

MEDIA RELEASE

CHALLENGING TIMES FOR LEIGH CREEK AND PORT AUGUSTA

Regional Development Australia Far North (RDAFN) is set to meet the challenges ahead with Alinta Energy's announcement this morning of the closure of the Port Augusta Power Stations and Leigh Creek.

The announcement itself, and the pending closure will have a significant impact on Port Augusta, Leigh Creek and the surrounding region. Dr Jen Cleary, Chairperson of RDA Far North said, 'Our immediate concern is for the people affected by the closure and their futures. The shock and uncertainty this announcement has created will be hard hitting and our communities will need immediate, practical support.'

'Both Port Augusta and Leigh Creek are important regional service centres for the Far North region and the knock on effects beyond direct redundancies will be keenly felt,' Dr Cleary added. Our intention is to work closely with the Outback Communities Authority, the Port Augusta City Council and the state and federal governments to firstly address the immediate impacts in the most practical way possible, and secondly to chart a way forward.'

Dr Cleary stressed that what is required in the longer term is a creative response to transformation. 'This could include government support for fast-tracking clean energy production and clean-tech manufacturing opportunities in the region' she added. Dr Cleary pointed out that there are a number of potential investors who have already expressed interest in the Far North Region and Port Augusta in particular. 'We need to ensure that these projects are afforded every support by the government,' said Dr Cleary.

'What is required in the first instance to progress the transformation of the region to world-class clean tech production and manufacturing is an analysis of the current and potential value chains associated clean energy production and spin-off manufacturing. This will enable us to quite quickly to develop a longer term plan that will maximise job creation and retained value from these projects in the region,' Dr Cleary said. 'We have such a project ready to go, and see this as an important first step that should be supported. We must be thinking about the important assets we already have, like solar and wind capacity - the potential of which is recognized around the world - hence the interest from international investors. We also have heavy industry capacity and experience. Marrying these together in the right manner could bring about the transformation we require for a sustainable future for the region,' Dr Cleary added. On a recent visit to Scotland, Dr Cleary was impressed with the manner in which rural Scotland has undertaken such a transformation and is now exporting clean tech manufacturing and workforce expertise to the world. 'This is the kind of vision we need to have for our region,' said Dr Cleary.

'We will work with the South Australian Government in the formation of a locally based key stakeholder group to that works towards these ends. These are indeed challenging times for us,

but challenge often comes with opportunity for transformational change, and that must be our goal,' she added.

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