

Revised 2020

Psychology and Climate Change

The APS position

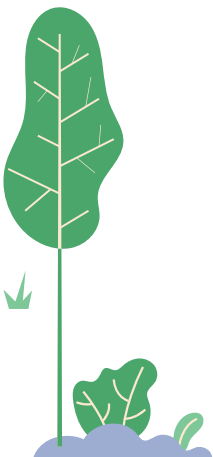
The APS accepts the scientific consensus that human-caused climate change poses an existential threat to human civilisation, demanding urgent action at global, national, community and individual levels. The APS also acknowledges the significant psychosocial implications of climate change, including its current and future impacts on the physical and mental health of all human beings.

In relation to climate change and health, the APS acknowledges that:

- Climate change involves serious and irreversible harm to the environment and to human health and psychosocial wellbeing;
- The main mental health consequences of climate change arise from the direct impacts of extreme weather events on individuals, families and communities, disruptions to the social, economic and demographic determinants of mental health (e.g., from disrupted livelihoods, increased costs of basic services, and forced migration), and emotional stresses and mental health problems in response to awareness of the threat that it poses;
- Measures to mitigate climate change will also directly benefit physical and mental health;
- Governments, businesses, and organisations should recognise the urgency of the climate crisis and associated environmental problems, and develop and implement effective policies to speedily reduce greenhouse gas emissions and drawdown the excess gases already in the atmosphere;
- Strategies to mitigate climate change and to promote community adaptation and resilience should be fair and just, and should observe the human rights of vulnerable people and communities (e.g., children, Indigenous Australians, migrant populations, those who lose their jobs in the transition out of fossil fuels);
- Individuals, businesses and organisations, including psychology and other health professionals, should be informed about, and take measures to reduce, their own greenhouse gas emissions ('carbon footprint') by making appropriate changes to consumption patterns.

In relation to psychological contributions to climate change, the APS considers that:

- Human motivations and behaviours constitute core causal factors with respect to environmental problems;
- Profound changes in many facets of human behaviour are required to bring about speedy action to prevent catastrophic climate change;
- Psychology professionals possess expert knowledge, skills and resources that can contribute to:
 - understanding the psychological dimensions of the global climate crisis;
 - understanding the human behavioural contributions to climate change;
 - understanding how people perceive the risks of climate change and how they can be motivated to take action;
 - pro-environmental behaviour change;
 - measuring and modifying aspects of the environment to achieve sustainable change;



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- the design, implementation and evaluation of pro-environmental campaigns and activities at an individual and societal level;
 - models of decision making that will help policy-makers understand how the public will respond once policies are put into place;
 - effective communication of climate policies to ensure they are turned into effective actions;
 - helping individuals and communities to cope with emotional responses to the threat of climate change; and
 - effective education and training for children and adults on the importance of pro-environmental behaviours and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Psychology as a profession and discipline, and its professional organisation, the APS, have a social and moral responsibility to play an active and leading role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, to advocate strongly for speedy policy action, and to contribute expertise to relevant local, state, national and international dialogues.
 - The APS has responsibility for its environmental footprint, including greenhouse gas emissions, resource use and waste production, and will take action accordingly, by estimating emissions, setting targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions, adopting sustainability measures, and ensuring public and transparent reporting on its activities and progress on these efforts.

The APS undertakes to assist and encourage the engagement of all psychology professionals with climate change issues, as researchers, academics, practitioners and students, and to seek to implement the recommendations outlined in the full position statement.

Go to www.psychology.org.au/About-Us/What-we-do/advocacy/Position-Statements/Psychology-and-climate-change

