

Australian sports officials, administrators, athletes and recreational spokesmen speak up about the impacts of climate change on sport

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In researching the *Sport & Climate Impacts* report, The Climate Institute conducted interviews with dozens of athletes, sports managers, and others in the field. Here are some of their comments, which they have approved for media use.

ADMINISTRATORS + OFFICIALS

“Our industry needs spaces to play, ‘a place’ to collectively experience the joys and tribulations of our wins and losses. Sport is the ‘glue’ that holds Australia together and to protect sport’s future we need the collaborative effort of our community in mitigating our impact on the environment and adapting our best practices in a manner that is more efficient, innovative, and high performing. We have the capacity and an imperative to take pole position in leading the charge and to act in ways where we leave our communities in the same, if not better, condition than when we found it.”

- Malcolm Speed, CEO of the Sports Environment Alliance and former CEO of the International Cricket Council

“The science is loud and clear. Our world is warming, and places like Australia are experiencing ever wilder weather: more drought, bushfires, and other extreme weather events. For this summer – and to mark a year since Melbourne experienced a severe heatwave while athletes played multiple-hour tennis matches at the Australian Open – the Institute is documenting the impacts of climate change on sport. Summer and winter sports alike are impacted. Some are showing resilience, changing their practices and amending playing grounds. Others will find adaptation much harder.”

- Andrew Demetriou, former head of the AFL and Board Member at The Climate Institute

“Because of the economical aspect of this job ... sometimes you are unable to stop the competition because there is a lot of interest in advertising, a lot of media around, and you cannot avoid the competition during the heat. Sometimes for us, the sports scientists, it’s really difficult to fight against the decisions coming from high level ... What I suggest is [that management] have to be conscious, that it could effect on the show. If you are not 100 per cent prepared to make the competition safe, then you drop your quality, because if you’re under fatigue, and then you drop performance. No one likes that. If you want the people to enjoy the show, the game, you have to make sure that your professionals, your athletes, have [the best possible conditions].”

- Simone Ripamonti, Head of Sports Science at Melbourne City Football Club

“Given that majority of ground in Australia ... are shared with cricket, [we looked into] whether we could jointly come up with a synthetic product that you could jointly play footy and cricket on ... That was I guess the key impetus, the drought and water restrictions in the period and the impact on natural turf grounds in Victoria, and the impact on our sport.”

- Ricky Bell, Infrastructure and Planning Manager, AFL Victoria

ATHLETES + RECREATIONAL SPORTSPEOPLE

“Given the unpredictable nature of our Aussie winter, many Australian athletes already train predominately at overseas facilities or resorts. Although I would like to train on home soil, I haven’t been able to since 2009 due to inconsistency of the conditions.”

- Lydia Lassila, Australian Olympic aerial skier

“Snow conditions are becoming much more inconsistent, weather patterns more erratic, and what was once a topic for discussion is now reality and fact. Our climate is changing and we are losing our winters.”

- Andy Newell, US Olympic cross country skier

“Especially for finals, that’s when you want to see the most elite teams play and if it’s going to be affected by an extreme heat wave it’s going to decrease the performance and probably the viewability of the game ... It’s a real balancing act that the AFL has to play between burning us out and making the game still good to watch.”

- Alex Rance, 2014 All-Australian defender, Richmond Football Club

“The Australia Day Alpine Audax bike ride in Bright attracts around 2000 cyclists but is at growing risk of cancellation due to extreme heat or bushfires. It’s happened once and will happen more in future. One time I recorded 47 degrees Celsius as I was cycling up Mt Buffalo; the alpine areas are usually cooler, but that’s no longer guaranteed. However, what particularly concerns me is fewer people commuting by bike due to extreme temperatures. I’m prepared to tough it out during my daily commute and I understand others need to play it safe, but by driving instead of cycling people often exercise less and, paradoxically, produce more of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming.”

- Wodonga Albury Toward Climate Health (WATCH) member and avid local cyclist James Sloan