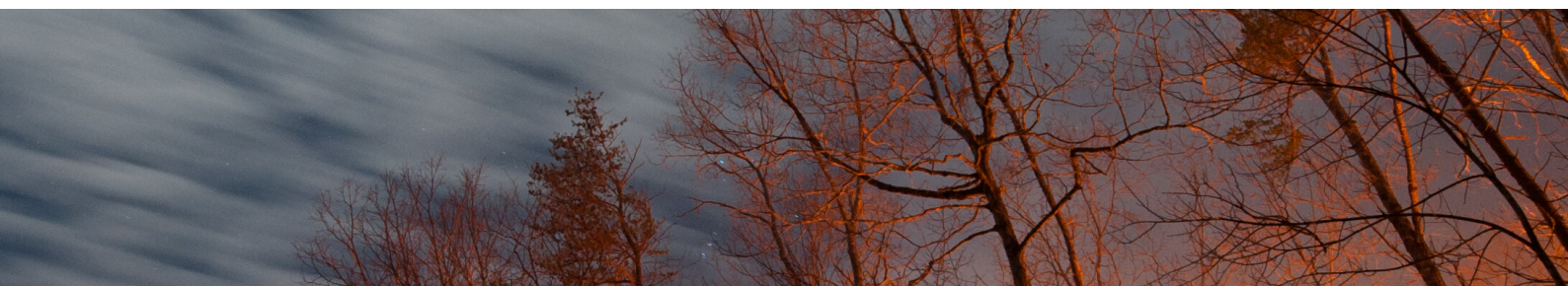
We now examine ideas and theories that were raised in supervision, to support clinicians to reconsider their own response in the context of supporting people impacted by bush fires.

Alternatives to individualism in responding as supervisor, as clinician and as community member

Alternatives to individualism in responding as supervisor, as clinician and as community member. Vikki Reynolds (2011) challenges individualism, calling for the need for collective responses to social challenges. In Australia, aetiological understandings of mental health were dominated by social environment models up until 1985, at which time biological risk factor models began to appear in psychiatry (Henderson, 2008).

During this time, many of us were shouldering the weight of these events whilst still being available to clients

The focus of mental health shifted over this time from a focus on underlying social determinants to a focus on individual biological risk factors, which continues to dominate health services despite significant critique (Allsopp, Read, Corcoran, & Kinderman, 2019; Read, Bentall, & Fosse, 2009; van Os, Guloksuz, Vijn, Hafkenscheid, & Delespaul, 2019). Vikki Reynolds (2011) argues that this move to attribute social problems to individual factors had the effect of



obscuring social injustices, and the collective ethics of responsibility associated with them (Reynolds, 2012). Furthermore, Reynolds argues that individualism is not only applied to people seeking help for distress, it is also applied to clinicians who are providing care to people in distress, to imply that when clinicians suffer in their work, they do so because of individual disorders or risk factors, or because they have failed to apply the requisite self-care. Reynolds offers valuable reflections on the impacts of the focus on individual risk, or 'individualism', in the understanding of clinician burnout, and presents an alternative framework of collective responsibility and collective justice doing (Reynolds, 2011). Her work asks us to reconsider how we respond to 'big and desperate' social and environmental issues in our work when they can no longer remain hidden and individualised? How can we respond in a different way?

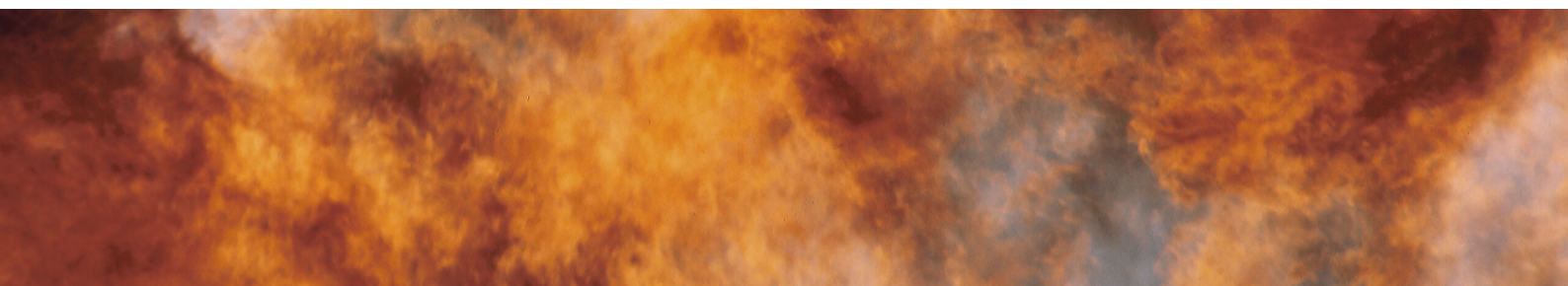
we come to act as a collective, even if we perceive ourselves to be distinct

With-ness thinking vs aboutness thinking

With-ness thinking, described by John Shotter (1999, 2005, 2006) as the "influence that other people's voices, their embodied expressions, can have in changing and enriching our own inner lives" (Shotter, 2005, p.6). This relational approach, in Shotter's view, brings about the way in which we respond, and what actions follow our listening and responses to others in dialogue. Shotter draws on the philosophical viewpoints of Bakhtin and Wittgenstein who considered the patterns of

previously spoken words on the speaker and the listener in dialogue. First, drawing on Bakhtin's concept of the dialogical (Augusto, 2016; Bakhtin, 2004; Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984) which highlights the relational aspect of language, Shotter points to how the anticipation of the response of others becomes contained in every utterance within a dialogue. Shotter also draws on Wittgenstein's notion of the "language game", to emphasise the meaning of words in relation to the participants in conversation (John, 1996). Shotter brings these together to consider the linguistic responses that living beings make in the presence of one another as "joint action", whereby our actions are shaped by each other and we come to act as a collective, even if we perceive ourselves to be distinct.

Shotter also seeks to distinguish withness thinking from 'aboutness thinking', which he sees as a response to problematic circumstances where we attempt to find a solution, or attempt to analyze or explain. Aboutness thinking, leads to 'aboutnesstalk', which is described as monological, a treatment of the difficulty as a problem to be solved by searching for regularities or establishing a single 'solution'. The person engages with the problem, but remains unchanged, and is not engaged with the person. By contrast, withness thinking, where we are influenced and changed via dialogue, leads to a kind of 'withness talk' through which we can enter into a dialogical relationship with another and recognise that the other is unknown to us, and that we are open to be 'moved' or changed by the talk. Where aboutness talk might generate problem focused solutions, withness talk can bring with it a sense of connectedness (Shotter, 2015). We are drawn into and immersed or tangled with the inner life of the other. The changes that occur as part of these conversations are two-way



and can be understood as a collective responding and responsiveness to ourselves and others. Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal visual artist and activist articulates this:

"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together"

Not knowing and relational responsiveness

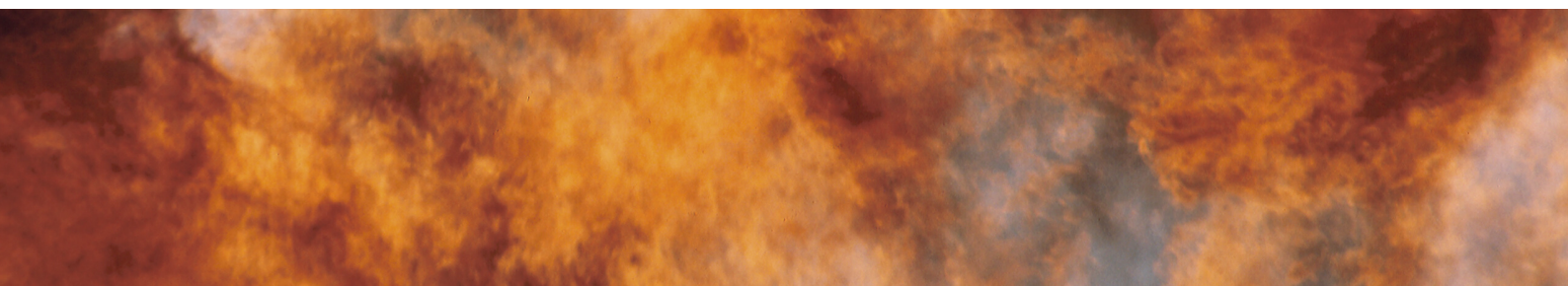
Anderson and Goolishian's (1995) concept of 'not knowing' allows us a way of re-thinking the epistemic position of the therapist. Responding to the distress of others under an individualist paradigm places the clinician in a position of 'knower'. We help by providing an answer, a solution to the distress as it is formulated and located within the person seeking help. As clinicians find themselves dealing with the discomfort of an overwhelming situation, this position loses its power and authenticity. In their attempts to consider what forms of talk invite possibilities and are mutually transformative, Anderson and Goolishian developed the 'not-knowing' therapeutic stance (Anderson, 1995; Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Goolishian & Anderson, 1987). This stance which became part of the Collaborative Therapy approach is underpinned by social constructionism and the location of expertise of clients in their own lives (Anderson, 2012; Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Not-knowing is described as a specific understanding of the way knowledge is produced, as well as the manner and intention with which a therapist uses knowledge. Therapist knowledge is introduced as a possibility, a way to think about the topic under discussion. Local knowledge and knowledge that is developed in the relationship between conversational participants is privileged (Anderson, 2012).

