

Solar power Queensland: Plans for up to six solar thermal stations

Daryl Passmore, The Sunday Mail (Qld)
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A COMPANY which helps keep the neon burning bright in the casino capital Las Vegas is planning a series of solar power plants across Queensland, creating more than 20,000 construction jobs.

SolarReserve is scouting sites for up to half a dozen solar thermal stations, each of which generate enough electricity for 90,000 homes.

“We have a vision for a number of these facilities to be built in Queensland, particularly north and western Queensland,” Daniel Thompson, the company’s director of Australian development, said.

Areas being considered include Mt Isa, Roma, Moranbah and Georgetown.

SolarReserve’s operations include the Crescent Dunes facility in the Nevada desert which uses groundbreaking technology to generate electricity for the 24-hour city.

Unlike photovoltaic, solar thermal uses molten salt heated to over 566C to store energy so it can be used on cloudy days and at night.

The SolarReserve project at Crescent Dunes in the US, which is essentially a carbon copy of the company’s proposed solar thermal generator in Port Augusta.

The 110MW plant in the US, the world’s first utility-scale facility to use the technology, features 10,000 billboard-sized mirror panels which direct the sun’s rays



on to the tip of a 195m concrete tower containing tens of thousands of tonnes of a sodium and potassium nitrates mix which acts as a giant battery.

Stored heat is used to power a steam turbine to supply power to the grid. The process has zero emission.

Mr Thompson said SolarReserve was in “very positive” discussions with the Palaszczuk Government and an application for a concessional loan from the Federal Government’s \$5 billion North Australian Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) was an option.

“We are certainly enthusiastic about the prospects in Queensland,” he said.

The company is considering four to six plants, each with a capacity of 100MW to 150MW. Each would cost about \$600 million to build, requiring 4000 construction workers and 50 staff once operational.

Each of SolarReserve’s plants would create thousands of construction jobs.

There would be flow-on for Queensland and Australian companies supplying concrete, steel and glass.

Mr Thompson said Queensland was attractive because of its abundant sunshine and the Palaszczuk Government’s target of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030.

The company is seeking government support for the first plant, possibly through a long-term supply agreement or a NAIF loan.

Energy Minister Mark Bailey said SolarReserve was one of many renewable energy firms keen to set up here.

He called on the Turnbull Government to refocus energy priorities away from fossil fuel.

“If they have money to spend, it’s new clean energy like this that the Turnbull Government should be supporting in Queensland, not building old-school, expensive and high carbon-emitting coal-fired power stations,” he said.

Mr Bailey said the Palaszczuk Government was losing confidence in the NAIF.

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/business/solar-power-queensland-plans-for-up-to-six-solar-thermal-stations/news-story/500edfdd61cdd0603bb876a8a558e3b0>