

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **Call for national response to sports' water consumption**

A Deakin University research team (Dr Pamm Kellett and Dr Paul Turner) has called for a national taskforce – similar to that which has been established for the Murray Darling Basin – to coordinate a national response to the consumption of water by sporting organisations.

Dr Pamm Kellett, from the University's School of Management and Marketing will tell the Sports Management of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ) conference in Fremantle, Western Australia on November 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> that sport as Australians now know it is under threat.

“Unless organisations adopt and develop co-ordinated, scientific and sustainable ways to manage their water use, sports that don't use water at all will flourish, while sports which are high water consumers may become extinct,” she predicted.

“This will and already has created equity issues in terms of access to sport as it pits sport against sport, code against code, and male sports against those played by women as each seeks to secure a share of the water available to their sport.”

Dr Kellett said the drought and water restrictions had already had a significant impact on the sport industry.

“The impacts of drought and water restrictions have been severe for sports such as cricket, soccer, Australian rules football, rugby league, rugby union, golf, grass and clay tennis courts to name a few that are heavy users of water for the maintenance of playing fields,” she said.

“Some sports have reported an increase in the risk of injury to participants because of the condition of unwatered playing fields, while others have been forced to delay or shorten their seasons and at worst cancel the competition completely.

“Sport is part of the social fabric of Australia and there are justified concerns about the loss of it and the subsequent impact on health and social wellbeing.

“Yet little attention has been paid to water management in the sports industry by academics, nor has there been a co-ordinated approach to the issue by the different levels of government.

“In Victoria alone each of the 79 councils has dealt with water restrictions and sport differently,” she said.

“In the City of Greater Geelong for instance the 10 highest water consumers in the City are sport and recreation facilities. “Sport is the cornerstone of the city, yet of the 120 turf fields in the city, 45 received a water allocation last year.”

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“Some councils have worked with sports to grant water restriction exemptions or find alternate water sources, others have urged sport organisations to implement more long term measures like changing grass type for playing fields.

“These are emergency measures, and unless the industry as a whole has a sustainable water plan, they may as well close up shop.”

## **Additional information**

Drs Kellett and Turner are currently working with the City of Greater Geelong and Barwon water to develop a water consumption rating scale for sport and recreation users in the region.

Once developed the rating scale, which would be the first of its kind, would identify and objectively compare all sport and recreation activities within the city based on the amount of water they consumed, and the type of consumption they could tolerate in future. This information along with data like soil and grass type would then be geographically mapped.

Researchers are also talking to managers from a representative sample of each of the sport and recreation users in the city to establish the sporting sector's attitudes to water conservation and management.

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