



Facing the challenge of coastal management

Increased tourist numbers, growing populations in coastal towns, climate change and 'grey nomads' moving to warmer coastal regions are some of the challenges facing coastal Australia.

Professor Bruce Thom, president of the Australian Coastal Society and a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, told a Ningaloo research symposium in Exmouth last month that WA was now experiencing high population

growth along its coastlines, particularly in places such as Mandurah.

"There is a difficulty with community facilities, and the issue of climate change and inundations on high tides, is something that will increase in amplitude," he said. "There are issues of water security, water biodiversity, water quality and other broader environmental systems. These are things which the nation needs to address.

"If we don't start attend-

ing to these, what will happen?"

He predicted biodiversity would decline and the least advantaged would be affected by bad planning decisions, such as housing developments around lakes or canals, while the building of ports, towns and sewerage structures along the coast had also caused problems.

"Sadly, we have a legacy of institutional complexity into how the coast has been used for some time, and the impacts of degradation. Many decisions are ending up in the courts instead of being solved through government policies – another barrier to

better management," Professor Thom said.

"We need to take a growing interest into how we can improve our management approaches," he said, adding scientists had to ensure their science advice informed state and federal governments, which had the power to manage Australia's natural resources.

"We need to improve our treasured coastal assets and integrate science into management," he said.

Professor Thom was the keynote speaker at Ningaloo into the future: integrating science into management, which looked at three years of research into Ningaloo Marine Park's biodiversity.



Bruce Thom (centre) with WA Marine Science Institution CEO Dr Steve Blake (left) and WA Marine Science Institution Board chair Dr Peter Rogers (right).