

Fossil Free South Africa launches *Climate Reporting Guide* for SA media

By  Sindy Peters

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Penned by veteran journalists David Le Page and Jo-Anne Smetherham, Fossil Free South Africa launched its *Climate Reporting Guide* this month. The guide aims to assist local journalists in their coverage of climate, environment, and energy-related stories.



Source: www.pixabay.com

Along with information on how the global climate emergency is affecting South Africa, it contains tips for journalists on how to report accurately on global warming as well as a list of contact organisations and experts for comment and information on fossil-fuel divestment.

Speaking during the online launch, Le Page highlighted four key factors to getting climate journalism right:

- 1. Accurate content:** Content that accurately reflects the facts and carries qualified expert opinion.
- 2. Accurate context:** Whenever there is climate relevance in stories, that relevance should be noted, e.g., stories on natural disasters, agriculture and fossil fuels.
- 3. Appropriate editorial presentation:** Climate stories are often reported on but are pushed into silos and don't make it into the headlines frequently enough.
- 4. Enough content:** Is there enough climate content given its relevance?

"As journalists and editors, we need to go out of our way to look for climate news and bring it into the foreground and make sure it gets a higher level of coverage," said Le Page.

He also unpacked the contents of the guide which includes the climate crisis and its impact in South Africa, the climate energy challenge, the just transition and the issue of jobs, renewable energy and its potential to replace coal, and the paths and options available to SA.

Media not currently doing enough

Also speaking at the launch, renowned science writer and specialist in climate, food security and pollution, Leonie Joubert said the media wasn't doing enough to warn society about climate collapse.

"In fact, I would say that the business media really also needs to be held accountable for largely playing a cheerleader to those who play by the rules of the capitalist game, rather than questioning the rules of the game itself. Which, of course, is challenging this predatory capitalist system that allows pollution to go unaccounted for," she said.



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Putting a face to the climate crisis

Joubert also shared the importance of narrative journalism in climate reporting. "Putting a human face to a climate story can drag someone, yank someone out of their own little echo chamber of experience and allow them to see what this situation means for another person."

"We have a 10-year window in which to radically alter value systems, the economy, the politics, the way we do absolutely everything, and we need to be doing it in a way where we're working with each other collaboratively and empathetically."

Access Fossil Free South Africa's *Climate Reporting Guide* [here](#).

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