Therapeutic conversations become a mutual curiosity and exploration, releasing the clinician from the expectation to 'solve' problems and painful experiences. This collaborative relationship which Anderson refers to as a way of being, is a philosophy that emphasizes joint action, and mutual relational responsiveness (Anderson, 2012).

"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." - Lilla Watson

Alternatives to the therapeutic state

McNamee (2015), who argues for the notion of radical presence over individualist discourses of human distress, provides a way of reframing therapy as a shared exploration. MacNamee argues that, locating distress within the mind of the person, with the vocabulary of diagnosis and disorder, may be useful in some contexts, but are not useful in relational and community responses (McNamee, 2015). This is because the power operations of mental health professions, noted in discussions of the 'psy-complex' (McCallum, 2007; Parker, 1994) in determining what is normal, and what is pathological, render invisible the social contexts of these experiences. Clinicians navigating this terrain can find themselves asking what they can provide to another who is experiencing a pain so closely resembling their own. Adopting the language and lens of this dominant paradigm frames this distress as vicarious trauma, burnout, or compassion fatigue which comes with self-doubt, and questions about the capacity to provide care.



McNamee (2015) argues for radical presence as an alternative, this shift requires a relational orientation in dialog with others. Dialog as defined here as a curiosity, an openness to new understandings and a move towards different and varied perspectives. This curiosity towards community resources, and relationally developed knowledge provides new ways to view and respond to these challenges.

Conclusions and new pathways

The development of this paper was informed by post-modern and constructivist ideas that have been described in a number of therapy approaches including Open Dialogue (Aaltonen, Seikkula, & Lehtinen, 2011; Seikkula & Alakare, 2012) and Narrative therapy (White, 1995; White & Epston, 1990). This work was inspired by conversations with clinicians who were able to articulate the dilemma associated with individualist responses to a collective concern, and the tangling of their own experiences with the people that sought their help.

The ideas put forward here are not intended as a solution to the difficulties experienced by clinicians or the community members they support, but as an opening to other possibilities in therapy and supervisory conversations.

However, these ideas enabled us to navigate and renegotiate the current focus on an individualist, medically oriented paradigm in mental health within Australia.

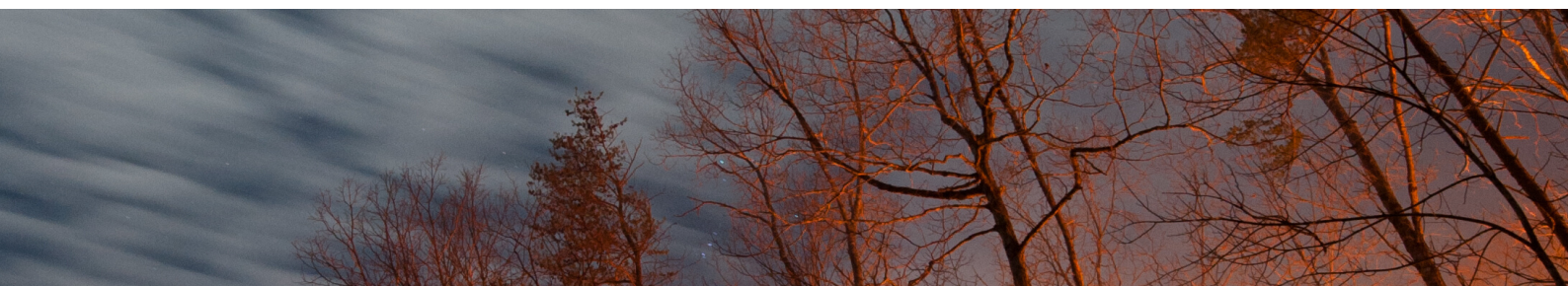
This framework has come to dominate our understanding of therapeutic interactions obscuring other ways of knowing, understanding and relating to the distress of others.

Psychiatric discourse, as it is described in constructivist research, has been found to operate in ways that constrain, objectify and disempower people who seek support (Harper, 1995). These individualistic conceptualisations of the responses of clinicians to stories they hear in their work, such as vicarious trauma, place responsibility at the feet of clinicians to care more for themselves. Further, these ideas make problematic the telling of these stories, rather than the social and environmental injustices that are responsible for them. Unfortunately, systemic and socially oriented ideas take up little space in teaching programs for mental health professionals, as well as in the information provided to the general public. Yet, as shown in this paper, they can provide an important alternative to notions of clinicians' self-responsibility and self-care and shift us towards an ethic of community care and connection. The idea of community care has gained some notoriety in the grey literature, with increasing focus on the value of working together to support each other

(<https://mashable.com/article/community-care-versus-self-care/>). We argue that, drawing on systemic and socially oriented approaches and philosophies in our practice can assist us in connecting with community members and engaging in mutually beneficial activities and conversations. This may provide an opportunity for a considered, reflective response to the experiences of local individuals, including those who offer mental health care and find their own needs and distress is tangled with those they provide support and care for.

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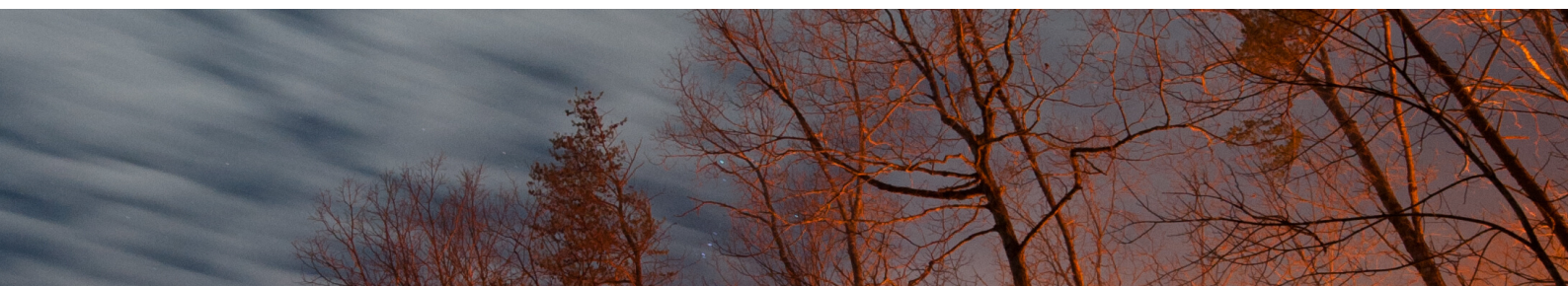
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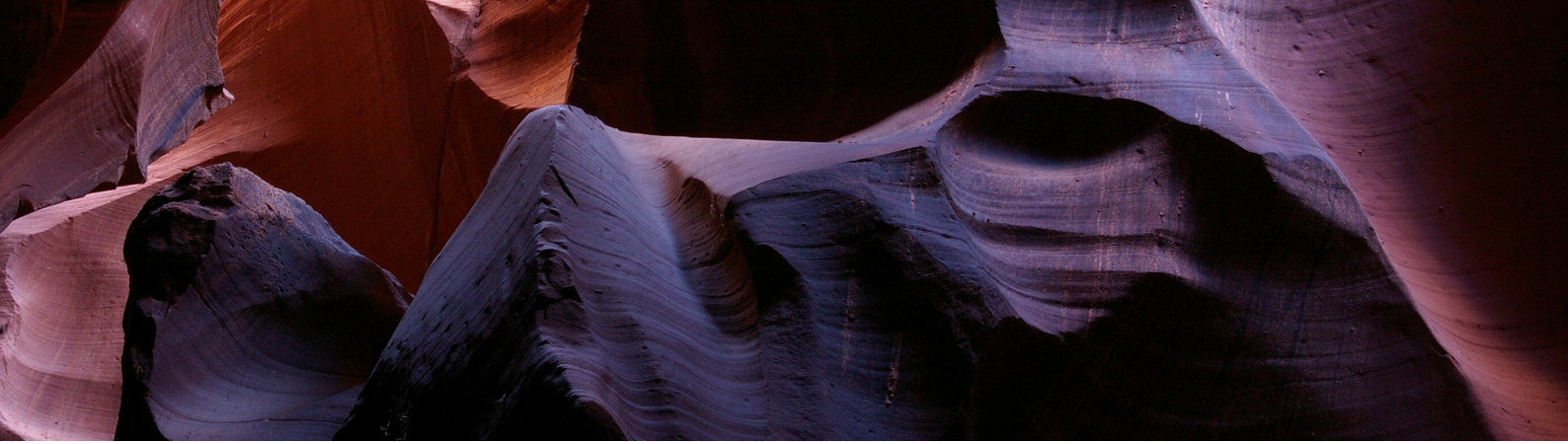
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CLIMATE GRIEF

