A Conversation About… Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Climate Change and Covid 19 – Part 2

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Host (00:01):
Hi there. Welcome to Mental Health Professionals Network podcast series. MHPN aims to promote and celebrate interdisciplinary collaborative mental healthcare.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (00:18):
I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians and the land of which are on. I would like to acknowledge the Elders on the country. I'm on the Wiradjuri and pay my respects to them. In particular for guiding myself and the Country I believe through colonisation and keeping our stories and culture as intact as they are, and for most part, that's sleeping, if not intact in its entirety.

(00:48):
Welcome to the second episode of this four part MHPN presents a conversation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and climate change. Last week we discussed the prehistoric and historic effects of climate and colonisation, the development of mental health professions and pathways. Then finished on a renewed shoots of hope, and we'll do that at each episode finish, on a strength based, we like to finish from a positive as opposed to a deficit model. I'd like to say hi to my co-presenters, Professor Pat Dudgeon and Professor Alan Rosen. Professor Pat Dudgeon, would you like to introduce yourself?

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (01:29):
Yeah, thanks Stewie. My name's Pat Dudgeon. I'm from beautiful Nyoongar Boodja that's in Perth in Western Australia. I've lived and worked here for over two thirds of my life, but my people are from the Kimberley, so I come from the Bardi people. I'm a professor at the University of Western Australia. I'm a psychologist by trade and I've been working very much in Indigenous suicide prevention and also in Indigenous social emotional wellbeing. So I lead a number of big national projects and work very closely

with the Aboriginal community, whether it's locally or nationally in bringing about social change in Indigenous wellbeing. So that's a little bit about me. Back to you, Stewie.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (02:16):
Thank you, Pat. And Alan, if you wouldn't mind introducing yourself.

Prof. Alan Rosen (02:20):
Thanks Stewart. I'm Alan Rosen and I'm a community psychiatrist. I've been involved in running community and hospital mental health services combined or integrated for over 30 years and then for the same time and longer, I've been working with remote Aboriginal community for about 40 years. So, and I'm very interested in what's been happening in this in terms of climate change, climate change related effects like pandemics that we've been going through as well as the fires and the floods, et cetera. And I'm speaking from the land of the Wangal Eora and I honour their Elders, their sovereignty, and I pay my respect to this Land from which I speak.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (03:03):
Thanks Alan. And I'm Stewart Sutherland. I'm a Wiradjuri man and present today from Wiradjuri Country here in Wambuul. Leaving school, I started as a chef and worked for a few years doing that. Some very lovely locations, but mental health grabbed my attention and so I've been working with mental health and addiction medicine for a while now, 25 years and more recently moved into academia where I've been working with Alan on some mental health and climate change for the last couple of years, getting to know him on a professional level. And Pat and I have known each other for a much, much longer time than that. And when I was doing policy work at the department of Health and Ageing in the OATSI division. So I think without further ado, we might launch into today's podcast. And today we're gonna cover three broad topics, which is the sequence and interaction of climate change relating to effects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, drought, fires, pandemic and floods, which we know will get a bit dark and a bit troublesome. And then of course, like any other episode or every other episode, we will finish with renewed shoots of hope. So today I'd like to call upon Alan and Pat to define the many different versions of what we are now calling the climate change crisis. We've got things like climate poly crisis, domino crisis, and cumulative climate disasters. So, what do all those things mean?

Prof. Alan Rosen (04:29):
Domino crisis really refers informally to an area of research, which is emerging, which is more often called cumulative climate disasters. There's a new term, at least new to me, which has been emerging through the World Economic Forum that has been going on in the last few weeks, their report associated with it, this idea of climate poly crisis is a cluster of related global risks with compounding effects such that the overall impact exceeds the sum of each part. And when they talk about poly crises, they're not only talking about climate crises, although a lot of it is due to them, but they're also talking about political crises, war crises, and other aspects of global crises, I would think including the nuclear threat, et cetera. But domino crises is sort of like when a domino falls and then starts tipping the other dominoes over. And what happens is if you've gone through one of these crises or managed to survive a disaster, you are then knocked down by the next disaster and then the next and then the next.

(05:34):

And we've had a sequence like that in Australia. If you think about the bush fires, the pandemic, the floods, and before all those came to, at least on the, in eastern Outback Australia came the two 10 year droughts, which were very, very tough. Tho those sequences can then recycle. The issue being that with climate crises, they don't cause it. If you just read your Colleen McCullough's "Thorn Birds" again, you'll realise that even in our Australian fiction that we allude quite often to floods and fires and things. But with climate change they come more often. They may recycle quicker, they may be more severe. And I think Stewart will tell us a bit more about those aspects.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (06:19):
Thanks, Alan. Pat, a shameless plug in the chapter, we've just about to publish, we talk about a couple of other different things. Do you wanna talk about those?

