

Come in spinner, \$166m stabiliser for renewables

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THE electricity system in South Australia will be strengthened by a \$166 million investment in new equipment.

Transmission company ElectraNet will receive regulatory approval today to invest in machines which act as shock absorbers to grid fluctuations.

"This is a positive step forward in strengthening SA's electricity network to accommodate the increase in renewable energy," said ElectraNet boss Steve Masters.

SA households are expected to save about \$5 a year from the project, ElectraNet estimates.

The project involves installing synchronous condensers machines which spin freely and absorb or produce reactive power to bolster the system.

The Australian Energy Regulator assessed and approved the proposal.

"Consumers pay for network investments for years to come and it is our job to ensure they pay no more than they need," regulator chair Paula Conboy said, adding the project would reduce consumer bills.

ElectraNet's proposal followed a formal declaration of a gap in system strength.

With a thermal generation grid, large turbines all spin in sync and have considerable inertia. With renewable energy, there is great variability, requiring stabilisation.

ElectraNet can charge an extra \$32 million over three years for the project. However, as well as the stability gain, a net financial benefit to customers is expected because other grid intervention and upgrades will no longer be needed.

The condensers will be installed in Port Augusta and Robertstown next year.