ELAINE KELLY

IDEAS THAT CHANGED ME

*Don't weep insects –
Lovers, stars themselves,
Must part.*

Kobayashi Issa

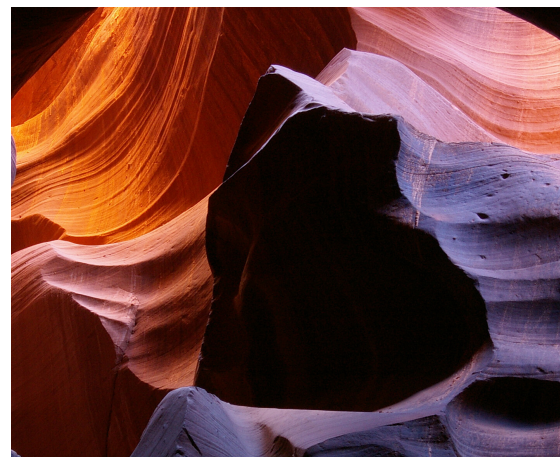
Grief, itself, is a naturally occurring part of being an embodied, empathetic being. To grieve is to be attuned to the transience of our existence; the cycles of birth and death, attachment and loss. Poets articulate the acute pain and beauty – our profound ambivalence – toward the process of grieving. All things must part because nothing that forms part of our interdependent ecology can live forever. Transience is double-edged, leading to death but also promising future life. When we are engaged in such 'grief work', as Freud named it, sorrow turns into regeneration.

'Climate grief' has emerged as a way of communicating the weight of our collective despair when we see ecological turmoil resulting from human-induced climate change, alongside the failure of our leaders to act responsibly. However, this 'grief' has a different quality to what I described above. Within it there is the potential for paralysis. Feelings of ambivalence associated with cyclic existence give way to apocalyptic fears. Our effect on the earth's system, our greedy consumption, means that regeneration may not be possible.

This is a grief that lodges itself in our bodies, threatening to suffocate us.

On the one hand, we may find ourselves weighed down by the heaviness of paralysing climate grief. On the other hand, this energy can be, and has been, turned into a fight against injustice. When our collective grief is channelled into action it comes with an insistence that we will not allow for untimely deaths.

***When we are engaged in such
'grief work', as Freud named it,
sorrow turns into regeneration***



DANCING ON THE DECK OF THE TITANIC: FINDING JOY AND PEACE IN THE TIME OF CLIMATE CRISIS

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN SAHRA O'DOHERTY AND XI LIU

Sahra - I'm talking today with Xi Liu, who is a Clinical Psychologist based in the Inner West in Sydney. We're going to be talking about climate change, climate anxiety and Xi's experience with these concepts, both within herself and with some other people that she works with. Thank you very much for joining me, Xi.

Xi - Thank you for inviting me to be here.

Sahra - So we were talking just before about your experience as an immigrant, and we were talking about that in the context of how you were feeling last year. For our readers, this is in the context of the bushfires that we've been having across Australia.

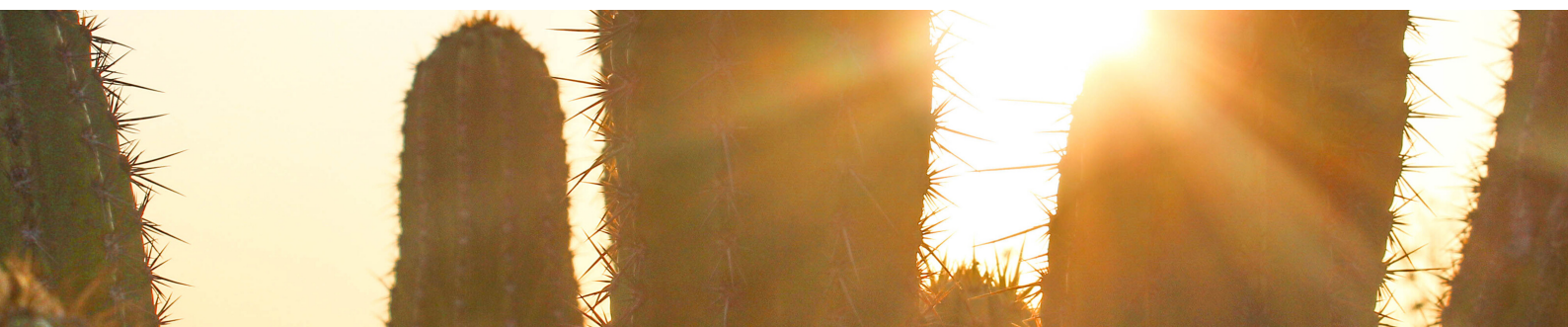
Xi - This is towards December last year when the bushfires had started. At the end of the year, like so many people, I was tired and was waiting for the end of the year to come along. Then the bushfires hit, and it just felt relentless. I found myself experiencing intense anxiety about this world that was ahead. I kept thinking about the firefighters. What's going to happen to them? Will they have so much PTSD that next year they won't be able to work? What does that mean? And this is an ongoing thing, so what would our summers look like in the future?

I found myself getting so angry. I really wanted to understand what the hell I was angry about.

I realized that, as an immigrant, that instability, uncertainty and risk are not foreign concepts to me. I've experienced them for most of my life prior to coming to Australia and even within Australia. I felt like I had really earned my privilege to give my child a sense of stability, consistency and safety that I didn't have growing up. I felt really ripped off. I had worked really hard and I contribute to society in all the ways that I can. I felt so angry at the world that this is changing and that I have no control over it.

Being someone who can't help but dive straight into emotions, I went straight into the anger. That led me to actually feeling this intense underlying grief. I felt a sense of loss of things that I thought I earned. It's a strange thing to lose something that I didn't have in the first place. It was such a deep feeling of grief. I allowed myself to feel it and connect to other friends who were feeling it too. It was such a relief and release to face that feeling, and to understand the depth of what I felt I was going to lose.

Part of that healing process was also realising that eco-anxiety is so different to other kinds of anxiety, right? For example, if I have persistent anxiety that my house is going to burn down, a way of dealing with it may be to check the stove fifty-four times and I do it in a particular way.



I know that, as a clinical psychologist, the risk of it happening is very low and I have to learn how to tolerate that uncertainty. My ability to cope with something bad happening is actually much higher than I imagine. I realised what's actually so different about eco-anxiety is that we're not supposed to tolerate this uncertainty. In fact, it is really, really, really unhelpful to try to tolerate the uncertainty of the world that is ahead of us. I think that with eco-anxiety, we actually have to act. It's purposeful action that helps us mediate the anxiety that we're feeling. It comes from connection with our loved ones over our shared grief and loss. It's the combination of these two that helped me feel a sense of peace.

Let me explain this feeling to you with a story. We were camping down south near Bega for the Christmas and New Year holidays. At 3am on the 31st of December, while we were asleep, sirens started blaring and police showed up to tell us *"Everybody evacuate, there's a fire coming."*

Sahra - That sounds so scary.

Xi - There were moments where I took a deep breath and thought, "Wow, this is really scary", but the focus was getting to a point of safety. Fortunately for us, we knew people that lived in Bega. Bega had become an evacuation centre, so luckily we had a home to go to while the skies turned orange.

The air was toxic for the whole of the 31st. We did not see any daylight. It was bright orange from the middle of the day and it just got darker and lighter and darker and lighter throughout the day.