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (06:28):
Okay, just picking up on Alan's point, I think that's what we were doing. You know, when we discussed doing these podcasts, we were saying, well, Australia's well known for floods and drought and whatnot. Has anything changed? And it has, as Alan said earlier, it's the frequency now they're all happening one after another and there's no time for the environment to recover, let alone populations living on that particular country. I'm particularly concerned too, for Aboriginal communities living in various areas. So we know Stewie, when we were doing the work and writing about COVID-19, we spoke about how often people were still living in shanties or caravans after the bush fires and whatnot, let alone now dealing with COVID-19. So in some parts of Australia, particularly for Aboriginal people who are the most disadvantaged, there's been no time to recover from those disasters. In any case, those natural disasters before other things are upon them, such as a pandemic, it's a story of strength and self-determination.

(07:34):
But it was also a story about how those inequities in mental health and wellbeing were probably amplified by a COVID-19. So all of them go together. I think that we can't underestimate the mental health impacts that climate change and the pandemic are gonna have on all people. And already it was there for Aboriginal people, the loss of Country. We have started to reclaim Culture and reclaim Country, but there is a great grief in the loss of Country and Culture that's beginning to heal. But we are still a long way off. And what with climate change, it's starting it up again. We know that in some of the countries, is it Torres Strait Islander or Stewie, where some of the islands look like they might be underwater. And I dunno what the government's doing about that. Very little I'd say. So, things are pretty grim.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (08:30):
Yeah, all of the low-lying islands and the Torres Strait has low lying islands as well as Fiji and Tonga.

Prof. Alan Rosen (08:36):
Yeah. And some are quite near PNG.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (08:38):
Yeah, that's right. They're all at the danger point of being swamped by the ocean. And just for our listeners, I might just interject about the use of COVID. COVID is now being discussed in terms of climate

change, not a standalone virus. So when we're talking about climate change, we are talking about it, the context of climate change. Just for the listeners to understand where we're coming from,

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (08:59):
What was our reasoning for that, Alan?

Prof. Alan Rosen (09:02):
Yeah, they think that it's really due to the encroachment of human urban development upon forests and country areas where there's a lot of wildlife. So, it's intermingling with wild species and therefore where there is the transfer of the virus occurs. And I think there are probably other mechanisms, but people talk about that as the main mechanism.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (09:25):
So, I think it's reasonable that for us anyway, we are putting it with climate change.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (09:29):
Yes. And the same can be said for other viral infections, whether it's monkeypox or a few others, the climate is allowing the intermingling of animal and human species to transfer viruses, and viruses are living longer in the environment that we have.

Prof. Alan Rosen (09:44):
And particularly where there is heating of the environment, you get a flow down of the viruses to formally more temperate areas that have now become more subtropical.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (09:54):
So along with the many different now definitions we have, what are some of the knockdown consequences? You know, we talked about historic trauma last year, but what are some of the knockdown effects of that and climate change in many different things involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today, you know, such as the rekindling of transgenerational trauma and the loss of land, for example, the historic loss of land.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (10:16):
I think that Aboriginal people in particular have been in a state of trying to recover from colonisation and to reclaim Country and Culture. But you know, that doesn't mean that mainstream society has changed. We do have to change systems, we have to change the way people think about things in a big picture, you know, ideas of progress. And we mentioned that in the last podcast, you know, ideas that progress is exploiting and manipulating the environment for products that we probably don't even need. And we're all committed, you know, we haven't questioned this idea or ideal of progress, but there are consequences, there are. People have lost as it's spread across the world, capitalism and industry, there have been great losses. I think people are becoming more conscious of it. Certainly, in often movies, the villain of the story is the nameless corporate giants who plunder rainforests and whatnot.

