

### **In south-western Australia, water shortages will worsen**

While the rest of Australia has had a reprieve from the Millennium Drought, and floods have recently affected many areas along the northeastern Australian coast, the extended dry period that has affected southwestern Australia since about 1975 continues unabated.

The loss of traditional water sources has required the building of seawater desalination plants capable of providing half the drinking water needs of people living in the Perth region.

Traditional water supplies are projected to dry even more by 2030 according to research just published by scientists.

Global climate models (GCMs) give variable projections but they usually provide some hope for a wetter future in most regions. However, all 15 GCMs that provide daily information project an even drier 2030 for south-western Australia. The runoff into the reservoirs that supply water to Perth and into irrigation dams is projected to reduce by about three times more than the reduction in rainfall.

Even more disturbing, because catchments have dried so much since 1975, a given rainfall amount now generates less runoff. Catchment water yields will only recover if there are decades of rainfall large enough to raise groundwater levels within the deeply weathered profiles. This is unlikely to happen.[...]

The study estimated the growth in water demand and compared these with projected water yields to identify areas of shortage and surplus by 2030. The Perth region is relatively water-rich and has been able to supply both itself and other areas until recently.

The water shortage in the Perth region is anticipated to become worse by 2030.

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**254 Words**