

Old Oz mining town to showcase renewable viability

Famous for its opals and underground dwellings, the historic mining town of Coober Pedy in the South Australian outback is about to make a giant leap into the 21st century.



Now the township of 3,500 is giving up on its total reliance on expensive, imported diesel fuels for its electricity, and tapping in to energy sources it has in abundance - wind and solar.

Site works for the town's new \$37m construction project commence this month. It will see construction of 4MW of wind energy, 1MW of solar PV and 1MW/500kWh of lithium titanate battery storage.

According to Keith Barker, the head of technology at remote power specialist, Energy Developments (EDL), the new array will displace 70% of the town's diesel use, and for half the time no diesel will be used at all. That means that for half the year, the town will be powered 100% by renewable energy.

"We believe that the project will establish new world benchmarks for megawatt scale off-grid renewables," Barker says. Not only will it be applicable to off-grid towns and mine sites, with some already toying with the mixture of solar and battery storage, but it could become a model for on-grid towns and much larger regions.

"Our view is if it can be done at Coober Pedy, it can be done for Adelaide. If it can be done for Adelaide, it can be done for Sydney," says David Leitch, a former leading energy analyst who runs energy industry consultancy, ITK. And he notes

if it can be done for the nation's capitals, then it can be done for the whole country.

Source: *The Guardian*

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