(11:17):
But for Aboriginal people it's much more closer to home. It's about maybe still being on your Country, but seeing it damaged or destroyed. I know for climate change, we know that for young people, we

know that some young people are choosing not to have children because these are uncertain times that we live in and we dunno where it's going to go. And it seems like we're in this really bad situation, but very little is happening to pull us back from it. And it seems that when you do try that you're ridiculed or ignored about it. So, for Aboriginal people, it's another cycle of grief. There's still quite profound racism and disadvantaged for Aboriginal people, and we get blamed for that. Like, you know, get a job and just be like us when it's difficult to get a job in any case. And you know, there might be other ways of being that people would prefer in other values that they have.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (12:12):
I mean, all of that, if we want to put it into terms of psychological effect is, you know, ecological grief or as Alan mentioned in the last episode, so solastalgia, and there's a couple of other terms fast becoming part of our language now, but did we want to talk about the elephant in the room, which is actually the events which, you know, I've sort of been avoiding addressing in this podcast. So, you know, we've had, in the last five years, we've had drought, fire pandemic and floods, and they've rolled into one. And you know, the arguments there that Australia is a land that's dry and we have droughts and that's followed by floods or fire. It's the, the severity and the scale, the frequency, it's the scar, it leaves on us and the environment. I mean, for me, travelling down the Clyde in, in the north coast of New South Wales and just seeing that scorched landscape 12 months after the fire is a reminder sort of every time you go down there that that's still not recovering the way it should be cuz of the intensity of the fire.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (13:12):
I think what you said there was really important Stewie. Alan, I don't know if you've seen anything.

Prof. Alan Rosen (13:20):
Yeah, I have. My first experience of fire, which probably has had an influence on me throughout my life was when I was seven and my dad helped my much older brother who was running a camp for young people and a fire broke out in the bush and my dad went off to look after it and I was left with my mum on the verge of the road and the car, wondering whether my dad would ever come back. And he did eventually. And they did get the fire under control. It took a long, long time. But boy, that stuck with me. So I understand something of what people have been through with that. But I've been mainly involved with research with Aboriginal communities that have gone through the drought, and we can reference some of the details of that work, but the, the biggest impacts were impacting wellbeing because the corporate cotton growers and, and other big corporates depleted the water courses.

(14:18):
And so hunting and fishing was depleted and this was, you know, 10 year drought. And then there was another one about the same length. And of course a lot of the pastoral jobs dried up as people had to sell off their cattle and government gave some exceptional circumstances payments to the pastoralists, but not to the workers so they can have employment. So, they had to go to the bigger towns and to the coast to get that employment, leaving their kids with their grandparents if they were lucky or other people. And so there was separation of families, there was poverty and water and food insecurities. And as people went searching for work, they had to travel everywhere, but they didn't have money for petrol. And if you don't have money for petrol, you can't get the main gatherings, the main events that reinforce cultural identity. And the main ones in these remote areas was first of all funerals and secondly sadly, funerals and secondly football games. And you couldn't get there if you didn't have

petrol money. So, talking about damaging traditional culture, you know, all these flow-on effects really were very important.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (15:28):
Well, I was gonna just add to that for drought. You, Alan, you're right. You know, one of the things we saw not only in the drought but in the pandemic is that interruption to culture. And you mentioned football, so you know, one would argue that is a modern based ceremony for many <laugh>, you know, and certainly our, sorry, business is, is a ceremony that's actually been uninterrupted for the most part. But, you know, I want to say one good thing about the fire and, and that is that once again down the south coast of New South Wales, it actually uncovered century old fish traps that had been lost, not lost to the environment, but lost to knowledge. So, these really historic fish and eel traps people rediscovered and, and so they could re interact with that part of their culture, which is a nice thing coming from such a tragic event.

Prof. Alan Rosen (16:16):
Yeah, but Stewart, that's a great example. What came out of a drought was the land council started buying up because the land lost its value. We're, we're talking about before 2010 when, you know, this, this particular drought went on until, and so the, the land values dropped and the land council started buying what they called "shit land" because the pastoralists and their managers were not allowing 'em access for custodial purposes, for doing custodial duties on the land. They weren't allowing 'em access to the land, but once they brought up the land, they had access to it. So the land councils took advantage of that. So, this is backhanded opportunities that come out of, but they were right to do it. Yeah.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (16:57):
Then you're right, it's backhanded. It's not given with goodwill.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (17:01):
Just going back to the bushfires, I think I'm just picking up on your point from earlier, and I felt a bit inadequate to make a statement because I didn't suffer through the bushfires, but I watched them and I watched all those animals, you know, the koalas and all the animals and the people who lost everything. And that was heartbreaking in itself. So yes, there is vicarious trauma and loss that we feel when a natural disaster occurs. Usually it's contained and we can donate money or something to help, but there's just so many of them, you know, now that are happening. What with the pandemic, you don't have time to recover and you don't have time to grieve as well. So, it's like this ongoing trauma that's happening out there.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (17:48):
No, I think leave in, I think you're right. You know, the amount of smoke in the air not only went to New Zealand but went to Canada, it made its way up North America coast. We forget just how big that episode was and how many people had affected even though they weren't in the fire zone. So, you know, there is something to be said from that, from that precarious trauma and that witnessing event from a, an external view, you know,