We went to get supplies and a lot of people went to the major supermarkets, like most of us do. However, we were staying with friends, who were well-connected to community, and they instead invited us to the local Co-Op. So, we went. It provided the most incredible respite. Folks in there were moving at a slow and thoughtful pace. I was picking nuts from a bucket and this lovely woman started chatting to me. I said I was camping and she immediately asked, *"Do you have a place to stay tonight? Do you have anywhere to go?"*

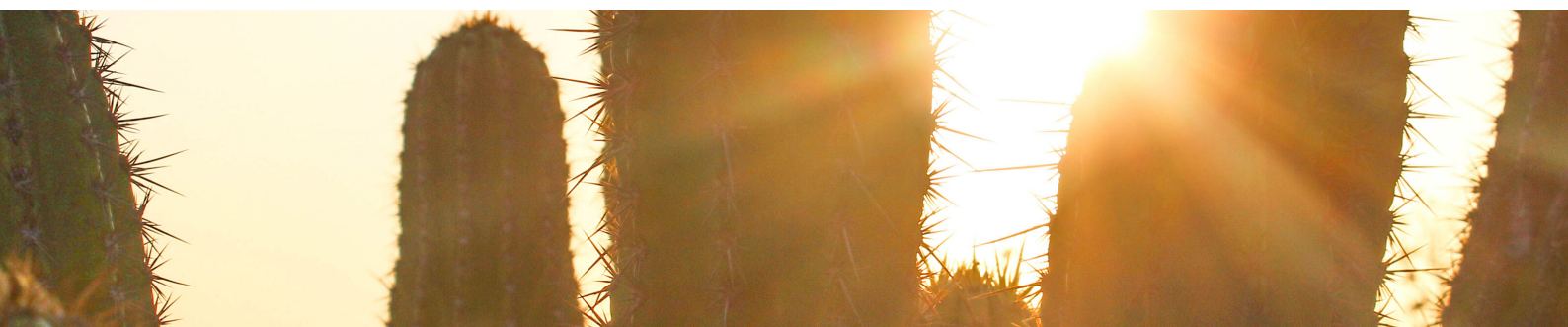
A local Co-Op is consciously built. People who work there and shop there have a more intentional way of life and are already engaging in purposeful action. On that particular day, it just felt so important to us.

I realised what's actually so different about eco-anxiety is that we're not supposed to tolerate this uncertainty

This year, I've put in place for myself a number of the actions that helped with my anxiety. I'm not shopping, even secondhand, for clothing this year. It is actually very hard for me (laughs). I'm giving up meat, which is an ongoing process. I'm not going to try and force myself to do it perfectly, instead I'm working on it. It's a movement in the right direction.

Sahra - It is.

Xi - And it fuels a sense of peace. Obviously, it flares up. However, it kind of goes up and down. These purposeful actions really helped me.



Sahra - It sounds like you are coming back to what you feel you can control, in a really unstable and uncontrollable environment both in the national and global sense.

Xi - Absolutely. As psychologists, we talk about how eating can be a form of control. In this case, I feel like I'm eating well in a way that's environmentally friendly. It does make me feel a sense of control in a really healthy way.

Sahra - It sounds like mindful eating and decision making - making ethical decisions that are in line with your values and what you care about.

It is a sense of loss that those things we came to expect are not likely to happen

I want to come back to that sense of grief and loss that you were feeling. That really resonated with me. I feel like in my experience, also as an immigrant, we have these expectations that our parents came to this country for a better life. We were brought to this country for a better life. As mothers, we've had our children in this country, with all of the hopes and dreams that parents imbue.

Xi - Every person has hopes and dreams. But absolutely, I think the immigrant carries an extra weight of hopes and dreams.

Sahra - I think so far it almost feels like those expectations, that maybe we've had for ourselves and for our families, have been really rocked and

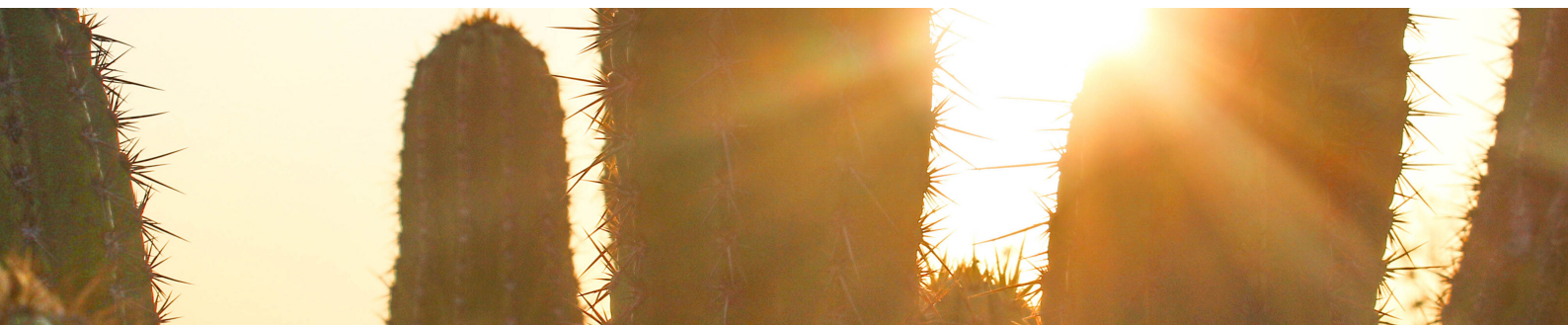
that grief sort of sounds like it's the loss of expectations. What are your thoughts on that?

Xi - I think you've hit the nail on the head. It's the expectations that were placed on us, as well as the healthy hopes and dreams that every parent has for themselves and for their children. And yes, it is a sense of loss that those things we came to expect are not likely to happen.

Yet, I come back to Martin Luther King every time I get really lost and think the world is a hopeless place. I get this helpful reminder that the world has never been a perfect place. The world has never been fair, just, or kind on its own. That's just the nature of things. There is darkness and there is light. That helped me to move from feeling that stability and certainty was taken from me, to a realisation that it wasn't there in the first place. It was never mine.

Sahra - Okay. As a psychologist, coming back to work in January, this was very much an issue that a lot of my clients brought to me. There's a sense of despondency, an almost sense of helplessness, hopelessness, of "what now?". The map of the fires across the country gave a real, tangible feeling that there is something not right. I want to get your perspective on people who might be reading this or even our children's generation. If they are exposed to that broader sense of loss, it's almost like it's not anxiety. You're right. It's not anxiety. It's like pre-emptive trauma.

Xi - It's like staring death in the face.



Sahra - It is. For other people experiencing these things we've talked a bit about purposeful action and connection. How do people get their heads around those bigger concepts?

Xi - That's such a good question. I guess my initial thoughts is that, I work with a lot of people of colour, a lot of complex trauma and a lot of LGBTQ clients. For many of them, this is really not the first time they've had tangible evidence that the world is not okay.

Sahra - So this is like another layer of trauma on top of it.

Xi - Exactly. I remember, during the American elections, when Trump got elected, I was working in New York and just holding clients through that. In a way, a lot of them weren't surprised. Saturday Night Live, the American comedy show, had this skit about a house party. In the skit, everyone, as the night went on, was saying, *"This is the worst thing that ever happened. This is the worst thing in history that's ever happened."* Then this African American guy says, *"This is worse than slavery?"*

Sahra - It does put some context to it, doesn't it?

Xi - It's not to say that what's happening is not a terrible thing. Of course it is. But it's also this sense that bad things have always happened. For some populations, they've seen tangible forms of discrimination every day of their life. They grapple with this all the time.

Sahra - You're absolutely right, it's another layer.

Xi - So actually, a lot of my clients have not brought this up because they're just so overwhelmed with survival. This has exacerbated the stress that they feel, but it is not something specific that they are stressed about. It's like, life is so hard. This is another thing, now I have my asthma on top of everything.

