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Nuke power best for Port Augusta

CAMERON ENGLAND

NUCLEAR power would be a better option than renewables if the Port Augusta power stations were to be replaced, a consultant says.

ThinkClimate Consulting Director Ben Heard told the Paydirt Uranium Conference in Adelaide yesterday that the nuclear option he analysed would be much cheaper to build, costing from \$3.5 billion-\$4.8 billion, compared with an estimated \$8.1 billion for the renewable solution.

It must be noted that the two smaller power stations at Port Augusta have now been shut down and the large, Northern Power station only runs for six months a year following a decision to reduce capacity at the high-carbon emitting plant.

There has been a push to replace the capacity with solar thermal generation however, which Mr Heard says would be much more expensive than nuclear power.

"Despite the large upfront costs of nuclear power plants, levelised cost of electricity

(LCOE) comparison of nuclear power over its life demonstrates it is still a competitive option (\$101-\$138 megawatt hours) for zero-carbon base-load electricity," the report says.

"This is far superior to the \$250-\$300/MWh cost anticipated for solar thermal, and is comparable to the \$90-\$110/MWh cost anticipated for wind.

"Unlike the wind option, nuclear electricity is dispatchable on demand, and unlike the solar thermal option, it is unaffected by seasonal variation or extended periods of poor weather.

Mr Heard's report shows nuclear power compares favourably on a number of factors besides the cost, utilising a much smaller footprint, employing a similar number of people during construction and using a lot fewer materials.

For more, Mr Heard's report can be found at www.zerocarbonoptions.com