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DESALINATION PLANT TO FACE HIGHEST ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY

Acting Minister for Water Security Paul Holloway said today the Adelaide Desalination Project, already designated a major project, has been referred to the Federal Government in accordance with the Commonwealth's *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

Mr Holloway says the referral by SA Water under the Commonwealth legislation is necessary to have the Adelaide Desalination Project assessed under South Australia's environment and planning laws.

"Based on information to date, no significant impacts have been identified for matters of national environmental significance. However, SA Water has referred the project to the Commonwealth for a formal determination," Mr Holloway says.

Mr Holloway says the designation of the desalination plant as a major project ensures the proposed development already faces the toughest assessment process available in South Australia.

"The desalination plant project is subject to the highest level of environmental scrutiny in this State," Mr Holloway says.

"About 30 environmental studies are under way, including a suite of marine surveys, acoustic studies, hydrodynamic modelling, noise and visual assessments and flora and fauna studies.

"The project is also required to achieve a range of environmental performance objectives and criteria to be developed and publicised as part of an Environmental Impact Statement."

Measures to minimise environmental and social issues include:

- Intake structures designed and located to minimise intake of sand, debris and marine biota;
- Outfall to effectively disperse seawater concentrate;
- Placement of the desalination plant within suitable buffer zones;
- Location of infrastructure to avoid areas of remnant vegetation and sensitive marine features such as the inter-tidal and sub-tidal zones and;
- Transfer pipeline to be buried, with tunnels under transport routes.

"The Rann Labor Government is also committed to ensuring the design, construction and ongoing operation of the plant meet high environmental standards," Mr Holloway says.

"Environmental Management and Monitoring Plans will be developed for both the construction and operation of the plant and pipeline and these will detail mitigation measures for any identified risks.

"SA Water will also require all contractors employed in the construction of the plant to have in place a certified Environmental Management System."