

NOTICE OF ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING



11 NOVEMBER 2025 ***EXTRACT*, Item 13.2.1** **Community Battery - Blair Athol Reserve**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1999 that a Council Meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at 62 Commercial Road, Port Adelaide on Tuesday **11 November 2025**.

The meeting will commence at 7:00 pm.

The business to be considered at the above-mentioned meeting, is set out in the enclosed Agenda.

Mark Withers
Chief Executive Officer

7 November 2025

DISCLAIMER - Please note that the contents of the Council Agenda have yet to be considered by Council and recommendations may be altered or changed by the Council in the process of making the formal Council decision

13.2 Decision Reports

13.2.1 Community Battery - Blair Athol Reserve

Report Type	Decision
City Vision Goal/s	Thriving Community Clean and Green City
Report Author	Manager Property & Building Assets, City Assets
Report Summary	This report presents a proposal for the installation of a community battery in partnership with the Department for Energy and Mining as part of the emPowering SA program and seeks endorsement to commence community engagement and agreement negotiations.
Attachments	1. Community Battery Attachment 1 [13.2.1.1 - 1 page]

RECOMMENDATION

Council resolves that:

- 1. The report of the Director City Assets titled "Community Battery - Blair Athol Reserve" be received and noted.**
- 2. The Administration is approved to commence community engagement for:**
 - a. The installation of a community battery on a portion of land defined as Allotment 580 in certificate of title Volume 6208 Folio 11 in plan number 90277 and located at Blair Athol Reserve, Leslie Avenue, Blair Athol, SA 5084.**
 - b. The provision of long-term lease of 15 years to the Department for Energy and Mining over a portion of land defined as Allotment 580 in certificate of title Volume 6208 Folio 11 in plan number 90277 and located at Blair Athol Reserve, Leslie Avenue, Blair Athol, SA 5084.**
- 3. Subject to the Community Engagement outcome and no material objections being received, the Chief Executive Officer or his Delegate is authorised to:**
 - a. Negotiate the terms and conditions of any necessary agreements or documentation to give effect to the installation of a community battery on a portion of land defined as Allotment 580 in certificate of title Volume 6208 Folio 11 in plan number 90277 and located at Blair Athol Reserve, Leslie Avenue, Blair Athol, SA 5084.**
 - b. The maximum term of any agreement entered into under (3a) is up to and including 15 years.**
 - c. Enter into and approve any necessary easements required for the installation and maintenance of community battery infrastructure installed on a portion of land defined as Allotment 580 in certificate of title Volume 6208 Folio 11 in plan number 90277 and located at Blair**

Athol Reserve, Leslie Avenue, Blair Athol, SA 5084 for the period of the agreement entered into under (3a).

- 4. Should material objections be received through the community engagement process that cannot be resolved by Council Administration a further report would be brought back to Council for a decision on how to proceed.**
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Background

Council Administration have been working through an exciting sustainability initiative, to progress the proposed installation of a community battery in partnership with the Department for Energy and Mining (DEM) through the emPowering SA program.

The emPowering SA program is a partnership between the Government of South Australia, AGL, and the Australian Government's Community Batteries for Household Solar initiative to deliver a fleet of 18 community batteries across South Australia. The program aims to provide direct benefits to more than 10,000 low-income households through access to a retail electricity rate 25% below the Default Market Offer (DMO), equating to an estimated annual saving of up to \$575 per household. Over its operational life, the program is expected to deliver approximately \$60 million in value to South Australians experiencing cost-of-living pressures.

Each community battery will have a capacity of 700kW / 1828kWh and will occupy a footprint of around 11.5m x 7.2m including fencing, with an adjacent SA Power Networks transformer on a separate slab. The batteries will be owned by the Government of South Australia and operated and maintained by AGL as part of a Virtual Power Plant (VPP), enabling energy trading to fund the electricity discounts provided to households.

The batteries will store excess renewable energy when available and release it back to the grid during peak periods, improving grid stability and resilience while supporting South Australia's climate and emissions reduction targets.

Safety and maintenance are key priorities:

- Equipment complies with stringent national and international battery safety standards
- Each unit includes fire detection and suppression systems
- Annual maintenance and 24/7 remote monitoring will be undertaken by AGL
- SA Power Networks will maintain associated transformers
- Security fencing and site design (including landscaping and community information opportunities) will be developed collaboratively with Councils.

