Submission on the Retention of Torrens Island Gas Power Station

To: Net Zero Economy Authority

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Subject: Opposition to the Closure of Torrens Island Gas Power Station

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Introduction

The proposed closure of the Torrens Island Gas Power Station represents a misguided approach to energy policy, one that prioritizes ideological commitments over practical necessities. Gas-fired power remains an essential component of Australia's energy mix, providing reliable baseload and dispatchable power that intermittent renewable sources cannot guarantee.

The push toward net zero emissions has led to a rapid expansion of wind, solar, and battery storage, yet these sources have demonstrated serious environmental, economic, and grid stability concerns. Without gas infrastructure to support the transition, Australia risks severe power shortages, escalating electricity prices, job losses, and the degradation of both terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

This submission highlights the critical role of the Torrens Island Gas Power Station in maintaining national energy security and economic stability, while exposing the broader issues associated with the forced transition to so-called “green” energy.

1. Energy Security and Grid Stability

- The Torrens Island Gas Power Station is an essential component of South Australia's energy grid, providing reliable, dispatchable power.
- Renewable energy sources such as wind and solar are intermittent and cannot sustain a stable power grid without constant backup.
- Removing gas-fired power will lead to blackouts, energy rationing, and increased dependence on imported energy solutions.
- Project EnergyConnect is not a suitable replacement and will not guarantee a stable grid, making South Australia highly vulnerable to energy shortages.
- The UK and Germany provide cautionary examples, where over-reliance on renewables without proper baseload backup has led to soaring electricity prices, winter energy rationing, and rolling blackouts.
- Australia has already faced energy crises due to unreliable renewables, including the 2022 electricity market suspension where soaring costs forced authorities to intervene to prevent mass blackouts.
- Households and businesses will bear the burden of this instability, with increased energy costs disproportionately affecting low-income families and small businesses.

- Industries dependent on stable power, such as manufacturing and agriculture, will be severely impacted, leading to job losses, decreased productivity, and a weakening of the national economy.
- Without sufficient gas and coal infrastructure to act as a safeguard, emergency measures such as forced demand reduction or importing electricity at exorbitant prices may become necessary, further crippling the economy.

2. Environmental and Economic Destruction from Green Energy

- **Wind Energy:**
  - Wind turbines are a significant threat to bird and bat populations, with thousands of fatalities reported annually.
  - Wind farms require extensive land clearing, leading to habitat destruction for native wildlife.
  - Offshore wind farms disrupt marine ecosystems, impacting fish populations and endangering whale migration routes.
  - The low efficiency of wind turbines means they require vast numbers to generate comparable energy to traditional sources, worsening environmental destruction.
  - Extensive wind energy developments contribute to PFAS contamination, with harmful chemicals leaching into soil and water supplies.
  - Wind projects alter atmospheric circulation, creating **thermal belts** that impact local climates, reducing rainfall and worsening drought conditions.
  - Large-scale wind installations create **heat islands**, artificially increasing temperatures in surrounding areas, impacting local biodiversity and agricultural productivity.
  - Offshore wind projects have been linked to increased whale and dolphin strandings, as sonar and vibration interfere with marine navigation and echolocation.
  - **Blade Shedding and Toxic Pollution:** Wind turbine blades, made from composite materials, degrade over time, shedding microplastics and toxic particles into the environment. These materials are difficult to recycle and accumulate in landfills.
  - **Infrastructure Waste:** The disposal of decommissioned wind turbine components presents a growing waste management crisis, as the sheer size and volume of blades make them challenging to repurpose or recycle.
- **Solar Energy:**
  - Large-scale solar farms sterilize vast tracts of land, eliminating viable agricultural use.
  - The construction process involves significant deforestation and soil degradation, reducing biodiversity.
  - Toxic chemicals used in solar panel production leach into the environment, contaminating soil and water sources.
  - Solar panels have a limited lifespan, with no scalable recycling solution, leading to mounting e-waste concerns.
  - **Water Usage:** Manufacturing and cleaning of solar panels require large amounts of water, depleting local water resources, particularly in arid regions.
  - **Soil Erosion:** The installation of solar panels can contribute to significant soil erosion, destabilizing local ecosystems.

- **Fire Hazard:** Faulty solar panels or improperly managed solar farms have been linked to electrical fires, posing risks to nearby communities and ecosystems.
- **Reduced Land Productivity:** Solar farms remove prime agricultural land from food production, reducing available farmland and impacting food security.

3. Economic Consequences

- The burden of toxic clean-up from decommissioned wind, solar, and battery infrastructure will fall on landholders and the Australian taxpayer, as there are currently no comprehensive industry-funded solutions for remediation.
- The high cost of renewable energy infrastructure, including wind, solar, and battery storage, is passed onto consumers through higher electricity prices.
- Government subsidies for renewable energy projects distort the energy market, creating artificial dependency and masking inefficiencies.
- The closure of reliable gas power stations reduces competition in the energy sector, leading to monopolization and further price hikes.
- Industries requiring stable and affordable energy, such as manufacturing, agriculture, and mining, will suffer operational disruptions, threatening jobs and economic growth.
- Unreliable energy supply results in higher costs for businesses, which are passed down to consumers in the form of increased prices for goods and services.
- Energy poverty will increase as vulnerable populations struggle to afford escalating electricity bills.
- The reliance on foreign-manufactured solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries places Australia at the mercy of international supply chains, increasing vulnerability to global market fluctuations and geopolitical risks.

Conclusion

The push to eliminate gas-fired power in favour of wind, solar, and battery storage is fraught with risk. The closure of the Torrens Island Gas Power Station will remove a crucial component of Australia's energy security, drive up electricity prices, lead to environmental degradation, and create further economic instability.

Australia must prioritize energy policies that support national interests, ensuring a stable and affordable power supply. Instead of dismantling essential infrastructure, investment should focus on diversifying the energy mix with reliable baseload power, including gas and nuclear energy. The continued reliance on unreliable renewable sources, without adequate planning for stability, threatens the prosperity and well-being of all Australians.

We urge the Net Zero Economy Authority to recognize these realities and abandon any plans to decommission Torrens Island Gas Power Station.

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