

New jetty hope for rapid return

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A RENOWNED dive site in South Australia could be re-opened for business by the end of the year, with construction of the new Rapid Bay jetty set to begin in spring.

The existing jetty, which was closed in 2003 because of structural instability, was a major drawcard for fishing and dive enthusiasts.

Transport Minister Patrick Conlon announced this week a company had been commissioned to take on the construction and design of the new 260m jetty.

SA civil engineering and construction firm Bardavcol would complete the final design in the coming months.

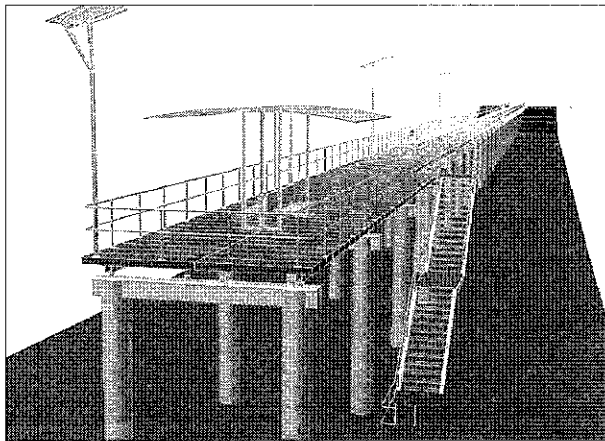
"For a South Australian employer to win the contract has positive spinoffs for the state's economy and local job market," Mr Conlon said.

"By working with groups including the Friends of Rapid Bay Jetty, we have designed a jetty that best serves the needs of residents and businesses while enhancing tourism at what is widely regarded as one of Australia's best fishing and diving sites."

The \$3.9 million jetty, announced two years ago, would be built adjacent to the old one and had been custom designed for diving and fishing.

Fenced off at the 120m mark, the original jetty would be left as is to protect resident marine life.

Delamere General Store owner



DRAWCARD: Artist's depiction of the new jetty ... it is predicted it will give the region and SA tourism a major boost

Kaye Maslin said the area had suffered since the jetty's closure. "We've been holding our breath and waiting for it for two years," she said.

"It will make a big difference to us. The jetty was such a huge tourist attraction and people would come from all over Australia to fish.

"And then, of course, with no jetty, it all just died off."

Scuba Divers Federation of SA's Antony King said the jetty was famous for the leafy sea dragons that lived around its pylons.

"I've spoken to people from all over the world who have come here because they've heard that's where you go to see leafy sea dragons," he said.

"But even without leafy sea dragons, it's still a fantastic dive."

Mr King said the Government

had worked extensively with local groups on the design to ensure the structure would bring tourists back to Rapid Bay.

"Even the little details have been accounted for - like the width of the stairs so divers going up and down can pass each other with enough room, extra deep stairs to accommodate fins and a platform halfway so you can have a rest," he said.

He said divers would be able to access the old jetty's pylons from the new structure, with the two being just 30m apart.

Friends of Rapid Bay Jetty spokeswoman Glenice Galbraith said her group was very pleased with the progress of the new jetty.

"The jetty will be of immense social and economic benefit to the Fleurieu Peninsula region and SA," she said.