The project is fully funded through the emPowering SA program, and delivery will occur progressively across 2026, with each site taking approximately 12-18 months from approval to commissioning.

Councils play an important role in community engagement, supporting site selection, and ensuring local residents are informed and heard. Priority access to program benefits will be given to eligible Housing SA tenants within host Council areas.

The emPowering SA team and AGL will provide ongoing monitoring and reporting on performance, safety, and community outcomes, and will maintain open communication channels with host Councils.

Report

Memorandum of Understanding

Council Administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DEM, which outlined our shared intention to continue working together through the various steps required to assess and potentially deliver this project. The MOU does not commit Council to a specific site, nor does it bind Council to proceed without appropriate approvals. It explicitly recognises the need for Council endorsement, community engagement and other necessary steps before any final decisions are made.

Site Selection

Numerous sites have been considered as part of the process to date including The Lights Recreation Centre, Duncan Fraser Reserve, LJ Lewis Reserve, Edward Smith Reserve and Blair Athol Reserve. Blair Athol Reserve has been deemed by DEM as the most suitable site for the installation of this community battery due to location, proximity to suitable high voltage power, minimal impact on reserve use and the number of eligible households in close proximity (attachment 1 shows the proposed location).

Crown Land Application

A Crown Land Development Application, which functions similarly to a private development application but is required for projects involving Crown developments, was lodged as a preliminary step to support investigations into the proposed site at Blair Athol Reserve. Council provided feedback on the application which was generally supportive, and it has subsequently been approved.

Council's Role

Council's proposed role in this project includes:

- Providing a 15-year lease at peppercorn rent for the battery site
- Providing necessary easements for transformer infrastructure
- Continuing to maintain the site boundary, up to the edge of the battery infrastructure
- Minor fencing modifications to move an access gate at the proposed site
- Leading the community engagement process to ensure local input is considered and the community are supportive of the installation and the provision of a long-term agreement to occupy the site.

Key Benefits and Allocation Hierarchy

Key benefits include:

- Access to an electricity rate of 25% below the Default Market Offer (DMO) for selected households who meet the program criteria. Housing SA are the lead agency to identify these households and provide information regarding the program and their eligibility
- Annual savings of up to \$575 on energy bills (based on typical household usage)
- A choice of plans will be available for eligible households, a time of use tariff approach or flat tariff which will provide further opportunities for electricity and cost savings
- A prioritised rollout to eligible residents in the host community and local government area, ensuring local benefits are maximised.

The allocation hierarchy gives the first opportunity to:

- Housing SA tenants in the immediate neighbourhoods of the battery
- Housing SA tenants in the City of PAE
- Community Housing tenants nearby, then city-wide
- Other eligible households experiencing energy hardship.

Note it is likely that the majority of household connections through City of PAE will be SA Housing Trust households, given the numbers of these homes across the City.

Next Steps

Council Administration will continue to work through the project stages in collaboration with DEM and provide regular updates as key milestones are reached, including engagement with the community and any future decisions required by Council.

Given DEM have provided feedback that it has completed its feasibility assessments for this site and wishes to progress with formal approvals it is necessary to commence formal engagement to seek community feedback on the installation and agreement arrangements for the site.

Assuming there are no material objections to the proposal in its current form, Council and DEM would be in a position to progress this initiative at this location. Should material objections be received then Council Administration would bring a further report back to Council for consideration and an ultimate decision of whether to progress this initiative, find an alternative site or not progress at all.

City Vision Relationship

The installation of a community battery strongly aligns with Council's City Vision goals. It supports the Thriving Community goal by delivering affordable renewable energy to households experiencing cost-of-living pressures, helping to reduce their energy bills and improve household financial resilience.

The initiative also advances the Clean and Green City goal by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, supporting the integration of renewable energy into the local energy network, and enhancing the sustainability and resilience of community infrastructure. In addition, the project contributes to broader liveability outcomes by enabling equitable access to clean energy and demonstrating Council's leadership in promoting innovative solutions to address climate change and energy affordability challenges.

Legislative Context and Related Policies

Section 202 (1) of the Local Government Act allows a council to grant a lease or licence over community land (including community land that is, or forms part of, a park or reserve).

