

Maurice Goldsmith Lecture

“Are Net Zero Targets a false promise?”

Thursday 24 November 2022 4pm (NZT)

Murphy Lecture Theatre 101 (MYLT101)

Murphy Building 21d Kelburn Parade, Kelburn, Wellington



Presented by Professor Christian Barry

Countries, firms, universities, and many other climate actors have increasingly been adopting net zero targets—declarations of intent to ensure that by a certain date these actors will make no net addition to the global atmospheric concentration of CO₂ and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Commitment to such targets has arguably emerged as a marker of responsible action on climate change. However, there is often little clarity on what these targets really mean, and critics have argued that these targets are often formulated so that they serve as a cover for delaying measures that are urgently needed to address climate change.

In this lecture I discuss key ethical issues connected to the idea of net zero targets, including the role that offsetting greenhouse gas emissions can legitimately play a role in achieving such targets. I'll also touch on questions raised by the adoption, promotion, and coordination of net zero targets by these actors as contributions towards preventing dangerous climate change.



Christian Barry is Professor of Philosophy at the Australian National University. His research focuses on ethical theory, philosophy of action, and international justice. His publications include the books *International Trade and Labour Standards: A Proposal for Linkage* and *Responding to Global Poverty: Harm, Agency, and Responsibility*, and articles in *Ethics, Philosophy & Public Affairs*, and other leading journals in philosophy, politics, law, and international relations. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and Co-Editor of the *Journal of Political Philosophy*.