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\$300m vision to turn the tide for Port

A \$55 MILLION plan to deepen the port at Outer Harbor and a major upgrade of South Rd are key components of a \$300 million infrastructure proposal for Port Adelaide.

The plan, outlined by Premier Mike Rann yesterday, calls for the harbour to be deepened from 12.2m to 14.2m to allow access by huge grain freighters known as Panamax ships.

It will be funded under a public/private partnership scheme with a business plan for the project being finalised.

Flinders Ports, which runs Outer Harbor, is examining the extent of its role in the project.

Flinders Ports director John Wood said the company was already committed to building a new grain terminal at Outer Harbor.

The extra depth in the harbour would mean more bigger ships could be loaded and would be able to sail "irrespective of tide". "If they can't sail irrespective of tide they may stop coming," Mr Wood said.

Dredging of the harbour would take between six and 12 months and Mr Woods was hopeful the work could start early next year.

The plan includes:

A \$20 MILLION upgrade to the Le Fevre Peninsula rail freight corridor to allow extra freight to be railed more efficiently from Birkenhead to Outer Harbor. TENDERS to be called next week for the \$136 million stages two and three of the Port River Expressway, including new road and rail bridges.

A \$20 MILLION plan to support Flinders Ports and Ausbulk to develop integrated infrastructure services at Outer Harbor.

INVESTIGATING with the Federal Government a 22km-long freeway between the Sturt Highway at Gawler to the Port River Expressway, which includes widening Port Wakefield Rd. It would cost a total of \$300 million.

Mr Rann said the \$43 million South Rd upgrade would eliminate the bottleneck between Port Rd and Torrens Rd. Construction is due to begin in the second half of next year.

"Infrastructure had been identified as the key need of the state," he said. "This is aimed at underpinning the state's economic future and

helping meet our goal of tripling the value of our exports from SA within 10 years."

Mr Rann said South Rd was a major freight corridor for Adelaide and at present heavy vehicle traffic north-bound from Port Rd was channelled into one lane due to the poor condition of this section of road. He expected preliminary road works to begin next year.

SA Farmers Federation president John Lush welcomed the harbour deepening announcement, saying it was critical for farmers and would also help the state increase exports, particularly of grain.

``Dredging to 14m is more than we would have hoped for and means we can fully load a Panamax vessel," he said.