

# SA Water's bright idea to bring cost relief



SOLAR SAVER: SAGE Automation's Jason Brine, SA Water's Jennifer Dreyfus and Chris Young of Enerven with a solar array at SA Water's Glenelg treatment plant. Picture: BIANCA DE MARCHI

The Advertiser can exclusively reveal the \$304 million contract to install more than 500,000 storage panels and storage infrastructure across 70 sites has been awarded to SA business Enerven, which is coowned by SA Power Networks and Spark Infrastructure.

The installations will be completed over the next 18 months, providing SA Water access to about 154

megawatts of new solar photovoltaic generation and 34 megawatt hours of energy storage.

The investment, expected to deliver a return in six years, is significant for SA Water, chief executive Roch Cheroux said.

"Neutralising our large operating costs like electricity – which reached \$62 million in 2017-18 – will help deliver low and stable prices for customers," Mr Cheroux said. "It's another step in us becoming zero net cost on our energy bills by 2020." He said the move would help SA Water become an exporter of energy to the grid.

"We are not going to be selfsufficient or disconnected from the grid," he said. "But this gives us more control where we continue to use low prices and gravity within our networks to manage the operations. It means that, down the track, we can reduce costs for customers.

"If we reduce our costs – and we expect to do that through this project – the subsequent determination of ESCOSA (Essential Services Commission of SA) will see them reducing the revenues we can collect from customers. We definitely want to transfer benefits to customers."

ESCOSA is working through its public consultation process to determine prices SA Water can charge from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2024. The benefits of the solar project will begin to be delivered to customers from July 2020.

In January, Business SA analysis showed South Australians pay up to \$129 million a year too much for water because of an inflated asset base.

SA Water has committed to ESCOSA's challenge to cut bills by reducing running costs.

Tonsley business SAGE Automation has won a subcontract to supply control and monitoring systems across the new solar energy sites. The new installations will take SA Water's total solar generation capacity to about 160MW, which exceeds that of many large-scale commercial solar projects.