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Town of Gawler Advocacy Prompts LGA Action on Key Initiatives

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA SA) will advocate on behalf of all South Australian councils for clearer rules regarding the purchase of accredited renewable energy across the state following strong advocacy by Town of Gawler.

It will also investigate ways to reduce the cost and timeframes to councils associated with the adjustment of telecommunication service pits in road reserves as part of their capital works programs.

LGA SA held its Annual General Meeting on October 29, where Town of Gawler Mayor Karen Redman presented two separate motions that were supported by SA councils.

The first requested that clear and consistent rules be established for purchased and accredited renewable electricity.

The motion was as followed:

That the Annual General Meeting requests:

- the LGA to support advocacy led by the Australian Local Government Association calling on the Federal Government to amend the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) Framework to establish a legal definition of what is required to buy renewable electricity via the electricity grid and claim 100% renewable electricity use and zero emissions. This will establish market-based accounting for renewable electricity, create a single nationally consistent method that applies to electricity and renewable electricity consumption and prevent double counting for all customers including for councils, seeking legally assured, clearly defined and priced renewable electricity; and*
- that the LGA President write to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction to confirm member councils support for the above position.*

The second Town of Gawler motion urged LGA SA to explore ways to create cost and time savings for all councils regarding the adjustment to telecommunication pits on road reserves.

The motion was as follows:

That the Annual General Meeting requests:

- The LGA to explore ways to reduce the cost and timeframes to councils associated with adjustment of telecommunication service pits in road reserves as part of their capital works programs.*

Background: Clear and Consistent Rules for Purchased Renewable Electricity

There is currently no legal framework or consistent method to allocate, trade or claim use of accredited renewable electricity via the grid.

This results in a myriad of different methods being employed to determine what makes up a 100% renewable electricity use claim.

Without a clear set of legal rules, market participants, scheme creators and consultants have established different methods to make renewable electricity claims, which at times are inconsistent to the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) scheme.

The uncertainty and inconsistency arising from the lack of a legal definition leads to electricity structures that are unfair.

Town of Gawler had a similar motion passed at the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) National General Assembly earlier this year, with the two motions aligning LGA SA with the national position ALGA has taken on establishing clearer guidelines for purchasing renewable electricity.



Quotes attributable to Town of Gawler Mayor Karen Redman:

"All customers across Australia, including councils, should be able to choose, buy and claim renewable electricity use under a consistent legal method assuring integrity and a basis for fair pricing," Mayor Redman said.

"Town of Gawler is committed to working towards a green energy future and our strong advocacy, at both state and national level by way of these motions, for clearer guidelines regarding the purchase of renewable electricity is testament to this."

Background: Cost and Timeframes for Adjustment to Telecommunications Pits on Road Reserves

The Local Government sector has long held concerns associated with monopoly oversight of service adjustments to telecommunication utility pits, namely the cost of adjustment works and the length of time taken to address adjustments once contracted.

Staff have found that in recent years the cost differences and timeframes for works to be delivered between utility service providers to adjust pits is vastly differing.

Town of Gawler's motion raised several points of dissatisfaction related to this, including:

- The excessive cost of many adjustment works, including the wide variance in costs charged by different utility service providers
- The length of time taken to address adjustments
- The common need for remedial works following the adjustment works of contractors
- The inability of councils to directly engage qualified contractors to perform the adjustment works

Council's motion allows the LGA to advocate for improved commercial arrangements on behalf of SA councils on this significant expense in undertaking capital works on road reserves each year across the sector.

Quotes attributable to Town of Gawler CEO Henry Inat:

"Under the existing framework, South Australian councils, including the Town of Gawler, are prohibited from directly engaging with qualified contractors to undertake work on telecommunication pits," Mr Inat said.

"Frustratingly, this results in higher than necessary costs being incurred and in 2020/21 this service cost council in excess of \$80,000, and much more in lost productivity and re-visiting work.

"This resolution that has now been passed will act as the catalyst for LGA SA to determine ways to better streamline this process and eliminate excess financial burden on council, which can instead be used to better serve our community."

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