Prof. Alan Rosen (18:15):

Here's the glimmering from that, and that is at least when the smoke came to the cities, the cities could identify with what was going on. A lot worse in the country areas, at least people got a taste of it. And even though there was smoke inhalation and there were problems in the cities as well, but it, it brought the community together.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (18:31):
Yeah. Mm-hmm. <Affirmative>

Prof. Alan Rosen (18:32):
Which our then prime minister, I don't think relies how much it brought the solidarity together between people laterally. But I, I think that the two key issues that came up from the drought was people who said, if the land's sick, Wes sick, and if the river doesn't flow, there's nowhere to meet. So, this issue of cultural meeting came back again through that.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (18:55):
I think, you know, for drought and fire and flood, actually COVID too is that much of our ceremonies around food and food practise. And if, you know, the, the fires decimated the land or droughts decimated the river or the floods decimated the river the cultural practise around that fades. And people don't get together. And that's a really important part that many don't think about in a modern world because they think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still don't collect traditional food, but that's actually not true for a good portion of people.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (19:30):
That was one of the issues that came out of COVID in the recovery. A positive thing was that people were starting to go out and hunt wildlife, but then the rules were introduced that they couldn't share that around the community. Yeah, Stewart.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (19:44):
Yep, that's right. There are laws about, especially with high risk foods, about who you can share with and who you can't with and the amount you can take and so forth that we're still all bound by. The other traumatic thing is Canberra had the 20th anniversary of their fires where they lost the lives. And I can't remember how many dozen houses, but the 2019, 2020 fires, people were panicked because it just brought back that memory. So there was all this panic and people were physically traumatised and verbalising that because of the historic trauma. So, you know, these things sit with us for a very long time.

Prof. Alan Rosen (20:20):
Can I just mention that there is one more possible elephant in the room, and that is when people are on fire ground and they're being encouraged to move away, at least for a while, or if they're living in drought, there's no money and there's no work. It is very difficult for people who are strongly attached to the land to leave and there's a strong attachment to land no matter what and how it might become degraded and dangerous to live in, no matter how much that happens with extreme heat and drought and flood or fire. And it results in a loss of ability to draw on strengths or collective identity. So I'm just wondering about how much we have to resist the spectre of possible future forced removals. And you know, they talk about Indigenous people if they're not organised to be able to manage the land properly

again, if they're not allowed to. It rekindles the trauma of transgenerational experiences and then the people talk about having to be the first climate refugees. But I think there's a lot of Aboriginal people who really want to stick with it and get into the recuperation, the restoration, and the recuperation in their communities.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (21:31):
I mean, I, I personally haven't experienced it in my communities where people have had to consider leaving country because it's getting so drought or flooded, not yet. I know there's a big hold up in the Kimberley right now, but the threats to leave communities come from the government saying that they won't fund the infrastructure for it.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (21:53):
And I think that's currently, but with the change in climate, will the government be able to keep up that infrastructure in, in, in a way that resists the need to move if central Australia becomes more dry, will people be able to find water, for example,

Prof. Alan Rosen (22:09):
With tide rises, with sea rises too. The local communities sometimes feel it's an insult to consider that they might have to be climate refugees where it may be forced by circumstances or as you say Pat, it might be forced by government.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (22:24):
I think that's a, a part of this that we are yet to fully grapple with. And I think the psychological effects of that have not even been started to be thinking, thought about to be honest, which is a, a quite a depressing thought really.

(22:39):
So, I might take that as a segue to move into a new chips of hope part where we can actually lighten the mood and talk about some of the good things that actually came out of the fires and the pandemics and the drought and so forth. And one of the pieces of work that I'm actually quite proud of is our work that we did around the, the pandemic and culture and some of the ways that Community led that response.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (23:04):
Yeah, absolutely. Look, just the very nature that we called a big zoom meeting of as many Aboriginal people as we could to discuss what was happening. And for a lot of people that was their first lifeline because everyone was just grappling with lockdowns and you know, COVID-19. So a lot of people expressed at the first meeting they said, this is fantastic, we've got an opportunity to share our experiences. So we'd done two major round tables with national representation talking about what was the effects of COVID. And our last one we did, we actually invited Jeffrey Ansloos who was, is a Canadian First Nations man who's here on sabbatical. So to talk about what the pandemic had meant for Canada. But we know for overseas that Australian Indigenous people did very well, especially in the early parts of the pandemic, mainly because our Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector took charge.

