

As Australia's urban environments become more dense, the demand for land for recreational purposes becomes harder to fulfil.

Recognising the issue, a team from the Centre for Sport and Recreation Research (CSRR) at Curtin is undertaking an international review of 'right to roam' policies and management. The project will investigate public recreational access to land of varying tenure, to inform a strategic research direction for public access to land in Australia.

"Australia is under-prepared for the increasing demand for recreational land," explained CSRR Director Professor Marian Tye.

"It's happening faster than we realise, and both the legislative and non-legislative determinants governing public access to land are complex, and often ambiguous.

"Fortunately, the WA Government realises the need to clearly define 'access' and better identify where and to what extent public access can be granted."

The research also involves the Curtin Sustainable Tourism Centre and the WA Department of Environment and Conservation. In a related project, CSRR will examine strategic planning of public open space within Perth's metropolitan area.

"There's some concern that active open space is being reduced by planning initiatives established for environmental reasons," Tye said.

"Because active recreation is an important part of Perth's lifestyle, policymakers need the knowledge that achieves a balance between human recreational needs and environmental measures that safeguard biodiversity and water resources."

The two projects are among several that Tye has initiated since being appointed as CSRR's inaugural director early in 2009. The centre is also undertaking research that tackles issues of sustainability, through its partnership with WA's Department of Sport and Recreation. The first of these research projects involves several of CSRR's industry research associates, including Leisure Institute of WA Aquatics, Royal Life Saving WA and Parks and Leisure Australia, to achieve water- and energy-efficient aquatic centres.

"CSRR is addressing the challenges that arise from environmental issues and population growth," Tye said.

"Our charter is to undertake research that helps build stronger, healthier, happier, safer and more sustainable communities."

Free to Roam

ONCE TAKEN FOR GRANTED BY MANY AUSTRALIANS, 'WIDE OPEN SPACE' IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY SCARCE RESOURCE FOR MANY COMMUNITIES. A NEW CURTIN PROJECT IS HELPING TO ENSURE THERE IS ADEQUATE RECREATIONAL ACCESS TO LAND.