Under the *Local Government Act* 1999 section 202 (2) states that before the council grants a lease or licence relating to community land, it must follow the relevant steps set out in its public consultation policy. Due to the fact that the proposed agreement is in excess of 5 years the exemption for community engagement under section 3 (a) does not apply and community engagement must be undertaken. This then allows for all parties with an interest in, or who are impacted by this decision the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

Section 202 (6) states that a lease or licence must be consistent with any relevant management plan. Balir Athol Reserve is listed in Council's Community Land Management Plan – Active Recreation Reserves. This plan provides for uses such as those listed below which align with the installation of a community battery and the provision of a long term lease or licence:

- Facilitation of programs, services and activities, including those undertaken by groups or organisations under a permit, lease or licence granted by Council
- Use of the land by individuals, groups or organisations under a permit, lease or licence granted by Council.

Council's *Lease, Licence and Property Agreements Policy* and *Agreement Guidelines* will also guide the formation of and entering into of any agreement related to this proposal. This Policy and Guidelines outline that leases will not exceed 5 years unless Council resolves to grant a longer term and states that occupancy agreements longer than 5 years will set out terms for capital development of the land or building over the term of the agreement. The proposal to install a community battery represents a significant investment in infrastructure at the site, whilst not owned by Council, the direct benefit will flow through to the community.

Stakeholder Engagement

Community consultation is required to be undertaken. Should material objections be received the results of the community consultation will be presented to Council in a further report for its consideration prior to Council formally endorsing a new lease at the site. Otherwise Council Administration will commence with agreement negotiations for a period up to 15 years as requested by DEM.

DEM have advised that they will support Council throughout the Community Engagement process by providing information, materials, and insights drawn from engagement activities already undertaken in other Councils that have completed their engagement activities on similar proposals and long-term lease arrangements.

Council Administration will work closely with DEM and the local community through the engagement process to understand their specific concerns, questions and feedback.

Internal engagement has occurred with the Manager of Parks and Gardens to ensure that the location will not impact any future works to be undertaken at the reserve.

Risk Management

A comprehensive assessment of the proposed site at Blair Athol Reserve has been undertaken to confirm its suitability for the installation of the community battery, taking into account safety, accessibility, environmental, and operational considerations. The selected location meets all technical and regulatory requirements, ensuring that the battery can be installed and operated safely and efficiently.

The battery infrastructure will be owned and operated by AGL, with continuous 24-hour remote monitoring and regular maintenance in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. This ensures that the asset remains fully operational and serviceable for the duration of the agreement.

To mitigate safety risks, the site will be securely fenced, preventing unauthorised public access and minimising potential hazards to the community.

While the technology is considered inherently safe, it is recognised that community members may have concerns regarding fire risk or other potential impacts. The energy storage technology used in the battery is certified to the highest international and Australian safety standards, including lithium cell and battery safety (IEC 62619:2022, IEC 63056:2020), as well as grid connection, installation, and inverter standards (AS/NZS 5139, AS/NZS 4777.2, AS 3000, AS 3008). Each battery cabinet is equipped with fire detection and an automatically activated fire suppression system, providing multiple layers of protection in the unlikely event of a fire.

Financial Management

There are no significant ongoing costs to Council associated with the installation or operation of the community battery. The infrastructure will be owned, operated, and maintained by AGL, including all technical maintenance and monitoring.

Council's responsibilities would be limited to minor modifications to existing fencing to move a gate and to routine maintenance of the area surrounding the battery, consistent with current maintenance practices. These minimal obligations ensure that Council's ongoing operational costs remain low while supporting the safe and effective integration of the battery within the reserve.

Professional Fees and Contractor Costs

No professional fees or contractors costs have been incurred or are expected other than those outlined above in the financial management section. All costs to date have been incurred by DEM as part of the project.

Environmental and Social Impacts

There are no known environmental concerns associated with the installation of the community battery, whilst community batteries are a relatively new technology, batteries are widely used in residential and commercial settings and have not been linked to any environmental concerns.

There are expected to be significant social benefits provided via the annual savings on energy bills for those who are selected to benefit from this project in line with the methodology above.

PROPOSED LOCATION



Proposed location of the Community Battery

