



Repower Port Augusta Alliance  
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To the Select Committee on the Port Augusta Power Stations,

The Repower Port Augusta Alliance is a broad coalition of organisations supporting the replacement of Playford B and Northern coal power stations with concentrated solar thermal with storage and wind power.

The Alliance welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Port Augusta's Power Stations.

Repowering Port Augusta with solar thermal and wind power is a great opportunity for Port Augusta and South Australia. The Alliance represents business, health, environment and community groups that see the countless opportunities that solar thermal would bring to South Australia.

**(a) the full cost of implementation of this proposal and how it may be met;**

**(b) the impact on household and business electricity prices;**

**(d) the ability of solar thermal technology to provide a reliable power supply comparable to other mainstream technologies; and**

Beyond Zero Emissions' *Repowering Port Augusta* report clearly outlines the following facts regarding the cost and reliability of solar thermal technology:

- The cost of solar thermal plants with storage are higher up front but have no ongoing fuel costs, and the capital cost of solar thermal is dropping dramatically.
- Playford B could be replaced with two solar thermal plants with a minimal impact on electricity prices. A 0.7c per kilowatt hour contract for difference is one example of how the right policy mechanism could get solar thermal built in Port Augusta. Northern could be replaced with a similar mechanism, without dramatically impacting electricity consumers.
- Concentrated solar thermal plants with storage are reliably providing electricity to thousands of households in Spain and the US, day and night. The storage capacity of this solar thermal technology means it can provide baseload, 24 hour electricity on demand.

Both the Port Augusta City Council and Business Port Augusta see the economic opportunity that building solar thermal presents. The benefits to health, employment and the local economy far outweigh the minimal impact on electricity prices that replacing Playford B and Northern with solar thermal plants would have.

The Port Augusta City Council believes that Port Augusta can take the lead in building a solar thermal industry in Australia. Port Augusta has the opportunity to become an innovative, forward thinking centre for solar thermal technology. The town's existing transmission lines, the large and untapped sun resource, and the overwhelming local support give Port Augusta a clear advantage in this exciting venture.

**(c) the impact on employment in the region;**

The Alliance has gained support from a range of unions including the Australian Services Union, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch), the National Union of Workers (SA Branch), the National Education Union (SA Branch) and the Tertiary Education Union (SA Branch). Each union can see the benefits to local employment in Port Augusta and the development of the entire South Australian economy. A total of 1800 jobs will be created with the full *Repowering Port Augusta* proposal, with 1300 construction jobs, 225 manufacturing jobs and 360 permanent power plant jobs. The solar thermal industry will obviously have flow on benefits to the rest of the economy, both state-wide and in the Upper Spencer Gulf region.

With the mothballing of Playford B and the seasonal operation of Northern, contractors are already losing their jobs in Port Augusta. Job loss will continue if no alternative economic development is found.

**(e) any other relevant matters**

**Climate change**

The burning of fossil fuels is Australia's largest greenhouse gas emitter. 5 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions could be avoided by closing Playford B and Northern and replacing them with solar thermal with storage and wind power.

Beyond Zero Emissions, CLEAN SA, 100% Renewables, Conservation Council SA and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition are all concerned that the continuation of coal fired power generation in South Australia only worsens the severe risk we face of damaging climate change.

South Australia could become a world leader in renewable energy generation and the move away from emissions intensive technologies of the past. Port Augusta could set an example to Australia and the rest of the world that coal power can be replaced by reliable and clean renewable energy.

## **Health**

Mining and burning fossil fuels is a severe threat to public health.

Doctors for the Environment, Climate and Health Alliance, Public Health Association SA, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch), and the Port Augusta City Council consider the continued operation of Playford B and Northern to be a real health threat to the Port Augusta community.

Port Augusta has the highest cancer rate in South Australia, and above normal incidences of asthma and other respiratory diseases. The situation continues to worsen, leading many community members and health professionals to call for an alternative. Solar thermal and wind power present a clean, healthy alternative to coal fired power generation.

## **Community support**

The community of Port Augusta are ready for a change. The Repower Port Augusta local group formed in April 2012 after the launch of the *Repowering Port Augusta* report. The group has members from across the Port Augusta community, including nurses, a local councillor and a power plant worker. In July 2012 the group held a community vote to survey the opinion of the Port Augusta population on the future of the power plants. 30% of the Port Augusta population came to vote on the streets and in local businesses, and of those 99% voted in support of solar as a replacement option for the coal plants.

## **Alinta's coal and solar hybrid proposal**

It has come to the Alliance's attention that Alinta Energy is considering the construction of a solar thermal booster at the Northern power station. This would extend the life of the Leigh Creek mine and the Northern coal plant, with continued pollution and health impacts. It would also do little to aid the economic trouble facing the Port Augusta community, as a hybrid plant of coal and solar would not create any significant employment opportunities, and have little benefit to the state's manufacturing and construction industries.

The community and the Alliance are working towards a full solution for the people and industries of South Australia. Any proposal that does not improve the health of the community, reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the plants, provide real ongoing employment opportunities and ensure true energy security away from coal fired power generation will not satisfy the needs of South Australians.

The Repower Port Augusta Alliance encourages the Select Committee to recognise the full economic, health, community and environmental benefits associated with the development of a solar thermal industry in Port Augusta.

## **Repower Port Augusta Alliance members**

Beyond Zero Emissions

Australian Youth Climate Coalition

Port Augusta City Council

Business Port Augusta

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)

National Union of Workers (SA Branch)

National Education Union (SA Branch)

Tertiary Education Union (SA Branch)

CLEAN SA

100% Renewables

Conservation Council SA

Doctors for the Environment

Climate and Health Alliance

Public Health Association SA

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