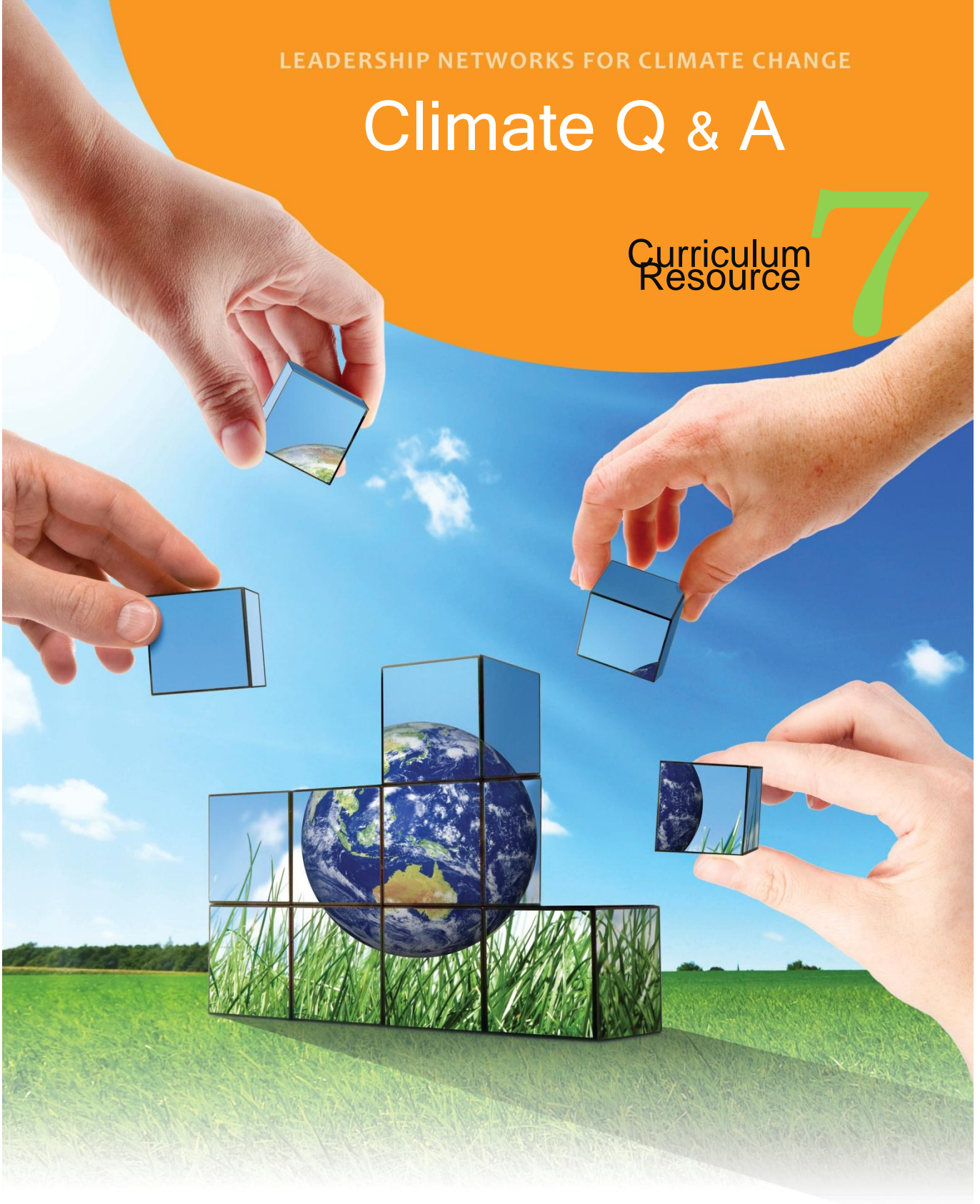


LEADERSHIP NETWORKS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate Q & A

