



CALLS FOR RENEWABLE PLANNING REVIEW

17 April 2018

Upper Spencer Gulf Councils are urging the new State Planning Minister, Stephan Knoll, to urgently review the planning assessment, approval and compliance system for large renewable energy projects.

Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities and Port Augusta Mayor Sam Johnson says whilst he is a strong supporter of renewable energy, it must be accompanied by good planning, compliance and commonsense.

“As developers propose to build more and more renewable energy facilities, we need to ensure this is done in an orderly way and is underpinned by good planning and safeguards for nearby residents and landuses.”

“For example, there is no doubt windfarms have a substantial visual impact on the landscape and divide rural communities. I am really concerned that current windfarm planning and compliance is not keeping pace with the size and output of new turbines.”

Mr Johnson also wants to see key iconic landscapes, such as the Flinders Ranges and Clare Valleys, explicitly protected from future windfarm development.

Mr Johnson said there also needs to be much stronger local control over renewable energy development.

“My town of Port Augusta is proud to be home to a number of very significant solar renewable energy projects. Our community has a very strong track record of encouraging and supporting these developments.”

“Unfortunately this has been tarnished by the planning and development approvals undertaken by the city based Development Assessment Commission, which failed to give adequate consideration to issues such as dust suppression during construction.”

“We now have nearby residential areas covered in thick dust every day.”

“Because the approval was made by the State Government, Council is powerless to do anything other than join the queue of angry residents trying to get a resolution.”

“Unfortunately, our planning system has not kept pace with the rate of growth in renewable energy developments. The current assessment guidelines for renewable energy doesn't even mention solar, let alone pumped hydro, batteries or hydrogen.”

“We fully support renewable energy, but we need to be sensible about where we allow huge industrial structures to be located and we need to make sure that our development approval, monitoring and compliance regimes are kept up to date so nearby residents and communities and environments aren't adversely impacted.”

The Upper Spencer Gulf Councils are also supporting an initiative led by the nearby Central Local Government Region to review options that would allow Councils to rate major developments such as wind and solar farms.

“At the moment, these large renewable energy developments are exempt from valuation for rating purposes, despite there being an impact on ratepayers and Council infrastructure”.

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