Flat-plate solar panels track the sun at Uterne in Alice Springs.

1MW of solar in our sunny centre

This new 1MW solar power station was built in Alice Springs in early 2011 and is an integral part of Power and Water Corporation's commitment to the Alice Solar City project since its inception in 2005.

Sunpower Corporation Australia Pty Ltd developed and built the system, covering four hectares with flat-plate solar panels that pivot to track the sun throughout the day.

Power and Water Corporation has signed a 20-year agreement to purchase the electricity it generates.

Alice Springs has embraced the Alice Solar City project, with considerable private investment in solar. Key projects include: 500 rooftop photovoltaic (PV) systems; a 235kW PV system at Alice Springs Airport; and a 305kW PV system at Crowne Plaza Alice Springs.

Power and Water Corporation will maintain its gas power stations, continuing to provide power when the sun is not shining.

Frequently asked questions

Why is Alice Springs so good for solar power?

Alice Springs averaged only 63 cloudy days a year over the past 56 years, with an average 9.6 hours of sunshine per day.*

One square metre of solar panel averages 8kWh of electricity a day.

How much of Alice Springs' power will this system supply?

The 1MW system is projected to produce 2300 megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity per year. The average Alice Springs home uses 8MWh per year.

The solar farm will produce about 1% of Alice Springs' electricity a year and can meet 2% of peak demand on a sunny day.

How long will the solar panels last?

These solar panels have a design life of 25 years.

How much does it cost?

While the capital cost of the solar system is high, as this reduces so does the average cost of the energy it produces. Gradually it will become cost comparable with energy from conventional natural gas-fired power stations.

* Bureau of Meteorology

At a glance

Project name:
Uterne, a local Arrernte word meaning "bright, sunny day"

System rating: 1 MW

Annual output: 2300MWh

Equivalent to: 288 average Alice Springs' homes a year

Developer:
SunPower Corporation Australia

Cost: $6.6 million

Funding: $3.3 million from the Australian Government as part of the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program (RRPGP)

Australian Government
Solar Cities

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