

Critical state of infrastructure to blame – report

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) says half of SA's water infrastructure is in disrepair and it will take significant financial investment, and political will, to restore it, reports [Engineering News](#). 'Our research indicates that what is needed is investment in basic infrastructure, such as fixing leaky pipes and wastewater treatment facilities. South Africa has built this infrastructure once, now it needs to do maintenance. Moreover, training people to do these jobs would also address unemployment,' says ISS senior researcher Zachary Donnerfeld. The ISS report, *A Delicate Balance: Water Scarcity in South Africa*, compiled in partnership with the Water Research Commission, indicates that **more than two-thirds of the wastewater treatment facilities examined did not meet the minimum quality-control standards**. The *Green Drop* report of 2014, the most recent in the series by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), also concluded that about 25% of wastewater treatment facilities were in a 'critical state'; defined as needing an urgent intervention, while about another 25% are defined as 'high risk' in terms of disrepair. Donnerfeld indicates that SA only treats about 50% of its wastewater, while similarly arid Israel treats about 90%. Increasing the amount of wastewater treated would significantly boost water supply, he adds. He says the DWS War on Leaks campaign, which was not fully implemented, could have resulted in 15 000 plumbers having been trained to address the multiple water management problems. He believes a coordinated approach to water management, across all three tiers of government, as well as civil society and individual residents was needed. 'Desalination could play a role in large coastal metropolitan areas, such as Cape Town and Durban, but it is going to be part of a short-term solution and has high cost implications. ... it is much easier to fix leaky pipes and treatment plants ...'