

Media release

Lessons from Las Vegas for Australia

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In the heart of the Mojave Desert vast torrents of water flow freely in massive fountains, pirate lagoons, wave machines and casino waterfalls: the prodigality that characterises Las Vegas is sucking America dry, says one of the world's leading water authorities.

The issue of overexploitation of precious groundwater resources in an arid land faces Australia too, cautions Robert Glennon, Professor of Law at the University of Arizona and author of the book *Unquenchable: America's Water Crisis and What To Do About It*.

Professor Glennon is visiting Australia over the next three months, as Distinguished Guest Lecturer for the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training (NCGRT).

Worldwide, the burgeoning number of wells tapping underground waters that have taken centuries to accumulate is a recipe for disaster, as cities, mines, industries, the environment and farmers compete with one another for dwindling resources, Glennon warns. "Our water woes will get worse before they get better, because we are slow to change our ways, and because water is the overlooked resource," he says.

"For example, Washington's love affair with biofuels will turn to heartbreak once America realizes how many thousands of gallons of water are required to produce a single gallon of fuel. In Minnesota—the 'Land of 10,000 Lakes' — a local ethanol plant is already sucking local wells dry."

Glennon warns there are no quick fixes for the mess humanity is getting itself into over water – towing icebergs, desalination and diverting rivers are stopgaps that will not solve the overall problem of overexploitation.

"I'm arguing instead we need a market-based system that values water as a commodity and a fundamental human right. And that is a path on which Australia has already advanced."

"Both Australia and the United States are struggling with overuse of a scarce resource," says Glennon. He likens both countries water supply to giant milkshake glasses and each demand for water as a straw in the glass. Allowing a limitless number of straws is a recipe for an inevitable water crisis.

Glennon will be in Australia between late January and mid-May 2012. He is available for media interview.

Robert Glennon is the Morris K. Udall Professor of Law and Public Policy in the Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona. He is the author of the highly-acclaimed *Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters* (Island Press, 2002). His latest book, *Unquenchable: America's Water Crisis and What To Do About It*, was published in April 2009.

In 2010, the Society of Environmental Journalists bestowed on *Unquenchable* a Rachel Carson Book Award for Reporting on the Environment and *Trout* magazine gave it an Honorable Mention in its list of Must-Have Books ever published on the environment.

Glennon has been a guest on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart, *Talk of the Nation* with Neal Conan, *The Diane Rehm Show*, *C-SPAN2's Book TV*, and numerous other US television and radio shows. His writings have appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *Arizona Republic*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Arizona Daily Star*. He occasionally blogs for the *Huffington Post*.

Glennon has been a consultant and advisor to government agencies, corporations, NGOs, and law firms. Since 2009, his speaking schedule has taken him to more than 25 states and to Switzerland, Canada, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Saudi Arabia.

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