With a global ageing population (World Health Organisation, 2015) and the associated predicted healthcare costs, there is an increasing interest in preventative health initiatives for older adults. Leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) has been widely promoted as a key facet in preventative health policy (Annear, Cushman, & Gidlow, 2009; Booth, Owen, Bauman, Clavisi, & Leslie, 2000). This focus has largely been on generic leisure-time physical activity, such as gentle exercise classes, whilst sport, as a form of LTPA, has been mostly overlooked.

Limited research on the benefits older adults can derive from participating in sport include improved physical and social health (Henderson, 2012; Dionigi, 2006), and also the opportunity to use sport to bond with their families (Jenkin, Eime, Westerbeek, & van Uffelen, 2017). This evidence suggests that sport could become an integral part of preventative health policy. However, most sport in its traditional format can be inaccessible and unsuitable for many older adults, which has resulted in low older adult participation rates across community sport (Eime, Harvey, Charity, Casey, Westerbeek, & Payne, 2016).

Sporting organisations have begun to recognise older adults as a viable population group to engage. Specific and appropriate participation opportunities, such as walking versions of football, rugby, netball and basketball, have been developed over the past six years. Preliminary research in walking football from the U.K. has suggested older adults can derive significant physical health benefits (Arnold, Bruce-Low, & Sammit, 2015) and that the game can be enjoyable and provide an opportunity for older adults to develop new friendships (Reddy, Dias, Holland, Campbell, Nagar, Connolly, Krstrup, & Hubball, 2017).

As this modified sport for older adults research area is in its infancy, there has been no research for other types of modified sports, to explore whether these previously identified participant benefits are replicated in other sports. Furthermore, the perspective of facilitators/instructors of modified sport have not been sought. As these participants play a critical role in the development and sustainability of modified sport, their input is crucial to provide a holistic understanding of modified sport for older adults.

This research will qualitatively evaluate a walking sport program in the state of Victoria in Australia, across metropolitan and regional settings for both male and female participants. The active older adult participants will be interviewed in focus groups, whilst the facilitators/instructors will be individually interviewed. Participants have been recruited via the State Sporting Organisation. Both types of participants will discuss their prior sporting history, the perceived benefits they have derived from the program and their future intention to participate. Gender and geographical comparisons will also be analysed.

For the focus groups, two academic facilitators will be present, one to lead discussions and the other to take note of non-verbal communication. The facilitators will undertake a debriefing meeting after each group to discuss their preliminary thoughts, which will provide initial immersion in the data. The individual interviews will be undertaken by one facilitator.

For both sets of data collection, the data will be recorded and then transcribed verbatim. This data will be analysed using a hybrid approach of content and thematic analyses for coding. Two researchers will undertake this initial coding independently, with the emerging themes and sub-themes discussed by the wider research team for rigour. Once these themes have been agreed, one research will undertake the remaining coding. A suitable theoretical
perspective to explore and understand the results will be selected during this data analysis phase.

Data collection will occur in December 2017, with the project concluding in April 2018. Fully analysed results will be ready for discussion at the 2018 NASSM Conference.