



A few weeks ago I sat in the sunshine at a winery in the Megalong Valley. Cliffs towered around us and the tiniest sliver of white high above hinted that the Hydro Majestic Hotel was gazing down on us. These cliffs just as they stand here now are at least 300 million years old. You will need to let that sink in.

In this issue we visit jeweller Sondi's studio and from her table we can see through the window to another distant escarpment in this same ancient rocky sandstone formation (which we incorrectly call mountains). It is the same age.

We humans need to put ourselves into perspective.

When we look around us in these unsettling times, it is easy to feel that all is lost, that we can never undo or even minimise enough the damage we have done to our planet in order that our lives – indeed all sentient life here – can survive.

We do not all respond in the same way. Some of us will continue 'as normal'. Some appear as if they don't care while in fact they do. Others care so deeply that they sink into a 'slough of despond' from which they may never recover.

Artists who throughout history have made records of their civilisations – from cave paintings to today – describe that ambivalence and we can see this today in exhibitions, writing, in our contemporary language. Anthropocene and pyrocene have entered the vernacular, as have expressions like eco anxiety and climate grief. As well as understanding how we can physically put the



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brakes on the catastrophic changes which are forecast, we have to find ways to cope with the fear, even terror, this threat engenders. It's tough and challenging.

In 'The Art of Planetary Health' exhibition which is reviewed here, we can see the ambivalence artists feel when asked to express hope. Inspiration can be taken from our aboriginal countrymen, through whom we glimpse the spirit and tenacity that ancient peoples must have had to survive continuously for so many thousands of years. As Karla Dicken says, 'things just got real'...

Some believe that by spelling out our fears we will ward off disappointment, so not letting uncertainty take us by surprise. This is an ancient idea, from the Stoics of ancient Greece. Later philosophers of Stoicism have incorporated additional practices, such as meditation and learning to know what is within our control. The idea is that by focusing attention on the things which are within our control, we learn to accept the rest with equanimity. In that way, they believe, we can have a good life.

It will be interesting to see how our world and our society change in the coming decades. Predictions of chaos are so often wrong (too many variables, too many butterflies' wings fluttering not only in the Amazonian jungle) and disasters, it seems, frequently arrive unannounced.

I'm going back to basics. Meditation to calm the troubled spirit and leading the best and simplest life one can. And enjoy every day as it comes, we do live in a beautiful world.

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