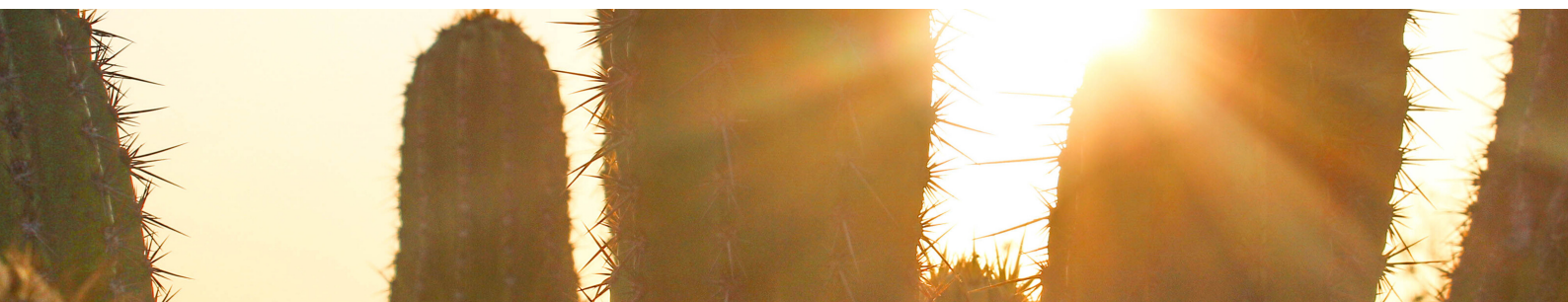
So, all those who are already emotionally struggling, this is like another form of, *"Oh my god, how am I going to deal with being indoors all the time and having to pay air conditioning bills on top of that?"*. So, it's a lot of work to unpack that the sense of the world being...

Sahra - ...On fire.

For some populations, they've seen tangible forms of discrimination every day of their life

Xi - On fire on so many levels. I think one way of looking at it is via intersectionality. We have different layers of privilege and non-privilege. When the world is on fire, we can feel all of those layers of struggles.

Sahra - Yeah. I heard on the news that the recent fires had actually further polarised opinions of people with regards to climate change. I had thought it would bring more people together. Whereas I think it sounds like people, who were very entrenched in their views that climate change is a myth, are becoming further entrenched. I thought that it would be more like "here is something that we all now have in common". We've all now experienced this national level of emergency and trauma. I thought people would naturally be connecting more and have a



mutual understanding.

Xi - I haven't read that research, but I'm really not surprised. My sense of it is that we all have universal needs, right? We have a need for safety, a need for connection. I think that need for safety was definitely elevated with the bushfires. We all felt it. I felt like there was a moment at the end of December and beginning of January where I felt really connected to the suffering of everyone in Australia. What feels different now is how we go about meeting that need, right? Some of us feel that means action on climate change, making more responsible actions, being a responsible consumer, trying to put an end to the destructive forces that are propelling us into this great, big, ball of fire. Yet, for some of us, our need for safety means that we need to keep going as is, because that feels okay.

Recently I feel this greediness to soak up as much of the landscape as I can and I really want, for the first time, to be in the bush

Sahra - I want to talk a bit more about your connection to physical environments. I know that you've done a bit of traveling and I've seen some of your photography. I want to talk about your sense of connection to various places. Has it changed at all with that sense of climate anxiety that you've personally experienced?

Xi - I think that before we started recording, you were saying that connection with the land hasn't really been there for you because of those experiences of immigrant women.

Sahra - We were talking about solastalgia.

Xi - Yes, how immigrants may not get to experience it as much if they have not had the privilege to form stable connections to their land if they have moved so much or were alienated from their home country.

Recently I feel this greediness to soak up as much of the landscape as I can and I really want, for the first time, to be in the bush. I'm such an urban person, I love being in the city. Yet, I feel this call to be in nature more and more. So much of the land has been burnt. There's just not that much left.

Sahra - It feels like a wanting to have that last ditch connection with something that is so scarce, as you say.

Xi - We're dancing on the deck of the Titanic.

Sahra - What a powerful analogy. The band is playing on the deck of the Titanic.

Xi - Exactly. More caviar?

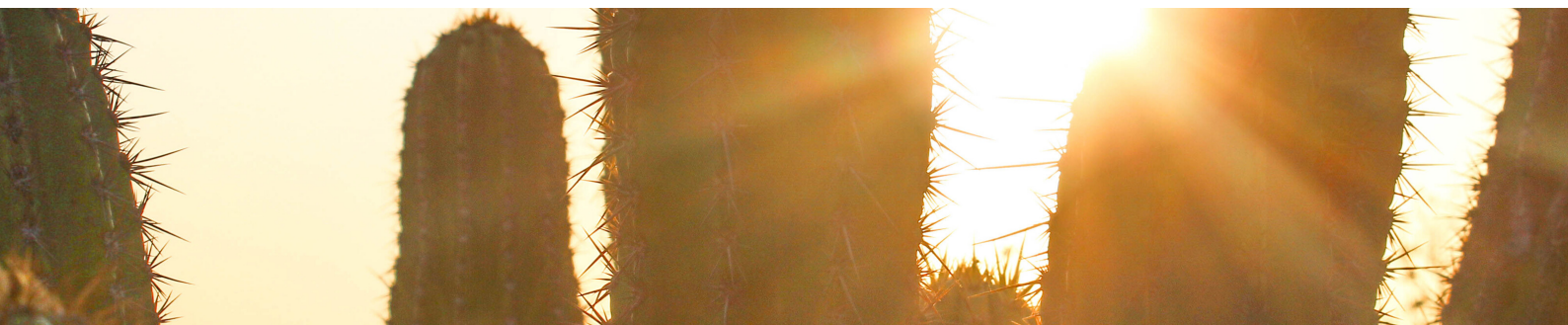
Sahra - More activism please.

Xi - Yes. The caviar can go. More activism. Let's extend the time between now and the iceberg.

Sahra - I like that. I think we need to do more of that.

Xi - And dancing is really important.

Sahra - Oh, it is.



Xi - In a way we are always approaching some sort of an ending but we have to find joy in that. As I'm sure you know, in any activism work, when there's so much focus on the work, it's so easy to burn out.

Sahra - You're right, it is.

Xi - Finding responsible hedonistic joy, which often involves very few resources and a lot of connection, is so healing.

Sahra - It is. I sort of think about that in a similar way to the mundane everyday experience. Having to get up, go to work, face public transport and get the kids off to school. Doing all of those things. It just feels like plodding along doing the everyday in the face of essentially what was a national crisis over the last couple of months. I think a lot of people find that juxtaposition between the mundane and the crisis really difficult to navigate, but I love your point about needing to have fun and joy in amongst the mundanity.

Xi - The daily struggle is really hard for a lot of people. I think we can get caught up in how hard that is. For some, it's much harder than others. At the same time, it's a dialectic that we often talk to clients about - *'I'm doing the best that I can, but I can always do better'*. Or even just holding yourself with some lightness or being playful. It can give us so many more resources and even energy.

Sahra - That's really beautiful. I think it is very much about focusing on the little things and what we can make of everyday situations.

Xi - Obviously, some of us have friends who are protesting and doing big things.

Sahra - We can't always be doing big things. You're right.

Xi - There's a lot of small things that make a revolution.

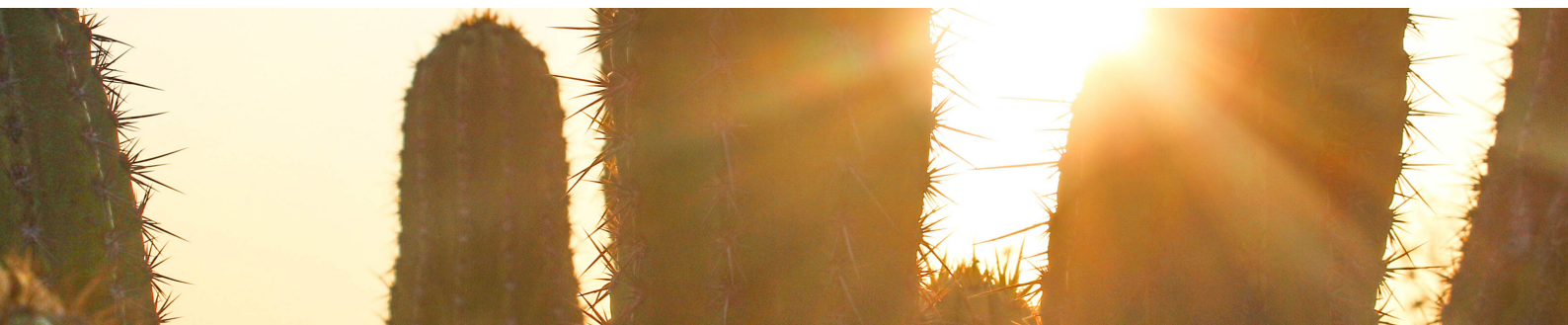
Sahra - I like that. I think that's also a really good note to end on. Thank you so much for the interview, Xi.

Xi - Thank you.



