Governments lack of treating climate change as an emergency linked to climate anxiety in young people

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Parents for Climate Aotearoa (P4CA) with a weary heart welcome the global study into climate anxiety in children and young people. The survey illustrates the depth of anxiety many young people are feeling about climate change. Nearly 60% of young people approached said they felt very worried or extremely worried. More than 45% of those questioned said feelings about the climate affected their daily lives. Three-quarters of them said they thought the future was frightening. Over half (56%) say they think humanity is doomed. Two-thirds reported feeling sad, afraid and anxious. Many felt fear, anger, despair, grief and shame - as well as hope.

Climate anxiety is described in the study as a perfectly rational response to the completely irrational inaction of our governments on the climate crisis. It is inaction that our youth see around them by adults and government that are leading to hopelessness.

Founder of Parents for Climate Aotearoa, Alicia Hall says “here in Aotearoa, we have seen a science and values based, honest and nuanced leadership and communication tackling the pandemic emergency. It is a stark contrast to our government's response to climate change, which they declared as an emergency but have not treated as an emergency.”

"It's so scary, as a mother, to think what this climate crisis is doing to our children. Try to imagine what it is to have this knowledge of impending doom right from the start, to have never known anything different. 77% say the future is frightening. I already knew we needed to do better for the sake of our children's future; This study makes it clear that we also need to do better for the sake of our children's mental health, right now, before they become truly hopeless.” says Heather from P4CA Pōneke Wellington.

“58% of young people said they felt betrayed by their government. Through this study I hear the voices of children imploring us grown ups to take them seriously. Our children deserve a government that is not betraying them, that instead recognises its moral imperative to do right by them."

Lauren, Waikato states "This week has seen us muster up endless collective outrage about two people having a fancy weekend away in lockdown. This study shows that our children are rightly terrified about climate change yet we don't seem to have anywhere near the same collective outrage about the deliberate destruction of their future."

Olivia Hyatt from Parents for Climate Aotearoa Nelson Tasman says “This study validates what our parents and families are experiencing. Parents are dealing with anxious kids and youth everyday, while being increasingly anxious themselves. We as parents love and
support our children, we listen to their fears, take them seriously as we know validating how they feel is important."

“Too often when our childrens’ and youths’ feelings and thoughts on climate change are dismissed and shut down. By doing this we are making it worse” says Hall.

“We know that acting on climate change ourselves AND seeing those around us acting too are the best way to alleviate anxiety.”

Earlier in the year, P4CA ran a survey and found 62.3% of parents are extremely anxious about their children and grandchildren’s future. 80.7% believe their children’s lives will be more difficult than their parents due to climate change impacts.

Parents for Climate Aotearoa welcome anyone who needs support and hope to join us in supporting each other and our young people. www.parentsforclimatenz.org

Contact for comment

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