

## Interview with Alex + Ali Rance

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Over the past year, brother and sister Alex and Alianne (Ali) Rance have done a few climate change-related projects together. Ali a PhD candidate in climate adaptation at RMIT University; Alex plays for Richmond Football Club and was the 2014 All-Australian centre half-back.

The siblings spoke to The Climate Institute as part of the [Sport & Climate Impacts: how much heat can sport handle?](#) report released in January 2015.

***When did you start thinking about climate change and the impacts of climate change on footy and your professional sporting career?***

**Alex:** When you first start to play, you just want to play, and you don't really focus on anything around you and you're just trying to get in the team ... but then my sister talked to me, and I saw the bigger picture. I saw little things that I had to adapt within my own game and throughout the season that was affected by climate change.

***How do you see climate change impacting Australia sport, particularly AFL?***

**Ali:** When you think about climate change, you really do think about extreme events and vulnerability, and it's about not being able to predict as much what's going to be happening season to season. When you look at AFL in particular, that means that extremes will really affect the players. It'll affect not only the operations of the football club in general, but how they deliver their games, how they train.

I think when you talk about adaptation, it's having contingency plans in place. That lack of predictability means that they have to be aware of what they can do to reduce the impact that change climate has on them.

**Alex:** Because we have pre-season in the heat and in-season in the cool, we have to prepare for every type of climate change. And sometimes in our pre-season games they'll cut our games short. If it's too hot, then we might only be able to play a 20 minute quarter instead of a full 25-30 minute quarter. So our game is very much being determined by the climate.



***Melbourne, especially last summer, has been stifled by a number of crippling heatwaves. How do heatwaves change how you play or train?***

**Alex:** It was a nightmare. We have ice vests and things like that, and they'll bring out big ice buckets. We had to shrink training down because we couldn't get as much ball work in because there's no shade out there ... We had to increase our recovery time.

**Ali:** I wonder about the long-term changes that might have to be undertaken ... This next season, the 2015 season, you'll be playing into October for finals because of the cricket World Cup. In terms of heat and going and playing to summer, that's surely something that surely you're going to have to consider for the players and training.

**Alex:** 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 heatwave, then it's going to decrease the performance and probably the viewability of the game ... It's a hard balancing act to play, the AFL are trying to limit rotations and now have a sub in place, so they're trying to make the game a lot faster and limit contact injuries. But they probably neglect to see that it's going to be hotter anyway and fatigue is going to rise again.

So it's a real balancing act that the AFL has to play between burning us out and making the game still good to watch.

### *Do you think your club has been adapting to the impacts of climate change?*

**Alex:** They've lifted the whole ground up about a metre. They used to play VFL games on here, so I'm sure they wouldn't have played it when there was half the oval covered in water at about knee deep. I'm sure that that's something that's really changed over time. The change in the drainage profile of the ground as well, they had to dig it right out and then change the whole profile of the soil to much sure it really can cope with the extreme deluges that come down.

**Ali:** When you talk about the league or Richmond as a club paying attention to these sorts of things, that's where it really hits home. And we find that in our research as well. For local government and community services organisations, it's their operations, so making the link with a climate variable or extreme events and how that might impact their physical facilities or the way we're delivering their service, it's the same for Richmond as well.

### *How can the sporting community raise awareness of climate change?*

**Alex:** I think it's more about being open to the conversation and not being a floater in the world and seeing the forest for the trees ... The climate is changing, it's unpredictable. It's probably not high on a lot of people's agendas, but it should be ... I've got a lot of friends with children, and obviously they would want a good future for their children, and their children ready to adapt to whatever the climate might hold for them in 10, 20, 30 years because it will be more unpredictable. And that could be another sticking – children -- so we've got to think about that.

**Ali:** Alex is right – it's about finding what's relevant to you and putting the plans in place. Sometimes that might be a formal climate risk assessment and then you develop actions to address that in terms of adaptation. But if you're starting from the very basics, at your local context, ask the questions, talk to your community, engage with someone who does know about climate change. There's so much information available it really is just about promoting awareness ...

Alex is great in his community work, so if we promote that kind of active conversation with sportspeople and the communities around these impacts, then that awareness will be promoted and you'll see action to address climate change.

*The full Sport & Climate Impacts report and associated content such as infographics can be found at [www.climateinstitute.org.au/sport-and-climate.html](http://www.climateinstitute.org.au/sport-and-climate.html)*