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In September 2006 the Australian Golf Industry Council (AGIC) was formed to represent the entire golf industry on important issues such as the current challenges surrounding water use and management. In its first official undertaking, the council has investigated golf course water use which it hopes will aid the industry in its quest to be seen as a leader and innovator in the area of water management.



The AGIC's recently commissioned "Water and the Australian Golf Industry" survey shows that the industry is a leader when it comes to efficient water use and an innovator in terms of its water management practices

# AGIC unveils industry water document

Australia has experienced one of the most severe droughts on record. This drought has placed significant pressure on industries that have a heavy reliance on water and the financial sustainability of many businesses is now under threat. The golf industry and the many individual golf club businesses within it is one of those.

In order for the Australian Golf Industry Council (AGIC) and the golf industry to more accurately promote its case to relevant government authorities, research on the water use patterns of the Australian golf industry has recently been undertaken by Golf Australia and the AGCSA on behalf of the council.

This research, which has now been published in the document "Water and the Australian Golf Industry", seeks to understand the current water use patterns and the level of proactive industry action around water.

"The information provides the first detailed understanding of water use by Australia's golf courses and highlights the value of the golf industry to the Australian economy," the AGIC report says.

"Taking into account the likely future scarcity of water, the document clearly illustrates that the golf industry is already a proactive water manager, has been an early adopter of efficient water management practices and is a vital contributor to the wider Australian economy.

"With the value of the Australian golf industry being measured at approximately

\$2.71 billion, it is clear that golf is not just a Saturday afternoon recreational activity. It is a major contributor to the Australian economy, with each person playing the game having an equivalent value of about \$2100 each.

"When measured as a value output against every megalitre of water consumed, the golf industry generates approximately \$22,000 in output for each megalitre used, positioning it as a value producing industry in terms of water use.

"AGIC research has found that almost one third of golf clubs are currently under some type of water use restriction. These restrictions are having a serious impact on these businesses and therefore threatening the industry's health and contribution to the wider Australian economy."

## A VARIETY OF SOURCES

The AGIC study found that there are about 1000 18-hole equivalent golf courses covering some 58,000 hectares in Australia that have some dependency on water for the irrigation of grass playing surfaces.

In total these courses use approximately 124,000M of water, an average of 124M megalitres per 18-hole equivalent course per year. Irrigated surfaces (20 per cent) receive an average of 10.7M per hectare. Ground water and recycled water accounts for almost 60 per cent of the water used.

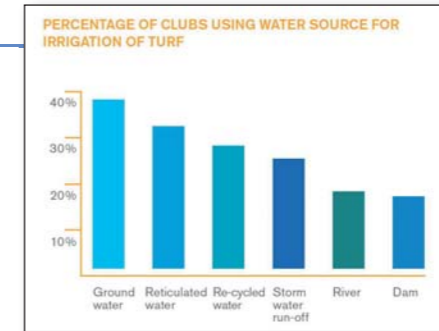
The study also found that about 60 per cent of golf courses across the country are currently using two or more sources of water and that only seven per cent of courses have 100 per cent reliance on reticulated water. Of that number, they use on average just 50M a year which is less than half the national golf club water consumption average.

"The Australian golf industry has been aware for a number of years of the impending crisis in relation to water and many golf clubs have already made significant investment in alternative water sources and water saving management plans," the report says.

"The industry realises it must be more responsible with the water it has and must continue to examine water use efficiency strategies. Many golf clubs are already committed to such strategies with evidence of this found in the AGIC research.

"The golf industry also acknowledges that recycled water, where possible, should be the preferred water source for turf management. However, greater support from the government will be necessary for this to be more broadly implemented."

The AGIC study found that over 40 per



cent of golf clubs nationally have in place a formal water management plan (WMP) and two thirds of golf clubs either have or are currently exploring other water alternatives.

Access to recycled water plants and new bore installations are the most common alternatives being sort, followed by investigation of on-site recycling plants, new stormwater pipes and dam construction.

In addition to these long-term projects, golf clubs are also pursuing a number of other shorter term practices that deliver immediate returns in terms of water management practices. These include:

- Use of wetting agents (being used by 65 per cent of clubs);
- Less frequent watering (being undertaken by 59 per cent of clubs);
- Installation of more efficient irrigation sprinkler heads (being undertaken by 50 per cent of clubs);
- Changing to less water dependent turf types (conversion from cool-season to warm-season varieties), a water management practice occurring at about one third of golf clubs.

"In short, the industry is being very proactive towards minimising its water use," the report says. "The golf industry is also developing best practice water management strategies in the aim to 'drought proof' the industry for the future."

One of these new strategies set to be rolled out over the next 12 months is the AGCSA's Water Management Plan initiative. This will be a free service to all golf clubs which will provide the necessary tools to establish site-specific water management plans. The initiative will go a long way to helping the industry be self sufficient in the long-term and will adopt a community-based approach to water management issues.

"Our message to government is that the industry requests a fair hearing around water, seeking acknowledgement of its efforts to date and requests greater support for the protection and further enhancement of the golf industry's value," the report says.

"The golf industry would like to work with government departments and water authorities to find the most appropriate long-term options for the sustainability of the industry.

"The industry is well advanced with modern water management practices and should be considered a leading and progressive industry with regard to water management. It also has significant value and is a major contributor to national employment."

For more information about the AGIC visit [www.agic.org.au](http://www.agic.org.au)

