



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **Solar delivering over \$100,000 in Savings to Rate Payers Each Year in Northern Areas**

Being located in heart of South Australia's renewable energy hub and the home of the famous Hornsdale Battery, energy usage is a strong focus in the Northern Areas Council. With its annual electricity bill beginning to steeply rise in the past decade, Council has taken a different approach to minimising these costs through the installation of solar energy systems across its many buildings in the Council area.

Since first commencing the rollout in the 2013/14 financial year, the Northern Areas Council has so far saved a combined amount of \$345,000. However in order to reach these savings, the Council has had to invest in solar energy systems, but the amount invested of \$265,000 has now been exceeded by the savings achieved to date.

Mayor Ben Browne said "to make savings for rate payers, some Councils historically have looked to cut the level of services delivered to the community, but we've opted to take a longer term view and find efficiencies in existing operations, of which electricity costs were becoming a major concern.

There is a payback period for solar, where the savings delivered recover the costs of the investment, but having already reached that point our solar projects are now delivering over \$100,000 in savings to our ratepayers each year, which is the equivalent of around 1.5% of rate revenue.

What this has meant is that we're better able to keep our rates at a stable level and reduce the level of Council debt without having to resort to service cuts, which are never popular in the community. People in the community pay rates, so as a Council we appreciate that it's fair and reasonable that they don't then expect to see services cut."

Community organisations across the Northern Areas Council have also benefited through energy savings from the highly successful Neoen Hornsdale Wind Farm Energy Efficiency fund, a grant program established by Neoen, the owners of the Hornsdale Wind Farm and Battery. This has helped deliver grant funding to not for profit groups within the Northern

Areas Council to help them undertake projects such as solar installations and energy efficient lighting to help mitigate rising electricity costs. Dozens of not for profit groups from across the entire Council area have benefited from the funding and continue to benefit from the ongoing savings delivered each year.

Mayor Browne added “the Neoen Energy Efficiency Fund has helped by saving enormous amounts of money to community groups across the Council area. It has delivered savings for a variety of groups such as bowling clubs in Gulnare and Georgetown, the RSL hall in Jamestown, local swimming pools in Gladstone, Jamestown and Spalding and the community run caravan parks in Laura and Gladstone. These aren’t just small savings, groups are saving thousands of dollars annually. Like the savings seen by Council through its solar projects this program delivers major savings every year, year on year.

We also have some highly reputable solar installers based in the Northern Areas Council which has seen them engaged by both Council and the community across both programs, delivering further benefits to the local economy”.

The Neoen Hornsdale Wind Farm Energy Efficiency Fund is anticipated to open in March of 2022.

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