The Yareta or Yarita in the Quechua language:

An evergreen perennial whose self-fertile flowers are both male and female. One of the oldest plants on earth at 2000+ years old and found on the Altiplano plateau of Bolivia. These ancient survivors have borne witness to our civilization and destruction. (Xi Liu, 2014)





THE ALBATROSS

WILL ELRICK
GUEST EDITOR MICHELE SEMINARA
(MANAGING EDITOR OF VERITY LA)

The sun rises on a new day:
a boy sitting on the sand
as soft as talcum powder,
glistening in the glow
of the life-giving sphere
seeping over the horizon.

Sitting under a palm tree
the boy draws strength and smiles
at what is to come with the new day.
The sky, now orange and red,
changing to an everlasting blue —
a reflection of the ancient vastness.

Seen from below, vagabonds travel the endless sky,
gliding overhead, each cloud a nomad
and each one covered by a silver lining:
what potential thunder may they unravel?

Golden rays sprinkle and shine over the ocean top
like thousands of fairies bouncing through swell,
sounding an abundance of laughter.
The boy smiles, wanting to do the same,
to flow in the ocean, jumping and diving like a dolphin...
bliss.

His grin grows as he dreams.
Oh, how the boy dreams.
Of being the dolphin, becoming one with the ocean
blazing through the water —
how free would he feel.



He laughs.
A cool breeze breathes over his face.
The day grows older...
He smiles and looks down:
one leg is all he sees.
Nothing but one leg and the white powder
that glistens around it.

Tears roll down the boy's cheeks.
He sees the beauty of the morning,
the sun's glow, the vastness
of the tranquil ocean, the grace
of the dolphin, the sand that pads his body.

He sees the perfection of nature,
the simplicity of the beauty before him —
and he sees himself,
nothing but a crippled and scarred boy.

He thinks of the knife he could use
to take away his stepfather's life;
the life of the man who took his own innocence —
but not even that would remove his pain.

Overhead, an albatross lunges
her powerful wings through the air,
flying gracefully through her heavens
as she moves toward the land.

The boy watches in amazement then sees
she has a missing leg.
He admires this awesome figure
who — like him — has just one leg.



As she makes her way through the sky
lunging and flying over the crystal blue ocean
the boy looks down at his own lone leg
and wonders if he can be like the albatross:
he may have one leg and many scars,
but, like her, he can rise and show strength;
strength from within.

And just as the sun rises to its peak
the boy too rises up,
tears of joy running down his cheeks —
he shall now strive to live his dreams.

He picks up his crutches
determined to let the sun guide him to live each day.
For each day is as precious as the last:
each day is yet another chance
to create a beautiful life.





ACTIVISM, COMMUNITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

IDEAS THAT CHANGED ME
A CONVERSATION BETWEEN TOM
AND LILLI AND RUTH NELSON -
EDITING BY JENNIFER JONES

Tom and Lilli are part of the blockading community in Australia. They took the time to chat with The Activist Practitioner.

- Mental health professionals are needed by the activist community to support wellbeing, but there are barriers to access;
- Bulk-billing, affordable care, and pro bono support, where possible, is important.
- Training activists in mental health first aid could help them better support each other;
- Activists want to stay connected to community and engaged in activism. They don't want to be turned away from that work because it is traumatising. They want to be supported to manage the difficulties and thrive;
- Mental health professionals can support activism in various ways as their status lends legitimacy (such as providing court references and attending direct actions);
- As a first step, learn more about the activist community and engage in conversation.

What changed you from being a bystander to an activist?

Tom: I got involved through research I was doing. That smoothed the transition because I could engage on familiar terms before I was a member of the activist community.

I was done with feeling disempowered. I think that's a common experience. "The world's cooked, what can I do about it? I'm just one person." I got sick of that feeling. It was conversations with people who had decided to participate in the world in a much more diligent sort of way, "I don't like the way the world looks. I'm going to try to change it."

So, I started getting involved. When you see change happen because of what you've done that reinforces the change in you. You're like, "I wasn't kidding myself when I thought I could change things. I've proven to myself that I can." Now I exist in a different world. It's a world where I'm a player and what I think does matter. There is a community of people who care about what I think. Together we can make this world look different. It completely changes the way that you relate to people, politics and place.

However, once you jump over that bridge, it's hard to turn back. You can't lose the new perspective. You can easily lose motivation and hope but I haven't seen myself lose the perspective.

Lilli: Or the sense of responsibility. The thought "Actually, I can change this. So maybe I should try." You don't ever lose that.



Tom: After you've decided you can impact the world, that doesn't mean you'll stick in activism forever. But when you're not doing anything to try and make the world better, you feel pretty guilty.

Lilli: When Tom and I became a part of the activist community and started organising, Tom was in his honours year and realising his life plan didn't go any further than university. Tom said, "Maybe we can't change the world, but we may as well have a go". You're aimlessly looking for a life purpose and direction. Well, there's no shortage of problems. Work on one of them.

"Maybe we can't change the world, but we may as well have a go"

Ruth: I loved the simplicity of that. "What else are you doing? May as well try and make the world a bit better while you're here."

Tom: Before activism, I was working and studying, but I wasn't working towards anything. I wasn't busy. I was working to pay rent and go to the pub. There was space in my life to do more than that.

Lilli: For me, one of the most important things it does for my emotional wellbeing is turn all my rage, sadness and impotence to a feeling of power. It inverts the helplessness. "No, you cannot. You can do all the structural things, you can put me in jail, but you cannot change my mind about this".

There's real power in that. "I won't believe what you want me to believe" - I find that really empowering. There's defiance in my worldview.

Do you ever wish you could turn away?

Lilli: Every day!

Tom: For sure. You can turn away from the doing, but you can't turn away from what you've done, seen and learned and the perspectives you've gained. I do loads of activism, achieve something amazing, get totally burnt out, do nothing for three months, and then just repeat the cycle. What always brings me back is that it's fulfilling. When doing activism, you get to meet incredible people and you have experiences you never could have comprehended. Whilst there's a lot of people who've stepped away from activism, many of them want to stay within the community. A lot of people get burnt out from activism and go into research or social services. Otherwise they get into art, creating community gardens or living in the bush.

Lilli: I feel a real sense that I am living authentically when I'm doing activism. I'm practising what I believe. But it's the community that brings people back. When you've been sitting at home, out of it for months, and then someone you really respect rings and says, "Can you take a look at this? I'd really value your opinion". That's often what gets you back off the couch. "I want to know what you think of this plan."

When it's scary, what helps you lean into authenticity and doing, rather getting stuck in fear and not doing?



Tom: When organising with a community, our politics can be different, but our values need to be similar. You're confronted with choices that have massive risk, are highly uncertain and we don't understand the legal context, then those kinds of things come up. If everybody wants it to happen, that's not enough to make it actually happen. You need enough people to believe that it's worth it and enough trust in the community that says, "If this goes tits up, we'll still be okay." For people embedded in the activist movement, the legal repercussions are a barrier, but a permeable barrier.

Lilli: They're often known and quantifiable.

Tom: What people are most afraid of is being isolated. The activist community hates the isolation. What terrifies people is things like actual jail terms, not just lock-up or the possibility of getting beaten by a cop. A huge number of our mates have had these bad experiences, yet they're still here and sitting around the fire. We're all still together. There are also other background fears: the climate is going to implode; we're going to end up in a fascist dictatorship. Yet those aren't barriers to action in the same way as a moment that could tear you away from your community.

Lilli: In my activist capacity, it's part of my responsibility to teach my crew their rights. A lot of my role in an action often involves explaining risk to people. I tell them, "This is your decision. I'm just giving you all the information you need to make an informed decision about the risk you're taking."

Fear is a barrier, like what it means to have a criminal record, that you'll never get a job, which isn't true. You can tell people that and alleviate their fear, but what people bring up to me is fear about interpersonal relationships. I have a friend who got arrested once. It seriously affected her relationship with her mother and she will definitely not get arrested again. She said to me, "I have to choose between getting arrested again and my relationship with my mother and I'm choosing my mother." Losing relationships is a fear that you can't alleviate simply with information.

For people embedded in the activist movement, the legal repercussions are a barrier, but a permeable barrier

Is that what you could call shame, if shame is about getting rejected from the group because you go against its values? The feelings that are brought up when you risk rejection?

Tom: Everybody engages with heaps of different social groups. The activist community isn't one community. There's lots of little ones inside it. But if you take it as a group, then if you do things that that group doesn't approve of, then you will be shamed by that group.

Tensions arise because people are part of multiple groups. They've got family, work, social life, maybe an ethnic community, and perhaps they're part of the activist community. When the expectations of these groups don't line up, problems pop up.



