

# Intyalheme leading way for bright future in renewables

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ALICE Springs, home to a variety of renewable energy projects, is re-establishing itself as the hub for solar energy in the future, leading the Northern Territory forward in the State's aim to achieve 50 per cent of renewable energy by 2030.

The future of renewable energy in Alice was discussed heavily at the DesertSmart Eco Fair Future Energy Forum earlier this week.

Repower Alice Springs, Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA), Cities Power Partnership, and renewables Minister Dale Wakefield, spoke about the imminent need to transition from diesel and gas energy production, to renewable energy.

The NT only produced four per cent of renewable energy production in 2017, however Alice Springs contributed eight per cent towards the state average last year.

While the transition to renewable energy is a daunting task, it is a challenge the region is willing to take on.

Harshini Bartlett, spokesman for renewable energy community group, RePower Alice Springs, says renewable energy is the key to reducing climate change.

"When you look at the world and what's happening in terms of our carbon dioxide levels, world temperature rises, extreme climate events, we have to act now for a liveable future for our planet, and for humanity.

"We need revenue streams for large scale batteries to be introduced into the market so that both community and private investment can invest in batteries as well as solar plants," Ms Bartlett said.

RePower Alice Springs has a vision to see the area powered 100 per cent by renewable energy in the future, and believe that the technology to do this, currently exists.

The group, is hoping to introduce a variety of renewable energy projects within the region, and have been lobbying and advocating for change, as well as taking local action.

RePower are currently working collaboratively with Territory Generation to intro-

duce a 10 megawatt (MW) community solar farm.

"When you look at the renewable energies, it's a real opportunity for local economic development, local jobs, and also being responsible for our climate future, and not looking at old technology.

Ms Bartlett, believes that going down a renewable path will be cheaper, and will also reduce electricity prices for people, as well as allow for equitable access to energy.

In December 2017, The NT Government committed \$5 million for a centre of excellence in renewable energy in Alice Springs, as part of the Road map To Renewables.

The Centre, known as the Intyalheme Centre, will prioritise knowledge sharing, community education and engagement, industry partnerships, and commercialisation as its core functions to drive solutions to reach the target of 50 per cent by 2030.

The Intyalheme Centre is a flagship project of Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA), which has a history of supporting and collaboration across the renewable energy sector through the DKA solar centre.

Sara Johnston, General Manager of the Intyalheme Centre, said the first thing they need to do is make sure that there are alternate enabling technologies in the Alice power system.

"Alice is certainly leading the way in respect to renewable energy, here, we have a long history of innovative and pioneering solar projects.

"Currently, we are relying on conventional generation to provide a whole bunch of other services that are required to maintain a reliable secure power system, and we need to transition to getting these services from either the renewable energy systems.

"It's through this transition that will enable us to essentially turn off some of the conventional generators in town and allow more solar to be used instead," Ms Johnston said.

Transitioning from previous sources of power, to renewable energy, also providing a variety of challenges.

Minister of Renewable En-



Sara Johnston, next to the DKA Solar Centre

Picture: Supplied

ergy, and Essential Services, Dale Wakefield, said she was excited about the solar opportunities available in Alice Springs, but admitted the region was starting on the back foot.

"We haven't had the investment into this area, but the bottom line is we know we have to respond to some kind of change, we know we're going to need to work on our sustainability as a town.

"Too often I think we are allowing attacks on science and expertise in this area, to really run the narrative", Ms Wakefield said.

"I think one of the great strengths over the environmental movement over many years has been the ability to engage people locally and then

have them to be able to engage in global conversation," Minister Wakefield said. The Intyalheme Centre, will have three primary functions; collaboration, infrastructure and knowledge, to implement strategies to introduce renewable energy into the region.

Ms Johnston, believes that we must intervene in order to unlock more opportunities for renewable energy in Alice Springs.

"The first step for us to be able to turn off some of those gas engines and use more solar, is to make sure that our grid has other components, technologies that provides those same levels of service so we're not jeopardising reliable secure power systems.

"While we transition the

Alice Springs power system to be able to accommodate more renewable energy, lessons from the centre will have broad relevance, not only to the other grids in the NT, but also across Australia.

"It's on this basis, that the significant opportunity exists to reposition Alice Springs once again as the hub for future energy, with people across Australia looking to us for answers," Ms Johnston said.

Sonya Williams, Project Officer at the Cities Power Partnership, a national program focused on emission reduction and clean energy successes of Australian towns and cities, said the efforts being made by Alice Springs to increase their renewable energy production was inspiring.

"For a town of 28,000 people, you're really punching above your weight in terms of capability, technical skills, knowledge, even universities working in collaboration with government and private sector," Ms Williams said.

Minister Wakefield described her excitement about the Intyalheme project.

"I think one of the things that were exciting about today, was the leadership that the Intyalheme project is showing and the opportunities we have in Alice Springs to really be world leaders in the solar space, We have very strong organisations in Alice Springs that brings local knowledge and expertise and passion to this area," Minister Wakefield said.



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Each weekday, from Tuesday 7th 'til 31st August, luncheoners in the Todd Mall will be entertained by local artists delivering live music, between 11am and 1pm.

For weekly gig guide updates, follow us on Facebook @AliceSpringsTC

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