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Desalination plant delivers water security for Adelaide

Adelaide's water security has been guaranteed with the official opening of the State's largest water infrastructure project, the Adelaide Desalination Plant.

Premier Jay Weatherill, Water Minister Ian Hunter and Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water Amanda Rishworth today visited the Adelaide Desalination Plant to inspect South Australia's insurance policy against future droughts.

The plant, which has been producing desalinated drinking water since October 2011, was handed over for operation in December 2012 to begin its 24-month proving period, on time and within the approved budget of \$1.824 billion.

The plant has the ability to produce up to 100 billion litres of drinking water per year or up to half of Adelaide's current drinking water needs.

"We're in the driest State on the driest inhabited continent and we've always had to make the most of limited water supplies," Mr Weatherill said.

"We fought hard for a fair share of a healthy River Murray that will sustain industry and jobs in regional areas.

"The desalination plant does the same for industry and jobs in the city and reduces the need for severe water restrictions.

"For the first time since 1836 we can say with confidence we have guaranteed Adelaide's water security.

"Reliable water supply is important to many industries, it's crucial that we guarantee supply to give them confidence to invest and grow.

"South Australians cannot forget the impacts and pressures of our worst drought on record, but we can now feel confident that we've got a secure water supply available whenever we need it that doesn't rely on rainfall."

Mr Weatherill said we are already seeing the benefit of having the desalination plant in operation, with more than 12 billion litres of drinking water supplied since the beginning of the year – the equivalent of the amount of water in 4800 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

"It is also 12 billion litres of water that has not needed to be pumped from the River Murray to help meet customer demand during a hot and dry start to the year," he said.

"The desalination plant allows us to take less water from the Murray.

“We have already agreed to provide 120 gigalitres over 10 years to an environmental water reserve and we are investigating further reductions in SA Water’s allowable take from the river.”

Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water Amanda Rishworth said the Australian Government was pleased to have provided \$328 million towards the construction of the Adelaide Desalination Plant through the Water for the Future initiative.

“Securing a sustainable, safe water supply for all Australians is a key priority for the Australian Government and this project demonstrates the ongoing commitment that it has made in this area,” Ms Rishworth said.

“This plant uses energy efficient water treatment processes and gives this project one of the lowest carbon footprints and operating costs of any desalination plant in the world.

“The agreement we have with South Australia ensures a six gigalitre environmental water entitlement for the River Murray every year, and will also provide between 12 and 24 gigalitres as an environmental allocation during favourable years—capped at 120 gigalitres over a 10 year rolling period.

“This investment illustrates the government’s commitment to water security in Adelaide, along with the more than \$230 million already committed to a range of urban water projects in South Australia such as stormwater harvesting and water recycling.”

Water Minister Ian Hunter said the Adelaide Desalination Plant showcases innovation and world-class technology and delivers on stringent environmental standards.

“Almost 600 local businesses have been involved in the construction effort and more than 10,000 people have worked on the project site to help deliver this essential piece of infrastructure,” Mr Hunter said.

The desalination plant also includes the *Kauwi Interpretive Centre*. *Kauwi* translates to ‘water’ in Kurna language and the centre will be an engaging way for the public to learn about water and desalination.

“Community and stakeholder consultation has been an important part of the project from day one. When designing the plant, we wanted a permanent facility that could be used once the plant was built to showcase the site and provide free educational programs about water,” Mr Hunter said. “Visitors to the centre will be able to do this through a range of different displays including interactive touch-screens, digital games, videos, science workshops, community presentations, guided tours, a Bushtukka garden and Kurna cultural heritage content.

The *Kauwi Interpretive Centre* has been made available to school groups as part of SA Water’s highly successful education program *Brainwave* and as well as community groups.”