



# SolarCitizens

A community voice for solar

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*Roger Smith  
Manager Network and Alternate Solutions  
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Dear Mr Smith,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the development of the Northern Queensland Renewable Energy Zone (REZ).

Solar Citizens is an independent, community-based organisation bringing together the millions of Australians who are already powering their lives with the sun, and the many more who want access to cheap and clean electricity, to pursue a fast and fair transition to renewables. We have over 100,000 supporters across the country, but are primarily based in Queensland.

Queensland's electricity system is rapidly changing. A new report from the Queensland Conservation Council projects that Queensland's state-owned coal-fired power stations will be running at a loss from 2024<sup>1</sup>. This was supported by forward projections in the latest Queensland Budget that show that government-owned generators will no longer provide an income stream to the government after 2023.

In this context it is reasonable to expect that the growth of solar and wind generation will continue to drive down the wholesale price of electricity and undermine the operation of both private and public coal-fired power stations in Queensland.

At the same time, Queensland's incredible solar and wind resources, skilled workforce and mineral deposits mean that the state is well-placed to manufacture and export commodities for the new world economy. Building out renewable energy and storage projects, and stimulating more local manufacturing and minerals processing, can significantly boost regional Queensland employment and investment. An example of this is the CopperString 2.0 transmission project,

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<sup>1</sup> [Queensland Conservation Council. \(2021\). Forecast of Generation, Revenue and Costs for CS Energy and Stanwell 2020-21 to 2024-25.](#)

which is expected to pave the way for 3,560 ongoing jobs in the North West Minerals Province in mining and minerals processing by unlocking cheaper electricity in the region.

**It is our concern that the scale of the grid augmentation proposed is not aligned with the likelihood of both early coal retirements and growing demand in North Queensland.** In our report, *Turning Townsville into a Renewable Industry and Hydrogen Powerhouse*, it was found that existing manufacturing, hydrogen and mining proposals around Townsville could increase local demand by more than 3,000MW<sup>2</sup>.

In the latest Integrated System Plan (ISP) the Far North Queensland Renewable Energy Zone is noted as having approximately 700MW of existing capacity. Will the proposed grid augmentation expand this capacity by 500MW to a total of 1200MW – or will the total capacity of the REZ be 500MW?

North Queensland's wind resources are negatively correlated with the southern states, which means they can make a valuable addition to the NEM's generation mix, especially at higher levels of renewable penetration. It's for these aforementioned reasons that we support further measures to expand the hosting capacity of the Far North Queensland REZ, including those outlined in the 2020 ISP, as well as the development of the CopperString 2.0 transmission line.

Given the 2000-2,500MW capacity limit of new generation north of Gladstone, we also support the urgent progression of the Central to Southern Queensland upgrade and Gladstone Grid Reinforcement to alleviate this bottleneck.

Thanks again for the opportunity to input into the Northern Queensland REZ. We look forward to continued engagement with Powerlink regarding the rollout of Queensland's Renewable Energy Zones.

Regards,

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<sup>2</sup> [Acacia Sustainability. \(2021\). Renewable Energy Hub Jobs - A Transformative Opportunity for Townsville.](#)