Curriculum
Resource

7



Murdoch
UNIVERSITY



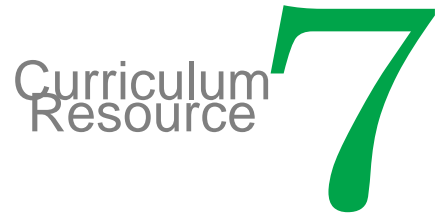
AUSTRALIAN
LEARNING
& TEACHING
COUNCIL
Promoting excellence in higher education

Climate Q&A

A student-led learning activity

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Themes

- Interdisciplinarity
- Problem-Based Learning
- Deliberative Practice
- Creativity

Rationale

At Murdoch University, climate change is taught in over 50 units across nine schools. The topics covered include, but are not limited to, the science of climate change, the impacts, the legal framework for action on climate change, the role of business, the role of the media, the role of sceptics, climate refugees, climate justice and adaptation and mitigation strategies. While the subject of climate change is explored from a diverse range of perspectives there is a growing concern among teaching staff that students feel like they are being bombarded with information about the impending crisis and subsequent impacts and that the doom and gloom messages are not empowering and instead lead to a depression and apathy. This mirrors Hulme's (2006) concern that the "discourse of catastrophe is in danger of tipping society onto a negative, depressive and reactionary trajectory."

To address this Climate Questions & Answers (Q&A) was developed as an activity that provided students with an opportunity to shape a conversation about climate change in a positive and future oriented way. This event was also an opportunity to develop a learning resource by capturing the event on film .

An additional benefit was engaging with a diverse audience; although the rationale for Climate Q&A was responding to student needs the event was designed for students, teaching staff and the general public.

Climate Q&A was modelled on the popular Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) TV show Q&A that involves having a panel of individuals respond to questions submitted by the public. Tony Jones, the host, facilitates involvement from different panellists in order to get different perspectives on the topic.

This resource describes how the script and panel were developed and concludes with reflections on the benefits of this event as a learning activity.

The questions & the script

An important part of the approach was to enable students to frame the discussion. To obtain their input, prior to the event students were asked the following questions:

- 1. What is your burning question or dilemma about climate change (that you would love a chance to discuss/debate with students, activists, academics, sustainability gurus)?**
- 2. What persuades you to take action on climate change (and how)?**
- 3. How could we improve teaching about climate change?**

These questions were collated and based on common themes were used to develop a script for the show (see Attachment 2). The script also included opportunities for the audience to ask questions.

The script was designed to provide all panellists with an opportunity to comment, but some questions were targeted to specific panellists based on their knowledge and experience. The script was distributed to panellists prior to the event.

The Panel

Climate Q&A was not intended to be controversial or provide a forum for common debates about climate change.

Instead, a key aim was to provide students and the public with different perspectives from a shared understanding that most of the increase in global temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations.

A short list of potential panellists was put together with the aim of identifying people with different disciplinary/life/work experience. The identification of some younger panellists was also intentional with the hope that they would connect with students.

Reflections

Climate Q&A was well received, reflections from participants and organisers about this as a learning activity included:

- That the event achieved its goal of being future oriented and positive and that this was appreciated although people did comment that it was unusual to be part of a discussion about climate change that was not controversial or adversarial.
- If the event were held again the importance of explaining more about the approach taken as there were comments from students that they did not attend because they thought it would be more of the same discussions and/or debates.
- The value of having panellists with 'expert' knowledge e.g., of government.
- The value of having panellists that students could relate to, particularly the younger panellists Simon Cherriman and Basha Stasak.
- The usefulness of having filmed the event with opportunities for incorporating it in units already being identified.
- The deliberative nature of this approach to teaching and the applicability and relevance of this approach as an alternative to lectures. It was reflected that this could run equally as well in the classroom with guest lecturers and/or students could be panellists assigned different roles.

Attachment

Climate Q&A Script

References

Hulme, M. 2006. "Chaotic World of Climate Truth." *BBC News*, November 4.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6115644.stm>

Introduction to the Q & A session

The aim of today is not to discuss climate science, or to debate over the existence of climate change. We are coming from a starting point based on the findings of the IPCC and the large number of scientific academies around the world that most of the observed increase in global temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations.