(24:04):

So NACCHO took charge with the state affiliates with all the AMS, and they galvanised into action. They were closing off communities early where they could, there was a lot of messaging happening within the AMS. They led the whole movement for us, it changed as time went on. I think at that time too, when COVID first came that we thought there'd be this COVID virus and then we'd get over it and go back to normal when it wasn't going to be like that in any case. And then all these different mutations happened, you know, we had Delta and then Omicron and so on. So it's been a whole range of different variations that have impacted on us and still do. But I think that that's one of the things. And we know that some communities, for instance, in terms of vaccination that on average I think we're a bit low, we could be much better, but we know that some communities got almost 90% of their people vaccinated. So we've been very conscious of that. There's been some great messaging going out health messaging from the community, controlled health, but also mental health messaging from peak organisations such as [unclear]. So they put out a number of fact sheets on, you know, how to keep yourself balanced during COVID, financial advice and so on. I think the success, particularly in the early days of keeping community safe, that does belong to our com Aboriginal community controlled health sector. And as I said earlier, it is a lesson in self-determination. So, when people are in charge, you know, wonderful things can happen. Later though different things happened, misinformation that was going around started going into our communities as well. But I was really pleased to see some of the Aboriginal leaders get up and publicly challenge that misinformation that was going about. So that was great, and I think some Aboriginal people there were attempts to co-op them into anti-vax type approaches and whatnot. So it was good to see leadership stand up against that. But overall, we've done very well, particularly when we know that in previous situations we've done so poorly and we know that globally it's been a terrible outcome for Indigenous people, the poor all and disadvantage always fear very badly in such situations.

Prof. Alan Rosen (26:32):
Yeah, and it was a world-beater in many ways that it would become a good news story worldwide after a while I thought. But it was really hard to get the message out nationally and regionally. Yes, because, and I think some of the people who've been involved in trying to get that message out, you look like yourself Pat, like Sandra Eades and like Fiona Stanley and they started thinking the news organisations only want bad news. They don't want to hear good news, and it was very hard to get the good news story out and that good news really occurred till the governments dropped the ball. And we'll come back to that in another session about what not to do as well as what to do. But it really came back to governments dropping the ball with vaccination, et cetera. But I think it also talks about Aboriginal leadership, that we have more Aboriginal spokespeople who are well informed, dually educated, you know, eloquent communicators and they stand up for cultural needs and justice and they're trusted by their communities to represent them and it helps to develop family and community solidarity and it stands up for caring for Country and valuing cultural tools, et cetera. So you know, there are those good things that have come out of that. It's consolidated I think the leadership out of, you know, trial by fire if you like, to mix my metaphors a bit.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (27:52):
And going back to fire, I mean one of the things that we discussed amongst us three was how that the Aboriginal fire burning in the old days, our people did control fire burning that kept the environment safe and kept, you know, the threats of bushfire down considerably. And Stewie you had some information on that about how New South Wales has adopted it.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (28:15):
Yes, fire stick burning as a cultural way has now been adopted into many of the state's practises and I think into other states and territories such as Tasmania and Queensland as a mode of reduction of hazards. So that, you know, back burning that used to be done from a very western science lens is now taken on a, a cultural lens for the country, you know, for Australia, which has been managed in this way and Aboriginal science has developed it for that to come back after a bit of sleep is a positive result for, for such a disastrous time in our history bush fires.

Prof. Alan Rosen (28:50):
So, what's stopping the other, the other states and territories?

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (28:53):
I dunno whether anything stopping them, I don't want to comment because I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I do think all of them have adopted in some shape or form, but I dunno that as facts. Where I know New South Wales has definitely adopted.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (29:05):
It, hopefully the others will. And I think the role of Aboriginal rangers is important as well. So most communities have Aboriginal rangers that look after country, you know, it's, it'd be a great job. They are out on country, they're monitoring the wildlife and looking after country. So I think that we'll see more of that happening. Very important and it's a great opportunity because it gives people meaningful employment. So I think they're the things that are coming out of these terrible situation, reclaiming cultural waste and having that recognised so valuing of Indigenous knowledges, but also Aboriginal people being reinstated as carers for Country doing that as their employment is fantastic, you know?

