

## MEDIA ALERT

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## Coping with climate change at home – tips for the public

Climate change is a global issue but it is also a major concern for Australians. With the Copenhagen climate summit in session now, dialogue about environmental problems has reached fever pitch. The increased media coverage and the ongoing public debate can arouse strong emotions in people.

Many people in Australia may be feeling helpless and overwhelmed by the scale of the problems, confused about the urgency of the issue, or alternatively are at risk of 'climate fatigue' and cynical about the motivations of governments. These perceptions can be problematic when they lead to people feeling hopeless, apathetic about climate change or giving up on their own pro-environmental behaviours because they think 'what's the point?'.

Psychologists at the Australian Psychological Society (APS) say that these responses, whilst worrying, are also a fairly predictable human process as people try to come to grips with very large, complex and worrying problems. It's normal to want to believe that maybe climate change isn't as bad as the scientists predict, or to want to minimise or avoid the problems by switching off (tuning out).

However, it is important to stay concerned about the world and the future, and to keep taking action. APS psychologists say that being optimistic (and active) is better for people's mental health, and helps people to be more effective at making changes. Taking personal local action on climate change is powerful as people can feel they are part of the solution, they can see the results of their efforts and they have the opportunity to positively influence family, friends and neighbours.

The APS tip sheet *Climate change - what you can do* provides many tips to help people overcome distress, cynicism or apathy about environmental problems, as well as tips for how to talk about environmental problems with others and encourage them to join in environmentally friendly behaviours.

### Tip sheet: Climate change - what can you do

[http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/climate](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/climate)

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*The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 17,500 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.*