

Interview with Sheila Nguyen, Executive Director, Sports Environment Alliance

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Dr Sheila Nguyen is Executive Director of the recently created Sports Environment Alliance (SEA). She spoke to The Climate Institute as part of the [Sport & Climate Impacts: how much heat can sport handle?](#) report released in January 2015.

Why this alliance?

Increasingly becoming the number one global concern, environmental protection has been listed as a human imperative. This was recently illustrated by the climate partnership agreement between US President Obama and China President Xi Jinping. The rising interest stems from the impact of growing populations and diminishing resources – and sport is not immune from its effects.

There are two reasons the sport industry should actively participate: One, we have the power to do so. Two, our survival depends on it.

How can sport be an agent for change?

There are two major opportunities for the sport industry to actively participate: through the built environment (in areas such as construction, water efficiency, waste management) and by effectively engaging stakeholders (through policy making, awareness and education).

These two streams of opportunity manifest in all manners: Procurement policies, recycling and composting, sustainable development and construction, and better waste management strategies; engagement to enhance awareness, education, and empowerment of our communities.

What's the biggest challenge?

As soon as we start seeing protecting the natural environment as a human issue and not a “government” or “political” issue, the stigma will be lifted. And as soon as we start learning how to share (or boast) about the great things that our industry is doing to protect the natural environment, the sooner others will be inspired to become part of the conversation through education and action.

The full Sport & Climate Impacts report and associated content such as infographics can be found at www.climateinstitute.org.au/sport-and-climate.html



What's the opportunity?

Australia is the perfect place to start the conversation. There are national building industry standards for sustainable practices (initiatives such as Energy Star and the National Australian Built Environment Rating System [NABERS]), industry bodies that care about these issues, and venues at the helm, holding the torch and lighting the way, Sydney Olympic Park, Metricon Stadium and Simonds Stadium to name a few.

But while the built environment practices are underway, the fact that the Australian sport community and its stakeholders are either unaware or apathetic is a concern. The opportunity we have is found in our national readiness, but our barriers are linked to lack of education and unassigned empowerment.