# Dr Sophie Scamps apologises over comments linking rugby player’s death to climate change



Dr Sophie Scamps, the independent member for Mackellar and medical doctor, has issued a public apology to the family of Keith Titmuss, a 20-year-old Manly NRL player who tragically died after a grueling training session. Dr Scamps had previously linked his death to climate change by suggesting 'lethal humidity' might have been a contributing factor to the fatal heat stress endured by Titmuss.

Titmuss passed away following a demanding Sea Eagles training session at their Narrabeen base in Sydney's northern beaches. Last year, a coronial inquest determined that Titmuss's death was caused by exertional heatstroke sustained during what was described by Deputy State Coroner Derek Lee as an 'inappropriately difficult' training session. Medical experts attending the inquest pointed out that factors such as Titmuss's higher body mass and lower aerobic fitness relative to his teammates increased his risk of overheating on the day, which featured a mildly warm 24°C temperature. One paramedic recalled that Titmuss’s body temperature reached nearly 42°C—the highest temperature they had ever recorded.

Dr Scamps has faced criticism for comments she made in February at a Doctors for the Environment Australia event. Without naming Titmuss, she referred to the death of a "young rugby league player" who died on a "33 degrees, very humid day," attributing the fatal heat stress to the effects of rising temperatures and humidity linked to climate change. She warned that as temperature rises, humidity increases exponentially, creating conditions described as ‘lethal humidity’ that the human body struggles to tolerate. Dr Scamps emphasised the importance of recognising these conditions as a growing concern for health and safety, especially for young athletes.

However, Titmuss’s family strongly rejected the connection made by Dr Scamps. His mother, Lafo Titmuss, expressed deep disappointment, saying to News Corp that Dr Scamps was using her son's death to score political points and that the coroner’s report made no mention of climate change. The coroner, Derek Lee, did not reference humidity as a factor in his findings.

During a live radio interview on 2GB with presenter Ben Fordham, Dr Scamps apologised for any distress caused by her remarks. "Of course, if there's any distress or upset, deeply, deeply sorry. That was never my intention at all," she said. Fordham challenged her for the conditional nature of this apology, pointing out the clear upset expressed by Titmuss’s family. He also criticised Dr Scamps for discussing specific medical details of a deceased patient she had never treated, given her medical background in emergency departments and as a GP.

Dr Scamps clarified, "I didn't actually mention the young man by name, nor did I ever say that it [his death] was directly linked to climate change. It's very unfortunate that I've upset the family but it's all about healthy, young people—our bodies are not adapted to dealing with humidity."

A spokeswoman for Dr Scamps reiterated the concerns about lethal humidity, stressing that Dr Scamps, as both a doctor and former elite athlete, takes the threat seriously and is committed to advocating for safer training conditions for athletes of all ages.

The Daily Mail is reporting that this incident has stirred debate around the intersection of climate change, athlete safety, and the sensitivities surrounding public discussions of individual tragedies.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-14/family-of-keith-titmuss-call-for-heat-to-be-taken-more-seriously/103466852> - This article reports on Keith Titmuss's mother's call for heat-related injuries to be taken more seriously, highlighting the family's concerns about the training conditions leading to his death.
* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-03/keith-titmuss-inquest-findings-inappropriate-training-session/103800424> - This article details the coroner's findings that Keith Titmuss died after an 'inappropriate' training session, which is relevant to the discussion of the training conditions leading to his death.
* <https://www.sophiescamps.com.au/call_for_urgent_climate_action> - This is Dr. Sophie Scamps's public statement calling for urgent climate action, which is pertinent to her comments linking climate change to heat-related health issues.
* <https://www.sophiescamps.com.au/speech_on_the_climate_change_bill_2022> - This is Dr. Sophie Scamps's speech on the Climate Change Bill 2022, reflecting her commitment to addressing climate change, which is relevant to her comments on climate change and health.
* <https://www.sophiescamps.com.au/question_to_the_treasurer_on_a_carbon_levy> - This is Dr. Sophie Scamps's question to the Treasurer on a carbon levy, demonstrating her active role in climate policy discussions.
* <https://www.sophiescamps.com.au/question_to_the_environment> - This is Dr. Sophie Scamps's question to the Environment Minister on climate change, indicating her engagement in climate-related policy matters.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/nrl/article-14661945/Teal-MP-Sophie-Scamps-apology-family-NRL-footy-star-Keith-Titmuss-died-aged-20-Manly-Sea-Eagles-Ben-Fordham.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data