

Experts warn Australia at risk from drought, rising water levels

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Leading water and coastal engineering experts from the University of Western Australia warn one of the biggest risks facing Australia is water security, with some regional towns experiencing water shortage to the

point where they are unable to respond to bushfires and coastal areas at risk from rising sea levels.

The comments coincide with a report issued by Infrastructure Australia which has listed priority areas for [infrastructure investment](#), including the development of a national water strategy as well as a new town and city water security initiative.

Professor Anas Ghadouani from UWA's School of Engineering and Oceans Institute said the report's recommendations were not surprising and cemented the need for significant investment into Australia's waterways, waste management and coastal infrastructure.

"Australia needs a fundamental rethink of infrastructure planning, not only to respond to major climate drivers, but also to renew aging infrastructure," Professor Ghadouani said.

"Areas at most risk are regional towns and [coastal areas](#) and a better long-term investment plan is needed to consider large infrastructure developments to support their needs."

Professor Ghadouani said with Australia being a large, hot and spread out country [water security](#) was critical.

"We need to be drought-proofed through the adoption of a new vision for water planning which takes into account the expansiveness of our country but also the local characteristics," he said.

"The need for a national water policy has never been more urgent, however it should be informed by scientific evidence and best practice."

Professor Chari Pattiaratchi from the UWA Oceans Graduate School and Oceans Institute said coastal infrastructure around Australia was

aging with many beyond their original design life.

"When they were designed and built there was no appreciation given to changing ocean environment factors such as rising sea levels and extreme storm surges," Professor Pattiaratchi said.

"So it is imperative that new design criteria and alternative methods of construction is applied for the renewal of these assets."

Recent work undertaken by UWA on extreme [water](#) levels around Australia provides a comprehensive database for coastal infrastructure design and inundation probability.

More information: Infrastructure Priority List 2020:
www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/e-priority-list-2020

Provided by University of Western Australia

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