



Annual General Meeting

6 November 2019

Carlton Library, 667 Rathdowne St, North Carlton

President's report

Carol Ride

Welcome.

As I prepared this President's report for the AGM, I was struck by a comment I referred to in the 2017 report – from Zen Roshi Susan Murphy – that the climate crisis challenges us to reflect on 'what can this moment discover in us? She shifts the demand this makes into it being a privilege to be asked to contribute.

Susan's thoughts resonate with those of psychologist Margaret Klein Salamon who started the Climate Mobilisation in the US with the help of Melbourne climate activists David Spratt and Philip Sutton. The Climate Mobilisation has become the inspiration for the Green New Deal and for the work of AOC (Alexandria Ocasio Cortez). Margaret's early work was so original and challenging – on her website she had a therapists couch with a background image of a climate induced storm. Her latest book, *Facing the Climate Emergency: How to transform yourself with climate truth*, tells of her own inspiring journey. She begins by asking readers to recognise their ways of denying climate change. She then has readers consider the emotional impact of accepting reality and the consequent implications for their lives – She asks them to consider what really matters and what changes does this reality necessitate to really be alive to the threat and the challenge of climate change.

While PSC has this year continued our work of running workshops for community groups, professionals working in the field of climate science and climate impacts, for Extinction Rebellion and other climate activists, as well as for survivors of bushfire, - we find ourselves constantly questioning what really matters in our work and what should be prioritized. We will be having a discussion later tonight to hear of some of the latest thinking about the question of what the climate crisis require of us all – and

particularly some thinking about the focus we might include in our work – under the heading of *Doom and Bloom*.

We have made a significant change this year by beginning to charge a fee for those participating in our workshops. This has achieved one of the desired impacts – increased the attendance of people after booking a place. And secondarily it has given us some income so that we have been able to successfully trial the employment of an administration assistant. We are very pleased to announce that the Sunrise Project have just given us a grant of \$10,000 to help us continue with administrative assistance and also to help us have some financial stability while we consider any new or additional activities we might undertake.

One such consideration would be reaching out to the therapeutic community of psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists to engage them in the thinking too about what and how they might offer a service to their communities across Australia. We can offer our experiences and but also those of the international community who have a developing interest in psycho-social and spiritual development in the climate crisis, and working in the climate crisis to foster wellbeing and resilience and personal development.

There is huge demand growing for understanding what eco-anxiety means and also for therapeutic help for those troubled by the instability and threat of the climate crisis. We have responded during the year an ever-growing number of media requests for interviews or written articles on topics such as – the mental health impact of climate change, climate induced trauma, eco-anxiety, how to manage climate anxiety, how to prevent burnout as an activist, how bushfires impact on previous victims and the impact of drought. These requests have swelled – particularly in recent months, both through invitations from the climate media centre of the Climate Council, and through direct invitations to our organisation. The school strike and the PM's statements about not making young people anxious about the future have been triggers. Charles, Bron and I have been the main responders here.

Invitations to speak at conferences on these and related topics have been taken up by Charles Le Feuvre at The Australian and NZ College of Psychiatrists - his talk titled *Our house is on fire!: Self and Nature in the Anthropocene* - and Bron Gresham at the Mindful Futures Conference speaking in on Compassion and Climate and our PSC work.

Other topics raised in media interviews have been the questioning by young people about whether or not to have children, and the need for parents to receive support in talking with their children about climate change. We have been able to provide panellist for this latter discussion and have called on other experts in the field, such as Prof Ann Sanson and Dr Susie Burke to assist as well.

We have been able to help with referrals to local and some interstate therapists who are conscious and engaged in understanding the impact of the climate threat to people's mental health. However there is a huge amount more work that is needed to foster a wider referral network across the country, and to support therapists in this work.

In August PSC played a significant role in the establishment of an online petition of psychologists and psychology organisations calling for an emergency response to climate change. With over 300 signatures, this has put pressure on psychology organisations – such as the Australian Psychological Society to review their position on climate change, and has contributed to the beginning of professional associations in ours and other fields taking a similar stand. (There are now Climate emergency declarations in 1,174 jurisdictions and local governments covering 290 million citizens world wide).

We made a submission to the state Government enquiry on Mental Health, and were very pleased to be invited to do so by the State Government – a recognition of our work.

I would like to thank my colleagues who have been such a rich source of inspiration and support in the challenging work of PSC in the last year - for their wisdom, commitment and continuing nourishment through working closely together: Charles Le Feuvre Vice President, Rosemary Crettenden Treasurer, Libby Skeels Public Officer, Nick Mueller Minutes Secretary, and treasured committee members, Bron Gresham, Beth Hill, and Anne Clancy.