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MEDIA RELEASE

POTENTIAL SITES IDENTIFIED FOR EYRE PENINSULA DESALINATION

SA Water has identified three potential sites to construct a desalination plant to help provide a secure drinking water supply for Eyre Peninsula.

SA Water Chief Operating Officer John Ringham says one of the potential sites is located near Cathedral Rocks on the Peninsula's west coast and the other two in the Sleaford Bay area.

"Since May this year we have fast-tracked our investigations into desalination for Eyre Peninsula and have now identified three possible sites for detailed environmental assessments and further community engagement," Mr Ringham says.

"The three sites have been selected from a regional review undertaken earlier this year.

"Initially we investigated five districts as potential locations for a desalination plant including the upper-west coast near Ceduna, mid-west coast near Elliston, lower west coast near Cathedral Rocks, southern coast near Sleaford Bay and the east coast near Tumbly Bay.

"Our investigations considered a number of specific issues such as proximity to existing SA Water infrastructure, power supply, geotechnical issues, heritage matters and ocean currents.

"The southern locations were more favourable and worthy of detailed analysis because they are in close proximity to power infrastructure and the SA Water supply network, have good ocean currents and the whole of Eyre Peninsula can benefit from water from the plant.

"Although these three sites have been identified, there is still significant work needed before a final site can be chosen.

"During 2010 detailed investigations into these sites will occur. A date for first desalinated water from the plant is subject to these investigations, funding and water allocations from southern groundwater basins."

Desalination was one of two water security strategies recommended in SA Water's Long Term Plan for Eyre Region completed last year. Investigations into desalination were fast tracked in May 2009 in response to a reduction in water allocations from the region's southern groundwater basins.

"Desalination is a non-climate dependent source of water and will provide greater flexibility to supply water to our customers on Eyre Peninsula," Mr Ringham says.

“Our priority is to provide a secure drinking water supply for our customers and to meet any future increases in demand on this system.

The Eyre Peninsula Water Security Reference Group, established to report to the community on the progress of SA Water’s Long Term Plan, has welcomed the progress made by SA Water towards developing a desalination plant in the region to supplement the drinking water supply.

Group chairman Brian Foster says members were pleased that SA Water had narrowed down the preferred site for the plant to three potential locations on lower Eyre Peninsula.

“Locating the plant on Lower EP will provide the best possible outcome for the whole region, because it will tap into the existing pipe network which has been set up to pump water from south to north,” Mr Foster says.

“We are pleased that there is a commitment to this project to address potable water security while other proposals for desalination plants, primarily to service the mining industry, are being discussed.”