Research to aid Californian drought response

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The worsening drought in California has prompted US agencies to turn to Australian researchers to identify the most effective strategies Australian utilities and agencies used to survive the Millennium Drought.

Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) researchers based at UTS will

evaluate the strategies used to cope with Australia's devastating, decade-long drought to help inform policies being developed in California.

The research will be conducted in collaboration with US-based water efficiency experts at the Alliance for Water Efficiency and the Pacific Institute. US partners funding the research include the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and the Water Research Foundation.

The Water Services Association of Australia is also participating, bringing a wealth of knowledge on behalf of the Australian urban water industry.

ISF Director and project leader Professor Stuart White said, "the Institute conducted research for numerous Australian utilities and government agencies during the drought, advising on rapid deployment of water-saving measures, recycling strategies and emergency supply options."

"Our work during the Millennium Drought showed that the linkages between long-term supply demand planning and drought response can't be underestimated."

Mary Ann Dickinson, President and CEO of the Alliance for Water Efficiency said, "we are pleased to be working with ISF on this project to provide needed advice to help with California's megadrought."

Heather Cooley, Water Program Director of the Pacific Institute said, "California has much to gain from Australia's experience and reflection on the lessons learned, both in terms of what worked well and what could have been improved,"

"ISF's work is well known worldwide," Professor White said. "Water

efficiency has been the quiet achiever over the past 20 years. In Australia efficiency programs have saved more water than has been used from new supplies, at a fraction of the cost"

"Per capita demand for water has barely increased since the drought ended, suggesting that water savings have been locked-in through a combination of efficient technology and community behaviour change."

"While the severity of Australia's drought surprised many in our water industry, some cities had already invested heavily in water efficiency measures before the onslaught.

"Without this foresight some could have come dangerously close to dead storage," he said.

The project will explore all these Australian experiences and include specific recommendations for California. The work will be completed by October 2015 and made publicly available online.

More information: For more information, see arena.gov.au/project/investiga … irtual-net-metering/

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