

Turf Waste

1. DHIE report

Concerns associated with environmental impacts (p7)

Waste: Environmental and financial challenge of disposing synthetic turf at the end of its 8–10-year life cycle.

Cost and economic factors are not transparent (p8)

Renewal costs associated with the disposal and replacement of synthetic fields at the end of their life cycle is not always adequately considered.

4.1.3 Environmental Considerations (p36)

As there is no peak body in Australia responsible for independently regulating and reporting on the environmental impacts of synthetic turf, facility owners are responsible for ensuring that the relevant environmental standards have been met. Environmental and health impacts associated with synthetic turf should be appropriately acknowledged and mitigated against at both the feasibility, design, construction, and operational stages.

Waste (p41)

The disposal of synthetic turf at the end of its useful life presents an additional environmental (and financial) challenge. Concerns around end-of-life issues was raised by several community groups through both the workshops and online submission process.

Synthetic turf has a life cycle of approximately 8-10 years, requiring a disposal of materials (mostly the carpet) when refurbishment is due. It is purposefully designed to not breakdown quickly, and when it is disposed of it has the potential to stay in landfill for long periods.

One proposed solution to address the issue of waste is the recycling of synthetic materials. In Europe, a circular economy within the synthetic turf industry has been created, and an industry stakeholder (Smart Connections) consulted for the Study stated there were plans to create specialised processing plants in Australia for synthetic turf. However, this can be expensive, and is not factored into the life cycle costs quoted by many synthetic turf providers. While design excellence and good maintenance practices can increase the lifespan of these products, thus reducing waste produced; end of life disposal is a key issue for synthetic turf which must be considered and mitigated against if implemented.

2. Environmental Impact Study on Artificial Football Turf (FIFA)

Recycling of artificial football turf is not widespread. The majority of the manufacturers interviewed for this study claimed their products are 'recyclable', but none are taking significant steps to make sure this happens in practice. (24)

End of life options for football turf (P14)

Removal of the infill on site is a common practice, but it comes with its own issues. Interviews with some of the large manufacturers of turf suggested that when removed onsite, the infill could easily

be reused directly in a new pitch. Despite this, the practice does not appear to be widespread. One of the biggest issues for recycling (and re-use) is the contamination by the sand infill.

Its small particles are very difficult to remove even in an industrial process. The—usually SBR— infill removed on site would be mixed with sand and separation of these two components on site—as is often claimed—is unlikely to be very effective. It is also unclear what secondary markets would accept infill (rubber crumb) with a low purity level if it is not suitable for football turf.

Outside of Europe—and in most of Eastern Europe—landfill is the dominant form of disposal for all types of waste. Other key countries in terms of football turf installations, such as Canada, USA and Australia, have very little incineration and comparatively low recycling of household waste. P24)

Unregulated landfill (Dumps) P24

Up until as late as the 1970's this was the most commonly found type of waste disposal throughout the world and is still the fate for much, if not all, of unrecycled waste in most developing countries today. This includes illegal dumping, which essentially costs nothing other than the fee paid to a land owner to allow dumping on their land. There is no government regulation.