# 2026 Environmental Policy Lecture:

## Climate Risk & Response: A Behavioural Challenge?

Professor Ben Newell

## Abstract

Climate risk is often broken down into three separate components: physical risks (floods, heatwaves, sea level rise), transition risks (technological, societal adjustments to a low-carbon economy), and liability risks (legal and financial exposures arising from a failure to disclose potential climate-related impacts). In this talk, I will argue that co-ordinating our responses to all three of these components benefits immensely from an improved understanding of behavioural reactions to climate change. I will discuss data from a range of studies examining individual and institutional-level responses that provide insight on the psychological impacts of physical risk, the preferences for and impacts of different kinds of transition risk, and the potential effectiveness of assessing and disclosing liability risks on changing behaviour. Across these studies I will emphasise the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to addressing the behaviour-climate challenge.

## Event Details

Thursday, **17 September 2026** (in-person only)
Arrival & poster viewing from 5:30 pm, lecture **6:00 pm,** networking from 7:00 pm.
Location: **Forrest Hall, 21 Stirling Highway** (on the University of Western Australia campus)
Registration required: Click here to register

## Professor Ben Newell

Ben Newell is a Professor in the School of Psychology at UNSW Sydney, and Director of the UNSW Institute for Climate Risk & Response (ICRR). His research focuses on the cognitive processes underlying judgment, choice and decision-making. His role in the Institute is to drive an interdisciplinary research agenda bringing together expertise from behavioural science, climate science, economics, law and governance to address the risks and opportunities of climate change. He has published multiple articles at the intersection of psychology and climate change, with particular focus on the understanding of uncertainty and risk. Ben is lead author of the books *Straight Choices: The Psychology of Decision Making,* and *Open Minded: Searching for Truth about the Unconscious Mind.* Ben is a member of the Academic Advisory Panel of the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA), and was part of the Chief Medical Officer's advisory group for the National Health and Climate Strategy. He also serves on climate and behavioural advisory panels for Commonwealth Bank of Australia, AoN, and the Actuaries Institute. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia.

## About the Lecture

The Environmental Policy Lecture is an initiative of the Western Australian Branch of the Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES WA) and The University of Western Australia (UWA) Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy (CEEP). Each year, we invite a leading international speaker to discuss important environmental or natural resource issues. The 2026 Lecture is co-hosted with the Forrest Research Foundation and forms part of The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia's Social Sciences Week 2026.

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