

MEDIA RELEASE

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Psychology report offers insights into motivations and barriers to 'going green'

People are more likely to adopt 'green' behaviours if they think other people are doing the same, according to a recently released report by the American Psychological Association Task Force on the Interface between Psychology and Global Climate Change.

The 2009 report looks at how people understand the risk of climate change, how they cope with the threats, and why people do or do not adopt 'green' behaviours, identifying the psychological barriers to action on climate change. Importantly, it demonstrates why single interventions, such as financial incentives, often fail.

According to Associate Professor Joe Reser, one of the report authors and a member of the Australian Psychological Society, it highlights how psychology can help overcome some of these barriers to action by providing people with feedback about their actions, appealing to social norms such as promoting the idea that 'everyone is doing it' and strengthening communication strategies.

Professor Bob Montgomery, President of the Australian Psychological Society, welcomed the report.

'This report shows that psychological knowledge can be used to help engage people on climate change and prompt them into positive action,' Professor Montgomery said. 'The report also identifies key areas for further psychological input. It is now beyond doubt that the climate is suffering because of some of our behaviours. Applied psychology is all about helping people, organisations and governments change their behaviour to prevent or solve problems.'

Professor Montgomery said climate change is a priority area for Australian psychologists. The Australian Psychological Society has established an Environmental Issues and Climate Change Reference Group to address psychological contributions to managing climate change. This group will support psychological research in the area, assist individuals and communities in coping with the effects of climate change, help the wider community to engage in 'green' behaviours, and provide psychological perspectives to government to assist in the development of effective climate change policies.

The Australian Psychological Society has a number of resources on climate change for the community – <http://www.psychology.org.au/community/topics/climate/>

American Psychological Association Task Force on the Interface between Psychology and Global Climate Change Report: <http://www.apa.org/releases/climate-change.pdf>

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The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 17,500 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.

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