

# 44th APS Annual Conference DARWIN



## MEDIA RELEASE

30 September – 4 October 2009

Darwin Convention Centre, Northern Territory

1 October 2009

### **The crucial role of psychology in addressing environmental sustainability and the challenges of global climate change**

Psychology brings a particularly valuable disciplinary perspective and highly relevant research findings to the challenges of climate change, according to a recently released report by the American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on the Interface between Psychology and Global Climate Change.

According to Professor Joseph Reser, one of the APA Report authors and a Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), current discussions concerning climate change have been poorly informed by psychological science and decades of research evidence, both with respect to fostering effective behaviour change, and with respect to personal environmental experience and social considerations, such as individuals' emotional responses to media images of *global* climate change and how communities are making sense of this frightening forecast and a changing climate in differing parts of the world.

Professor Reser will take part in a Forum at the Australian Psychological Society's 44th Annual Conference in Darwin this week to discuss collaborative roles psychology can play in addressing public perceptions and understandings of climate change, and how these concerns, along with media coverage and the behaviours of others, influence how people make sense of and cope with this threat, and what lifestyle measures they may or may not respond to and adopt.

The Forum will also discuss the APS Environment Interest Group's research into the ways in which Australian psychologists are engaged in environmental sustainability and climate change research and initiatives, the roles the APS is currently playing, and the different ways psychologists are working with corporations on corporate social responsibility.

"The APA report shows the many ways in which psychological knowledge can be used to help engage people with the threat and unfolding impacts of climate change and prompt them into positive action," Professor Reser said.

"We found providing people with feedback about the relative environmental impact of their actions, appealing to social norms such as the idea that '*everyone is doing it*', and strengthening public education and risk communication strategies, are helpful in overcoming multiple barriers to more ecologically responsible behaviours," said Professor Reser.

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Australian Psychological Society President, Professor Bob Montgomery, said climate change is a priority area for Australian psychologists. “The APS has established an Environmental Issues and Climate Change Reference Group to address psychological contributions to managing climate change,” he said.

“This group will support psychological research in the area, advise interested research and policy groups with respect to relevant psychological research findings and expertise, foster more collaborative, cross-disciplinary research on the part of psychologists, and design briefing materials for assisting individuals and communities in addressing and coping with the challenges of climate change.

The Australian Psychological Society has a number of resources on climate change for the community: <http://www.psychology.org.au/community/topics/climate>  
To find out more information on the 44<sup>th</sup> APS Annual Conference visit:  
[www.apsconference.com.au](http://www.apsconference.com.au)

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**To coordinate an interview with Dr Joe Reser, please contact: Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068 or Ellise McLoughlan on 0428 445 097.**

#### **About the 44<sup>th</sup> APS Annual Conference:**

This year’s Conference will be held at the Darwin Convention Centre from 30 September to 4 October 2009. The Conference will bring together prominent psychologists, practitioners and researchers to explore topical issues including: psychological responses to disaster, emotional intelligence, Indigenous mental health and wellbeing, women in management, body image and youth substance abuse issues.

#### **About Australian Psychological Society:**

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the peak professional body for Australian psychologists. With more than 17,500 members and 40 branches across the country, the APS is the largest of all non-medical health professionals' associations in Australia.

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