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*Please respond to Parliament House*

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Hon Jay Weatherill MP  
Premier  
GPO Box 2343  
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Dear Premier

As you know, I wrote and emailed a letter to you on Thursday morning last week asking that you allocate an appropriate level on funding in next week's Budget to support the people in the north of South Australia who are detrimentally affected by Alinta's decision to cease operating the Port Augusta power station and the Leigh Creek coal mine. I now put forward to you a list of suggestions for you and your government to consider which will support the people of this region.

You have the access to the resources of every government department and every public servant in the state so I hope that you will be able to significantly add to this list, but in the meantime please give immediate consideration to these suggestions which I make at the Member for Stuart representing both Port Augusta and Leigh Creek as well as many other communities which are directly affected by Alinta's decision:

- 1) There must be consideration and support for both Alinta employees and also other people who will also lose their jobs because of Alinta's decision.

For example, in Port Augusta there are 185 Alinta employees who all support local businesses and their employees through their personal spending and Alinta directly contracts many more people and local businesses to work in its operations including local tradesmen, railway workers and many other service providers.

In Leigh Creek there are 253 Alinta employees, but there are nearly another 200 people employed in other capacities in the town such as contractors to the mine and railway workers and other people employed in education, health, retail, hospitality, etc.

- 2) Support for people who suffer from mortgage stress. This can be done in a way similar to drought assistance packages which offer interest rate subsidies so people who cannot meet their mortgage commitments can at least make interest payments and retain their homes.
- 3) Financial support for displaced Alinta and other employees to access training. This could be anything from job application training for people who have not changed jobs for a long time all the way through to learning new skills and trades.
- 4) Fully consider the loss of financial and other support that Alinta currently provides to the affected communities over and above employment. Alinta currently provides sponsorship, water supply, subsidisation of medical services, airport and rubbish dump management, back-up electricity generators and much more and these will all go when Alinta ceases to operate in the region.
- 5) Flexibility and support for Alinta's apprentices and trainees who may not be able to complete their programmes before the power station and coal mine cease to operate. These people will need pro-active help to do so in another way.
- 6) Change the name and the focus of the existing Ministry for "Automotive Transformation" to the Ministry for "Industry and Employment Transformation".

It is vital that the government not only continues the important work of supporting the North of Adelaide to survive the closure of the Holden factory but also now the North of South Australia to survive the closure of the power station and the coal mine. The focus must be on job creation within the affected geographical areas.

It is critical that as many people as possible who are losing local jobs do not have to move away to find new jobs in other regions. That way local communities can be sustained and, importantly, the problems won't just be shifted through increased competition for jobs in other areas.

- 7) Alinta employees with appropriate skills must be given the first option to work with contractors engaged in the remediation of the Port Augusta power station site (it will be Alinta employees doing the majority of the work at the coal mine).
- 8) The Port Augusta Town Hall and Courthouse precinct must be redeveloped into a modern commercial and community centre including retail, hospitality and entertainment businesses as well as vibrant public space and community services.

These buildings and the vacant land have remained under-utilised for far too long and this type of development will create jobs, increase business confidence and revitalise Port Augusta's CBD.

- 9) Fast track assessment of and responsible support for proposals already made by RDA Far North and the Upper Spencer Gulf Common Purpose Group that the Upper Spencer Gulf be developed as a national centre of excellence in "green tech" industries (including but not limited to renewable energy developments) in partnership with industry and the tertiary education sector.
- 10) Fast track assessment of and responsible support for the proposal from Solar Reserve to build a solar thermal power plant just north of Port Augusta.

This proposal must no longer be considered a request for support but now an opportunity to invest in the region. As well as the capacity to create new jobs, this project could be the catalyst for South Australia and the Upper Spencer Gulf to lead the nation in this area.

- 11) Fast track assessment of and responsible support for the DP Energy application to build a wind and solar farm just south of Port Augusta which will create new jobs.
- 12) Investigate development of an inter-modal freight hub on the outskirts of Port Augusta which would not only create local jobs but also increase the freight, and therefore economic, productivity of our state and nation.

Port Augusta is the freight cross roads of Australia and yet heavy vehicle road and rail freight is not managed nearly as efficiently as it should be and the productivity gains would be extremely valuable.

- 13) Do not invoke the existing lease condition that people renting government owned houses (the only ones that exist) in Leigh Creek must vacate the houses within two weeks of ceasing to be employed in Leigh Creek. For many obvious reasons it is imperative that people are not required to leave the community as soon as Alinta or another organisation terminates their employment.
- 14) Leigh Creek must continue as an extremely important sub-regional service centre supporting the entire NE pastoral area of South Australia.

As well as Leigh Creek itself, the surrounding communities of Copley, Nepabunna, Lyndhurst, Marree, Innamincka, Beltana and Parachilna all rely upon Leigh Creek for services.

Leigh Creek's Hospital and medical practice, pre, primary and high schools, service station, grocery store, café, newsagent, post office and others are all needed.

The communities of Copley and Lyndhurst as well as nearby pastoral leases receive their water supply via Alinta from Aroona Dam. Residential and commercial electricity is distributed in the surrounding area from Leigh Creek.

Throughout the northeast of the state, pastoralism, tourism, transport, the oil and gas fields of the Cooper Basin and the resources industry more broadly receive a range of important services from Leigh Creek.

- 15) People should be given the opportunity to purchase their existing homes in Leigh Creek. Consideration should also be given to options for the sale of existing houses in Leigh Creek to other people to move into the town.
- 16) Fast track negotiations with the federal government on joint funding for the sealing of the Strzelecki Track which begins at Lyndhurst only 35km north of Leigh Creek.

This will not only create new jobs during construction but directly contribute to the region's and our state's economy by the immediate return of business from Queensland back to South Australia.

An enormous amount of service which was previously provided to the Cooper Basin from South Australia has shifted to come from Queensland instead over the past decade because of the unacceptable condition of the Strzelecki Track and this business will return when the track is sealed. Queensland currently has bitumen roads all the way from Brisbane to the South Australian border.

As many of your Cabinet Ministers know from receiving regular information and requests from me over the last five years regarding this project, I see this as South Australia's highest immediate priority infrastructure development opportunity anyway and so it is now even more important to pursue it.

- 17) Complete the sealing of the Lyndhurst to Marree road (59km still to be sealed). This 80km road was funded to be sealed several years ago but only 21kms was ever done. This will create local jobs.
- 18) Consider alternative uses for the existing Leigh Creek coal mine to Port Augusta railway line (which can connect through to Adelaide). The northern end of this railway line finishes approximately 20km south of the start of the Strzelecki Track which services the Cooper Basin oil and gas fields.
- 19) Fast track assessment of and responsible support for the Marathon Resources project just north of Leigh Creek.
- 20) Fast track assessment of and support for the Archer Exploration project just north of Leigh Creek.

Please consider these suggestions (as well as others coming from the community and from within government) immediately, because very unfortunately the direct and indirect job losses and the flow-on effects to our economy have already started. There are already significant contracts which have been cancelled because of Alinta's announcement last week. The negative outcomes are already being delivered, so we must all contribute to delivering positive solutions as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP  
**MEMBER FOR STUART**

Copies sent to relevant stakeholders