What we want to focus on today is where to next? The Climate Change Teaching Network has put this event together because one of the things we hear from students is that too much emphasis is given to the facts, figures, doom and gloom. So today we want to focus on how we achieve the policy and technological changes required to take action on climate change?

A large number of the questions that will be posed to the panel today were derived from a short survey of sustainability students as well as a few questions which accompanied the RSVPs.

There will also be a few opportunities for questions from the audience, so keep your short, focused questions in mind. There will also be plenty of time for discussion of these issues at the sundowner afterwards!

Introduction of the panelists

- **Philip Jennings** – Professor of Energy Studies at Murdoch University
- **Alannah MacTiernan** – Former state minister for planning and infrastructure & mayoral candidate for the City of Vincent
- **Piers Versteegen** – Director, Conservation Council Western Australia
- **Peg Davies** – Waste Education Officer, Mindarie Regional Council
- **Simon Cherriman** – Environmental Consultant & Filmmaker, and Young Conservationist of the Year 2010
- **Basha Stasak** – Perth Coordinator, Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC)

QUESTION 1

To the whole panel

It is obviously an important week for climate change action in Australia with the passing of the package of legislation to enact a price on carbon. I think we really have to start there by asking each of the panel for their reaction to this week's events, and also, what you all think might happen now in terms of the public debate, or the media reaction or more importantly, in the practical transition to a low carbon economy?

QUESTION 2

To Philip

The Federal Government's entire policy package is called *Clean Energy Future...* so Philip I am interested to hear from you about how you think we can best encourage the take-up of renewable energy in Australia and achieve a clean energy future?

[Anyone else on the panel like to comment?]

QUESTION 3

To Alannah

Alannah, given your experience of the complexities of Australian politics, how can we enact the policy changes required to combat climate change in the short time frame we have available to take meaningful action? And how can we get all of Australia involved?

[Anyone else on the panel like to comment?]

QUESTION 4

To the whole panel

The debate around climate change and the introduction of a carbon tax has lately been so divisive and ideological - how can we heal those divides, and how can we engage the entire community especially to see the opportunities that exist when we tackle climate change?

QUESTION 5

Invite a question from the audience

QUESTION 6

To the whole panel

We recently asked students what motivated them to take action on climate change and they said things like their values, their ethic, and their connections and concern for the planet. What motivates you to take action on climate change?

QUESTION 7

We now have a *QUESTION FROM AN AUDIENCE MEMBER* Andrew Moore

Given that personal transport is one of the biggest contributors to an individuals carbon footprint; how did you get here today? What does that say about the climate problem, personal barriers we face, and potential solutions?

QUESTION 8

To Piers & Basha

We have another *QUESTION FROM AN AUDIENCE MEMBER* Niels Brouwers

How can we make people aware that everybody can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation? So, how can we convince the Australian community that: A healthy environment starts with you!?

[Anyone else on the panel like to comment?]

QUESTION 9

To Simon

So Simon, in 2010 you were recognised as the young conservationist of the year. I understand that in terms of work you do a range of things, but one of your roles involves working for mining companies. I wonder how you reconcile your personal ethic and passion for the environment with the realities of working in Western Australia? I know this is something that our students really struggle with when faced with the prospect of getting a job when they complete their studies.

[Anyone else on the panel like to comment?]

QUESTION 10

Invite a question from the audience

QUESTION 11

To Peg

One of the climate change teaching network members has a question for you Peg which is about helping people put issues like climate change in to the context of their everyday lives. What are your thoughts about how to connect people to the issue and make it relevant to them?

[Anyone else on the panel like to comment?]

FINAL QUESTION

To the whole panel

There is a real feeling amongst students that there is a need to be future oriented, positive and solutions focused. So on a final note I'd like to ask the panel to share something that inspires you to think positively about the future.

THANK YOU

This brings to an end the Climate Q&A – I would like to thank the audience for their participation and the panelists for their involvement.