Prof. Alan Rosen (29:52):
Yes, I think that's great. And I, I mentioned again that issue in drought about the land councils buying up the "shit land" and then making it available for custodial duties and then it becomes a professional job as well. That's, that's terrific.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (30:06):
And goes back to the leadership too, doesn't it? It shows that we have our leadership ready and prime to act when given the opportunity. You know, an important part of that work that we talked about last episode with Chandler's work.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (30:20):
Stewie, I know in the last podcast we were going to give some advice because it is a, it is very challenging and you know, topics like this, when I see them in the paper, I almost don't want to read them because it's just so terrible and you feel helpless in it all. So with our lessness, we've talked about how bad it is and it is bad, but how there's some good things, a few good things are coming from it, but what can we do as individuals? What can listeners do as individuals? How can we have a role in this and not feel helpless? So that's my question to all of us. And I think I'd say, you know, join an animal rights group, join a campaign, write letters to your politicians so you can do that. What you buy from the supermarket, you know, that might not be a choice for you, some of you but others it might be a choice.

You know, buy ethically fished tuna and free range eggs and whatnot. That's the way you can make a contribution. But you can write letters to politicians, you can join groups and that gives you solace as well because no one's alone in this. I think our despair that we feel and our helplessness is a lot of us are feeling that. So that's my ideas. Alan?

Prof. Alan Rosen (31:38):
I would back that one up and just also suggest that there, there's been some of the more ultra-conservative politicians have blamed the climate change campaigns for causing eco anxiety and to saying that that anxiety was due mainly to the campaigners raising these issues. Whereas if you talk to most people, yes, they're angry, yes they're anxious, but they say it's because of the government inaction and the government denial. You talk about eco denial in the community. Sometimes denial's the wrong word, sometimes it's been just frozen with fear, people don't know what to do about it and they can't act alone. But acting together, joining a solidarity group or joining a campaign that stops the fracking of Aboriginal lands, for instance, makes a lot of sense cuz then people feel that they're potent and they're getting something done and they might not be getting something immediately done for their family, but they're getting something done for their community and for their people and for their country.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (32:40):
Yes, ultimately, it's a long-term game.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (32:42):
And I think apart from joining, you know, action groups, your comment pat about writing a letter, you know, and shopping and the products we use, you know, we've moved away from single use plastic bags as a way to transport our groceries around, yet it seems to me like supermarkets then just up the plastic in other forms. So to write a letter to your politician or your supermarket to say that you don't like that is actually a good way of doing something. Maybe small, but it's, it's still there. And, and that action will then propagate more action. And you'll see that the small changes make big changes, and it reminds me of that IKEA ad where, you know, one small change with a lot of us have makes a big change.

Prof. Alan Rosen (33:25):
And, and just to get the message through, getting the messaging through, just like we said, it was difficult to get the good news through about what Aboriginal communities could do about COVID. Well, on the same thing with all climate change, we need to get the message through not only that there is a problem, there is a problem, but this is what we can do about it. It's not as if you can't do anything about it, cuz that's part of the surveys. Young people particularly think it's, you know, about 55% people surveyed and a huge survey of 10,000 young people said that they despair because they don't know that they think the world is gonna end for them and their, and that's, that's when you come to those sort of solutions, the chance solutions at all, which are giving up. But there is a lot we can do about it and there's a lot we can do to change it. So it's worth doing. It's a two part issue. There is a problem, this is what we can do about it.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (34:19):

And it's not too late yet. So I think we should wrap it up. Thank you for joining us on this episode of MHPN presents a conversation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and climate change. And I'd like to thank Pat for joining the team.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (34:34):
My pleasure.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (34:36):
And Alan for your contributions.

Prof. Alan Rosen (34:38):
Thank you, Stewart.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (34:39):
I've enjoyed working with you both on this podcast and I hope you have enjoyed our conversation and you find it helpful as well as enlightening and we've enjoyed bringing it to and talking about the impacts of fire, drought, pandemic, and floods and that you join us for our next episode. And we'll talk about. .

Prof. Alan Rosen (35:00):
The achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Dr. Stewart Sutherland (35:03):
Thank you. The achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the area of mental health and climate change. And so I would like to thank you all for listening and goodbye. From Pat, Alan, and myself.

Prof. Pat Dudgeon (35:16):
Bye.

Prof. Alan Rosen (35:17):
See you everybody.

Host (35:19):
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