

# Southern Seawater Desalination Project

## The environmental approval process



*Binningup Beach*

Before construction and operation of the Southern Seawater Desalination Plant can commence, a rigorous environmental approval process must be followed.

The Water Corporation will prepare an Environmental Scoping Document, which outlines all environmental matters to be addressed. This will be available for public comment in October 2007.

After consultation and feedback from the community and stakeholders, we will prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment document.

This will comprehensively outline all environmental impacts of the desalination project, assess those impacts, and indicate exactly how they will be managed.

The impact assessment will also be available for public review and comment in March 2008.

When the Environmental Impact Assessment is finalised, the EPA then provides a report to the Minister for Environment, who makes a final decision as to whether the desalination project is environmentally acceptable – and outlines any conditions that will apply to its construction and operation.

This process is similar to that followed for the Perth Seawater Desalination Plant, where very rigorous environmental conditions were applied to its construction and operation. An extensive ongoing environmental

monitoring regime has also been developed.

As was the case with the Perth Seawater Desalination Plant, extensive environmental studies will be undertaken by specialist, independent consultants.

Recognised independent experts will also critically examine all the technical documents we produce, and provide their feedback on these to the community and stakeholders. These 'peer reviewers' will have internationally-recognised expertise in appropriate scientific areas such as marine environments, ocean modelling and impacts on the land.

### Additional approvals required

As part of the environmental process, approvals will be required from a wide range of Commonwealth and State Government agencies and local authorities under a long list of legislation, including the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the Environment Protection Act, the Conservation and Land Management Act and the Aboriginal Heritage Act – among others.

### Public consultation

Public consultation is a very important part of the entire process. As mentioned earlier, the Environmental Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment documents will be publicly available, as will the expert, independent opinions of our 'peer reviewers'.

We will continue to hold public forums throughout the environmental approval process. We have held preliminary briefings with:

- ❖ EPA Services Unit
- ❖ Department of Environment and Conservation
- ❖ Conservation Council of WA
- ❖ Shire of Harvey
- ❖ Binningup Desalination Action Group

- ❖ Binningup Residents' Association
- ❖ Myalup Residents' Association
- ❖ Department of Planning and Infrastructure
- ❖ Main Roads WA
- ❖ Aboriginal heritage groups
- ❖ World Wide Fund for Nature
- ❖ South West Environment Centre

### Extensive studies to be conducted

We will undertake a comprehensive range of studies relating to environmental, technical, heritage, community and sustainability aspects of the Southern Seawater Desalination Project.

Some of these studies will include:

- ❖ Marine environment
- ❖ Flora and vegetation
- ❖ Fauna
- ❖ Rivers, creeks, wetlands and estuaries
- ❖ Coastal dunes and beaches
- ❖ Pollution
- ❖ Noise
- ❖ Visual assessment
- ❖ Aboriginal heritage
- ❖ Sustainability assessment
- ❖ Social impact assessment

### Open, inclusive, consultative

A comprehensive environmental approval process will examine every possible aspect of the construction and operation of the plant and associated pipelines.

Where any potential adverse environmental or other impacts are identified, plans will be developed to prevent or manage these.

As was the case with the Perth Seawater Desalination Plant, it is likely that rigorous environmental conditions will be

placed on the construction and operation of the Southern Seawater Desalination Plant. It is also likely that a comprehensive, ongoing marine environmental monitoring program will be required.

The Water Corporation will undertake an open, inclusive and consultative environmental approvals process. We also welcome the certainty that strict environmental and monitoring conditions will give both ourselves – and the community.



*Marine monitoring buoy*