It makes sense that it feels so important that the values of the group line up. That's how you know that you are going to stick together as a community and not be isolated from each other.

Tom: For sure. That's more prevalent in the blockading community than in the activism scene, more broadly. The cultural history of blockader communities comes from their context. You go out to a place and you have a camp, house or property. It's isolated and tight-knit.

Lilli: The blockading community is very embedded in place. Its unofficial motto is "We're in this place to protect this place. We all met here. We eat here and

One thing that activists struggle with is when they bump up against the health system. They're not necessarily going to fit into standard moulds and solutions

sleep here and play guitar around the fire here."

Tom: Because of that context, the blockader community is a tight-knit group of people. We all know each other. When we talk about how the activist community works, we're referring to that community.

What does the activist community need from mental health professionals?

Tom: What the activist community needs from mental health professionals are services. We are cooked, crazy, desperately in need of support for our community of people.

Lilli: Yeah, I agree. Also, it needs to be bulk billed!

Tom: One thing that activists struggle with is when they bump up against the health system. They're not necessarily going to fit into standard moulds and solutions. When I go through a period of climate grief, it really stresses me out. One of the things that stresses me more than anything is being confused. I hate it. So when I'm feeling really awful about the climate, politics, or if I'm worried the economy is going to collapse then I dive into that. I'll read and read on the subject until I feel like I understand it and that sense of understanding is what calms me down.

Lilli: For that reason I have not sought professional support for my mental health, ever. I've supported other people to access it, so I know how to. Truthfully, one of the largest reasons I don't is because I know that there is a 90% chance that if I go and say "I'm really depressed about all the injustice in the world," then they'll respond, "Just don't think about it." I'll be like, "No, I want to change it. I want strategies that keep me strong enough and together enough to fight and win. I don't want to just not think about it. I want to fight and I want to win."

Tom: I think another element is that people who don't benefit from the system don't trust institutions. Activists generally come from relatively privileged, middle-class backgrounds. Not always, but often. Then they spend months, years, decades, however long fighting a system. That leaves them very hesitant to access any kind of service for any reason other than the dole. So, finding ways to communicate to



activist communities that it may be worth accessing a health service? It's a really big ask for lots of people.

And that's led to a whole bunch of informal and unskilled mental health work within the communities. I've done a huge amount of that. We've had to find solutions to really strange problems. The kinds of trauma that exist in an action like a blockade community are not easy to translate to someone outside of that community. A psychologist would not necessarily understand any of the ramifications.

Tom: In terms of what I want from psychologists, it's more consideration of the context of activists. Instead of pathologizing, recognise that it's happening in a social context, to people who are really resistant to that social context. What I would love to see from a magazine such as yours would be that you encourage psychologists to go out and talk to activists. All the best change happens from conversation anyway. On the ground, with relationship building. For a magazine that goes to people with a skillset like yours, I don't think we necessarily want to encourage them to go and leaflet on the street. If I'm going to get one thing out of a psychologist, it'd be great if it was a unique skillset that we don't have access to normally. Leverage your skillset in support of climate goals via the people who are trying to protect it. Also, you're highly respected as professionals.

Lilli: We also want references for court!

Tom: But as respected members of the community, whenever you say something, people don't tend to argue against you and everybody listens.

Psychologists going out and taking direct action does not read the same as a bunch of hippie ferals going out. I want you to get out there and be like, "No, I actually support these radicals." That's an efficient use of privilege, right there.

One more tangible thing to do, if qualified, is to please go into organising spaces, particularly blockading spaces because they are 24/7 and really intense. Deliver the 'Accidental Counsellor' workshop for free. The activist community desperately needs 'Accidental Counsellor' training.

I want you to get out there and be like, "No, I actually support these radicals." That's an efficient use of privilege, right there

I really think the most efficient use of mental health professionals' skillsets is in supporting the people who are doing what needs to be done. Blockade communities might aim to organise anti-hierarchically and there might be no official leaders, but there is always a core group. There is always a small group who do the bulk of the work. Support those people because they drive the movement. They are often so broken because they spend all their time organising, acting and supporting others. Those are the people who leave a huge hole when they burn out altogether and have to disengage. A huge hole. Everybody needs a holiday. But we need those people to come back and teach other people what they can do. So, for mental health professionals to support those people is an incredibly valuable use of your time and skillset.



People who are full-time activists have given up their whole life to fight for a better future for your children. The least you could do is reach out to them and ask if they're okay. That's not a very big ask, okay?

"If you need some free counselling, I'm here."

The reason that you can't afford counselling is because you quit your job to go and be an activist full-time for the benefit of future generations and for people that will never, ever know that you did that work. Even after you've achieved something, people will still say it wasn't because of you.

So, we need mental health professionals to support the people who drive the movement. They live their lives this close to breaking point. Stop those people from breaking.

we need mental health professionals to support the people who drive the movement. They live their lives this close to breaking point. Stop those people from breaking



MAJORITY WORLD CONSULATION

COMMUNITY VOICES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

Climate change in northern Uganda has been tragedy

Alfred Oneki

Community Development Northern Uganda

Northern Uganda has been a major distributor of hard wood in the last 15 years. Many leaders are linked to the deals in northern Uganda, they became timber dealers more than leaders. Trees have also been cut for charcoal, which fuels the whole country and neighbouring countries. Resulting forest depletion affects rainfall formation, and increases temperature and humidity, bringing great change to our climate. There is need to encourage people to plant trees and green vegetation.

Climate change is the greatest challenge facing people in northern Uganda. Disrupted ecological systems have serious consequences for agricultural productivity, forest, water supply, health system and development. Rainfall is unpredictable and extreme weather continues to intensify. It is highly destructive for crops and green vegetation. The policy framework does not exist to mitigate the vulnerabilities and hazards caused by climate change.

Before, the elders knew when it was time to plant crops and when to harvest, based on the sky, the stars and the moon. People used to start ploughing in February. We called it "Ager," the dry season that takes place to March.

The usual planting of the first season was April, May and June, second season was August and September. Harvesting for the first season happened while planting for the second season. Harvest for second

season was December to January. This is all disrupted by climate change. Rain may start at any time throughout the year and end early. Usually, in June, elders understand that rain will go slightly and there is warm weather. Crops first grow and put up flowers as pollination take place. This doesn't work well with this climate change as we experienced rain heavily even in June. We used to experience heavy rain in August and October, it would wash away spears from grass (Lamol Acili). This has changed over the last ten years.



From January, men could go to the bush looking for wild game for meat. They could take the whole of January (dwar butu ilum). Because it is the dry season, people couldn't plant during that time. Women continued the harvest. These systems are disrupted. You can't predict when is going to rain and when not going to rain.

Last year, northern Uganda experienced rain up to end of December. Crops were destroyed. We had heavy rain in January this year. People's bricks were spoiled and they couldn't build huts. January is the time people renovate their huts by removing the old grasses and replacing with new ones to avoid leaking during heavy rain. This couldn't happen this year.

Climate disruption has caused food insecurity. There are food shortages, hunger and starvation. Perennial crops and fruits have disappeared recently (pumpkin, pawpaw, etc). They become a story for the new generation. Our traditional species have become history.

Climate change and its impact on the people of Somalia.

Solomon Oyanya

***Agriculturalist and environmental conservation
Somalia***



One of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, Somalia faces exceptional challenges in terms of natural resource management. Governance structures have fallen apart and militias control different parts of the country. The three main productive sectors and exports are livestock, charcoal production and crops. Much of the population practice nomadic and semi-nomadic agro-pastoralism. Some are farmers. There is little seasonal variation and it is hot year-around, with periodic monsoon winds and irregular rainfall.

Droughts, dust storms and floods are now more frequent and prolonged, making environmental degradation even worse. Environmental concerns bring food insecurity and famine, loss of livelihood, coastal and marine destruction, probable hazardous waste, and increased natural disasters.

I can relate the key environmental challenges in Somalia to women and children, degradation of natural resources and democratic instability.

Deforestation is a huge challenge. Charcoal-burning is a major income source for poor and middle-income pastoralists. It takes about 6 trees to produce one sack of charcoal. The charcoal industry has a huge impact on livelihood security, exacerbating community conflicts and increasing vulnerability to drought.

Land degradation is also a major issue. The livestock sector uses a nomadic system, so high mobility is required with access to extensive grazing resources. Land use is limited by soil quality, low rainfall and limited water. Overgrazing is a consequence. This land degradation is linked to desertification and drought, and leads to conflict. Conflict then results in

further land degradation as it obstructs the development of more sustainable agricultural practices.

