



Desert solar is a gas

The electorate of Barkly in the Northern Territory is twice the area of Victoria. Local Member Gerry McCarthy sees his patch as the site for an energy revolution

We've got, in the Barkly, traditional landholders with significant land trust areas. In my time as a Minister in the Northern Territory government, we have overseen many solar set up programs. Through our solar diesel hybrid projects we've reduced diesel consumption by 90,000 litres a year.

As I have travelled with these projects, traditional owners have really picked up on this narrative. They were translating it back into traditional values and traditional stories about the sun, about energy, about ecology and about sustainability. They really picked up on this.

So I think the relationship between traditional owners and solar PV is going to be a good one. It will provide many economic benefits.

People sometimes say, "You see heaps of jobs in a construction phase, but then you don't see any jobs in the production phase". I tell my constituents that if a company is investing in one third of an energy supply for an island

ABOVE: MEMBER FOR BARKLY GERRY MCCARTHY IN HIS ELECTORATE OFFICE WITH HIS SCIENCE ADVISOR GARY SULLIBHANE.

RIGHT: A PORTABLE, PREFABRICATED SOLAR ARRAY FROM STATE-OF-THE-ART PRODUCTION FACILITY 5B IN SYDNEY'S ALEXANDRIA.

nation like Singapore, I don't think they are going to build it and then leave it to sit out there and turn to scrap. There's going to be a lot of ongoing security, technical and maintenance jobs.

That's our challenge: to be part of, and benefit from, this energy revolution.

If we run with the concept that the Northern Territory will become a major energy exporter, intrastate, interstate and international, then they're the jobs of the future.

What we need to get across to the rest



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of Australia is that we have the cheapest energy available; we have natural resources needed to provide a viable downstream industry.

At the moment, the Northern Territory electricity grid comprises an isolated Alice Springs grid, an isolated Tennant Creek grid and the Katherine Darwin grid. The link between them is the natural gas pipeline.

If we replace natural gas with hydrogen, all we essentially have to do for the Northern Territory's electricity production is to convert the existing gas engines to run on hydrogen. We could then deliver 100% green hydrogen in terms of the Northern Territory's electricity production, using existing infrastructure. And when we talk about existing infrastructure, the poles and the wires.

This provides a better outcome than continuing to go down the mainstream solar technology pathway, where we incur considerable investment into grid stabilisation — that is, batteries and other stabilisation technologies.

The Wiso Basin is possibly the biggest recharging aquifer in the Northern Territory. We've done the scientific research and modelling on it and that is what gives Tennant Creek and the Barkly the edge over these other regions that are starting to explore the production of hydrogen. Because not only are we in the best scientifically defined corridor for solar penetration and cloud free days, but we also have a significant aquifer with water sources of high quality.

We can re-power the Northern Territory and use existing infrastructure with hydrogen. It would then be 100% renewable green hydrogen and we could reduce the cost of electricity significantly. This will attract downstream industries to the Northern Territory, which is one of our major economic diversification plans.

Just by swapping the fuel source. ■

WHILE THE GOVERNMENT DITHERS, INDUSTRY ACTS

The bad news

"This is coal, don't be scared, don't be afraid."



Prime Minister Scott Morrison mocks the Opposition as he hands a lump of coal around the government frontbench in Parliament. Obviously he accepts that excess CO² is harmful to the atmosphere or he wouldn't support any reduction target at all.



"Weak as piss ...
... a bunch of bedwetters."

Minister for Resources and Northern Australia Senator Matthew Canavan gives his opinion on companies that make a commercial decision not to support the Adani mine. Are the waterholes in the background for irony?

"We are going to stand by our tradies and we are going to save their utes."



Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business Senator Michaelia Cash pouring scorn on the Opposition for supporting the uptake of electric vehicles.



... and of course this lot who couldn't contain their glee at successfully repealing the carbon tax. CO² emissions have risen steadily ever since and industry is crying out for some pricing mechanism around which to base its investment decisions.

The good news



"... completely batshit insane project ... but the engineering checks out."

Atlassian co-founder and billionaire Mike Cannon-Brookes comments on his potential investment in the plan to provide one fifth of Singapore's electricity from a solar farm near Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory.

The *Australian Financial Review* reports that, 'the project would involve 15,000 hectares of solar panels integrated with a large storage plant and transmission that would carry the power north to Darwin and then Singapore.'

'The 10 gigawatt capacity would be supported by 20-30 gigawatt-hours of storage. Start-up is targeted for 2027.'



AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATION IN ALBURY-WODONGA MADE BY THE MODULAR PANEL MANUFACTURING COMPANY 5B. THE COMPANY SAYS ON ITS WEBSITE THAT THE INSTALLATION TOOK A MORNING'S WORK BY A TEAM OF TWO.

A price on carbon

'The new report, backed by CSIRO, says adopting an emissions intensity scheme is the least costly way of reducing emissions, and could actually save customers \$200 a year by 2030.'

'Big business and oil and gas companies have hit back at Resources Minister Matt Canavan for suggesting they should give up on a carbon price, saying climate change is not going away and they will still factor it into their business plans.'

'While the Morrison government has used the recent election victory as justification for its minimalist climate policies, business leaders said they had a duty to their shareholders to prepare for the financial risks associated with climate change.'

'Santos chief executive Kevin Gallagher said many in the industry kept calling for a carbon price because they felt it was inevitable in Australia, despite the policy inaction of the past decade.'

'"What I want is carbon policy certainty, whatever that is," Mr Gallagher said at the APPEA conference.'

Source: *Australian Financial Review* May 30 2019