

CLIMATE CHANGE, DESPAIR & EMPOWERMENT

The Climate Change, Despair and Empowerment workshop series aims to support climate action groups to increase personal empowerment, climate action sustainability and CAG effectiveness. The workshops will have 2 parts: a Joanna Macy-inspired despair and empowerment process to unlock the creativity and empowerment of CAG group members, followed by a visioning and strategy session tailored to the specific priorities of individual CAGs. See more information on the workshop content below.

PARRACAN WORKSHOP DETAILS

WHEN: 18th and 19th June. Saturday 9am – 7pm, Sunday 10am – 1pm

WHERE: [Hawkesbury EarthCare Centre](#), Corner of Science Rd & Campus Drive, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury Campus ([link to map](#))

COST: Suggested donation \$100 (or whatever you can afford)

All proceeds to [Beyond Zero Emissions](#), [Australian Youth Climate Coalition](#), and [100% Renewables Campaign](#).

BOOKINGS: Ling Halbert 0412 098 031, ling300ppm@gmail.com

Please bring a cushion to sit on and food to share for lunch and dinner (low footprint vegetarian preferred). Tea and coffee provided.

WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

John Seed OAM is an environmental activist who has worked with Joanna Macy since 1986 and co-authored with her the book “Thinking Like a Mountain – Towards a Council of All Beings”. He has been facilitating Despair and Empowerment for 25 years and in 2006 helped in the formation of numerous Climate Action Groups in the US, Canada and Australia with a series of Climate Change, Despair and Empowerment workshops.

Emma Pittaway has trained with Joanna Macy and has run Macy-inspired ‘[EarthWorks](#)’ workshops and retreats since 2005. She was involved in facilitating Climate Change, Despair and Empowerment workshops in 2006 and has run despair and empowerment workshops for several CAGS since. She has been involved in the grassroots climate action movement since 2005, and previously worked at Greenpeace supporting grassroots groups with the formation and organisation of Australia’s Climate Action Summit and the Community Climate Network.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP: DESPAIR AND EMPOWERMENT

We in the climate movement know better than anyone the horror of what climate change will mean for humanity. Yet we live in a culture where there is a profound denial of feeling - and this affects our energy and effectiveness to make change happen.

We are conditioned to repress feelings of grief, fear and anger and avoid their expression. We also learn to deaden ourselves and try to avoid feeling them at all. This repression takes a heavy toll and causes us to burn out, shut down, become shrill and ineffectual or burdened by quiet despair.

Yet these feelings are an important part of our intelligence. For billions of years our pre-human ancestors used feelings alone to determine what was safe and what was dangerous, and natural selection honed the accuracy of these feelings at every turn. Thinking augments this intelligence but does not replace it. Without robust feelings to back it up, thinking is shallow and lacks authenticity and passion.

To sustain our own work and reach out to other people in the community, we need to draw on our feelings for energy, not fight them. In her books “Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age” (1983) and “Coming Back to Life” (1998) Joanna Macy teaches us how to create a safe container of fellowship to invite these banished feelings back into our lives and explore the wisdom, energy and empowerment that this inevitably brings.

For more about Despair and Empowerment see Joanna Macy’s “[Working Through Environmental Despair](#)”. Also see more about [Climate Change, Despair and Empowerment workshops](#).

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP: VISIONING AND STRATEGY

The visioning and strategy session will move the momentum and energy created by the despair and empowerment work into planning for action and increased effectiveness. After talking to Tom and Ling, initial ideas for this session are to use the time to explore how to best to communicate with the local community, engage them in ParraCAN’s activities, and build ParraCAN membership. If time permits, it may also include strategic prioritisation of current ParraCAN activities, to ensure focus on the most effective opportunities and activities, so that members’ energy is not spread too thin.

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