With extremely low and unreliable rainfall, and ongoing conflict, water scarcity is at its worst. Less than 25% of Somalians have safe drinking water, and almost nobody in rural communities. Lack of safe water is a striking feature throughout Somalia. There are also persistent but unverified reports of illegal fishing and waste dumping off the coast.

As freshwater habitats are destroyed, the ecosystem services they provide are lost. This affects the livelihoods of people who depend on them. Climate change is not some far-off, future problem. It's happening right now, and threatening small and big businesses alike.

As Sylvia Earle said, "Even if you never have the chance to see or touch the ocean, the ocean touches you with every breath you take, every drop of water you drink, every bite you consume." Let's act swiftly to save the upcoming generations.

Flooding, Kampala's real nightmare

Godfrey Ogena

Uganda

Climate change is already having far reaching implications on the local population of Kampala city in Uganda. There is increased frequency and intensity of flooding in Kampala and surrounding areas. For example, in the last three weeks alone, water levels in and around Lake Victoria has greatly risen to 13+ metres almost surpassing the 1964 level.

This is due to torrential rains that have continued to pound Kampala and Uganda as a whole.

The frequent flooding in Kampala has remained largely unpredictable and has continued to point at climate change as occasioned by global warming.

Although environmentalists had predicted a decline in Lake Victoria water levels years ago because of construction of power generation dams, variability in climate change continues to prove otherwise. Also, pollution in and around Lake Victoria has continued to suffocate the lake forcing the waters to surge and the shoreline to burst.



The immediate effects have been feelings of helplessness and anxiety; distress among businesses resulting from loss of revenues and increased maintenance costs; and flooding and submergence of residential premises, commercial facilities, farms around the shores of Lake Victoria.

Climate Change in Melanesia

Brother Mark Kenatsi

Papua New Guinea

The world has come to a standstill due to COVID19. At the moment, there is lockdown due to this pandemic.

Every activity in the world is coming to a halt. Every developed nation is working around the clock, who is going to find the vaccine? Doctors around the world are working tirelessly to find a vaccine. We are pretty sure, in the very near future, life will come back to normal. This pandemic will come and go.

For us, the nightmare we will continue to live with is climate change. Some of our smaller islands, here in Bougainville, in the Carteret Islands some of their homes are now under the water. Areas they have planted cash crops to sustain their livelihood are now under the water.

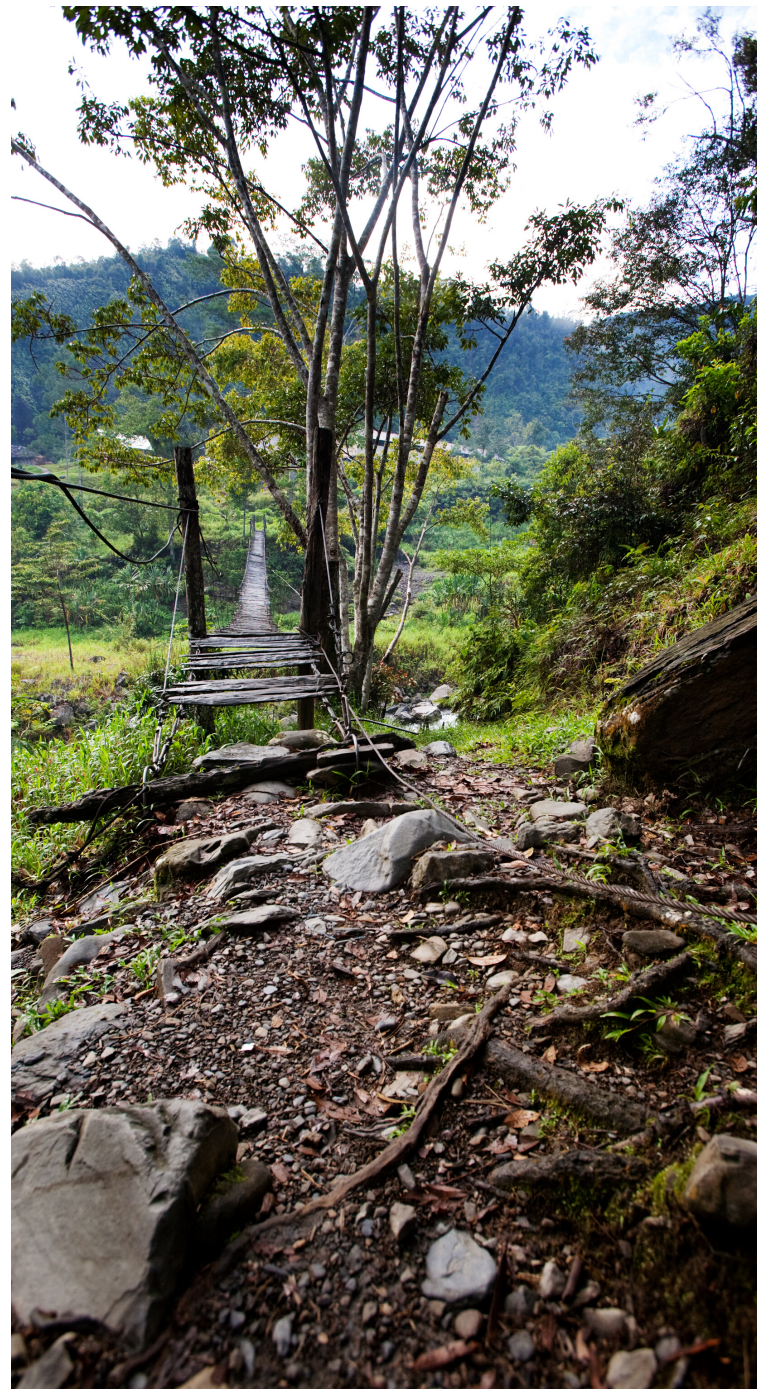
I am not really sure how the world is going to solve the problem of climate change. The developing nations in the Pacific are feeling the effect. Climate change is changing the face of our islands. The developed nations are talking about it but they are not doing anything about it. Kiribati is another Island Nation which is also affected by this climate change.

There are changing patterns of weather. Recently Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga experienced the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Harold. It left many people homeless and many are traumatized. It never happened like this before. It is now becoming an annual thing.

Therefore, the impact of Climate Change for us evolves around two issues – firstly, the rising sea levels which are now threatening the lives of our smaller islands, and secondly, the changing patterns of the climate.

Whilst we are so serious about COVID 19, the same seriousness must be also applied to minimize the effect of Climate Change in smaller developing nation as experienced by the Pacific Island Nations.

This pandemic will come and go. For us, the nightmare we will continue to live with is climate change.





RESEARCH PROJECT

□ ————— □

Are you a counsellor or
psychotherapist?
Are you involved in climate
action?
Have your clients expressed
climate-related anxiety and
distress in session?

□ ————— □

We would like to hear from you!
Please contact Katrina Wong at
238652@my.acap.edu.au to
participate in a research project
exploring the emerging role of
counselling and psychotherapy in
addressing climate-related mental
health concerns, on both a micro
and macro level.

Interviews will take 60 minutes and can be
conducted face-to-face or via Zoom.
Participation is voluntary and there will be no
reimbursement.



CALL FOR PAPERS

ISSUE THREE: SANISM

We are seeking expressions of interest for submissions on the topic of Sanism. Sanism encompasses the oppression and discrimination against people with a mental health condition. For this issue we would love a focus on people with lived experience. Send a short paragraph about your idea and a short bio.

You can submit ideas in relation to each of our types of pieces; a theory piece, an interview with someone, volunteer to be interviewed, a practice piece about work you are doing, a representation of community voices, ideas that changed you, a poem and art work etc.

We invite people from diverse disciplines and backgrounds to submit to this magazine. For in-depth articles (theoretical, practice, community voices), we would like to create opportunities for authors to develop their work through mentorship. That is, rather than having a peer review process focused on discipline-specific criticism, we would like to connect you with a mentor in your field to help guide you through the process of preparing your work for publication, if that is wanted.

Send your EOI's to activist.practitioner@gmail.com. Please see our [website](#) for further submission information and contact details.

EOI's are due by May 29 and, if accepted, completed pieces are due by end of June.

THE ACTIVIST PRACTITIONER EDITORIAL TEAM:

Paul Rhodes, Ruth Wells, Ruth Nelson, Sahra O'Doherty, Miranda Cashin, Max Loomes