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MEDIA RELEASE

EXPERTS GATHER FOR WATER QUALITY SYMPOSIUM

Scientific and environmental experts from across Australia, the US and Taiwan met in Adelaide on Tuesday to discuss the potential impact of climate change on drinking water.

The event was hosted by SA Water in partnership with Water Quality Research Australia (WQRA), and was attended by researchers and leaders from water utilities and universities from around Australia.

Associate Professor Mike Burch, Acting Manager of SA Water Research, Development and Innovation, said the symposium was extremely successful, with international specialists from the Water Research Foundation and Virginia Tech in the USA, Taiwan Water Corporation and National Cheng Kung University, and local speakers from the Water Services Association of Australia, Bureau of Meteorology, SA Department for Health, University of South Australia and University of Adelaide, providing a valuable contribution.

“Today’s event is an extension of our ongoing collaboration with national and international agencies. By bringing together a range of experts, South Australia can be appropriately positioned to learn and be kept up-to-date with the latest information and innovations affecting the water industry in today’s changing environment. Many of the problems we face here are also problems faced nationally and across the world,” Associate Professor Burch said.

“We know we are facing environmental changes and we need to prepare for this. The sound management of South Australia’s drinking water supply catchments, both ground- and surface water resources, represents the basic foundation for SA Water’s core business, comprising the sustainable supply of water from natural catchments. We have a responsibility to ensure that we continually understand and plan for potential future impacts, particularly in relation to environmental changes,” he said.

“This symposium is a demonstration of our commitment to collaboration and working with both national and international experts on the important challenges for the water industry,” Associate Professor Burch said.

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Professor Simon Beecham, a Director of Water Quality Research Australia and also Head of the School of Natural and Built Environments at the University of South Australia, was one of the presenters at the symposium.

Professor Beecham is leading stage one of the Goyder Climate Change Research project, which will produce an agreed set of climate projections for South Australia to support water resource planning and management.

“The Goyder project will result in a new understanding of the key drivers of climate change in South Australia. It will also ensure our policy decisions are based on the most reliable scientific evidence about both climate change and localised climate variability,” Professor Beecham said.

Speakers at the symposium also spoke about the possible public health implications of climate change on drinking water quality, and examined initiatives in the United States, Taiwan and Australia.

CEO of Water Quality Research Australia, Jodieann Dawe, said water quality cannot be taken for granted.

“We need to understand the risks posed by climate change to water quality and water security, and we need to be proactive in responding to them,” she said.

“Events like this symposium provide an important opportunity to bring together leaders in this field, to exchange knowledge, ideas and experience, and to help ensure that we are equipped for the future.”

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