

70 Actions to Make Alice Springs a DesertSMART Town

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Preamble

Alice Springs was founded in harsh conditions. Its pioneers were intimately connected to their environment. Over time their success has eroded as Alice people forgot how to live intelligently in desert surrounds. Today issues related to water, waste, buildings and energy are seldom addressed in serious terms. Alice Springs is at a crossroads, mirroring global choices to become smart and sustainable or slide into cultural decay. Alice can choose the first path and become an inspiring **Desert Smart** town. It can provide guidance to a billion people also struggling to live sustainably in desert towns around the world. The following actions provide a pathway to make Alice Springs a **Desert Smart** town. They are achievable. They simply require the 'can do' attitude that drove our pioneers.

Defining the vision

1. Develop a vision, strategy and targets for 'Alice Springs – the Desert Smart Town' via comprehensive public / business / government consultation
2. Inspire residents, businesses and government to engage via education, incentives, improved profitability, improved quality of life and pride in living a Desert Smart lifestyle. Celebrate successes.
3. Select diverse Desert Smart 'Thinkers' and 'Ambassadors' who stimulate discussions, identify opportunities, provide feedback on targets, promote and gauge progress.
4. Develop a 'Living with Climate Change' action plan to minimise impacts of increasing temperatures and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions

Built Environment

Suburbs

5. Develop ESD guidelines for hot arid zone subdivisions (make Mt Johns Valley a showcase)
6. Assist developers post-DCA phase to assess cost-benefits of best-practice sustainability features (street layout, water, energy, and wastewater). Provide financial assistance where whole-of-society benefits are proven but are not profitable for the developer.
7. Offer sustainability ratings to new Larapinta houses during early design phase to optimize sustainability features.

Public / trades education

8. Create a Smart Living Showroom for display of smart products and education of public / schools / businesses, including an advisory service for buildings, energy, water & waste.
9. Target new residents and teach them to lead Desert Smart lifestyles.
10. Upskill builders, suppliers and real estate agents on benefits (economic etc) for their businesses in a Desert Smart Alice Springs.

Houses

11. Introduce Desert Smart House Rating Scheme for new and existing houses to compare energy, water and thermal performance (similar to NSW 'Basix').
12. Undertake a cost-benefit assessment of mandatory 5-star housing (Victoria identified \$200M benefit from 5-star housing)
13. Provide assistance and incentives for existing houses to be more sustainable (by 2020 Alice Springs will have 10,000 dwellings – 8,000 of these already exist)
14. Mandatory Desert Smart House Rating and disclosure at sale or lease of homes, to create a market value for extra stars and promote efficiency renovations pre-sale.
15. Arrange lived-in demonstration houses and design/build competitions, regularly opened to the public and well-monitored (e.g. Cool Living House)
16. Provide home energy audits (as per COOLmob audits), green home loans, no/low interest loans for energy/water efficient products (as per existing 24-month no-interest loans for white goods). Government contribute if whole-of-society cost-benefit proven.
17. Set stretch targets for uptake of Desert Smart hardware (e.g. 90% solar hot water, 100% roof insulation)
18. Housing Commission homes to be insulated, ceiling fans & roof ventilators added, solar hot water (currently none of 1,000 Territory Housing dwellings are insulated, see 2004 report 'Energy Efficiency opportunities for Public Housing in Alice Springs').
19. Use thermal images of buildings to target cost-effective central Australian solutions (e.g. shaded 'skin' walls on sunny western walls)

Commercial buildings

20. New commercial buildings constructed to minimum 4 star Green Star rating (as per new Civic Centre)
21. Establish 'Sustainability Fund' (low interest) available to businesses that demonstrate cost-effective building/energy/water retrofits. Repayments back into revolving fund.
22. Audits of commercial buildings, briefings to CEOs and finance officers on cost-benefits of energy/water retrofits. Refer them to 'Sustainability Fund'.
23. Retrofit an existing commercial building to use 90% less water and 70% less power (as per '60L'building in Melbourne). Promote Centre for Remote Health, Civic Centre, etc.
24. Construct Desert Knowledge Precinct as best-practice showcase. Closely monitor and promote outcomes.
25. Develop commercial building energy management processes so owner-occupiers and tenants can readily access information and techniques to reduce energy/water use.

Government buildings

26. Conduct energy & water audits of all govt-leased buildings in Alice Springs, then work pro-actively with financial managers to determine cost-benefits and allocate finances to enact programs. Monitor and report to all NTG agencies (run an interdepartmental competition).

27. Specify minimum energy and water efficiency requirements for Government leased buildings in Alice Springs.

28. Government commit 5% of energy & water costs per leased building to implement tenant-controlled sustainability retrofits

29. Create, upskill, support and reward 'Energy & Water Action Teams' of staff in govt-buildings.

Water

30. Enact major water efficiency program in Alice Springs (as per 2003 Alice Springs Water Efficiency report) including stretch targets for total consumption

31. Modify Power Water's business structure and Community Service Obligation payments to create a business case for PW to pursue energy and water efficiency.

32. Modify water tariff structures to reward water efficient customers (e.g. two tier tariff – does NOT mean increasing total bills for majority of customers)

33. Introduce water restrictions to stop water wastage (hosing driveways etc). Erect a daily water usage gauge on Town Council lawns

34. Optimize 'water sensitive urban design' elements of new & existing subdivisions

35. Continue developing options to supplement/substitute drinking water (current Roe Ck aquifer, Town Basin, treated effluent injected under AZRI, rainwater, greywater)

36. Create a water conservation challenge amongst Desert Knowledge towns

37. Provide home garden water audits for high water users

38. Arrange Open Days of well-presented water efficient gardens in Alice Springs

39. Develop a Desert Smart plant labelling scheme for water efficient plants at nurseries

40. Present 'mantlepiece awards' for low or reduced water users. Make prestigious.

41. Research and implement new irrigation regimes to reduce sports ground water use

42. Promote and resource Waterwise schools program including benchmark targets and upskilling of teachers, students and groundsmen.

43. Create public art with a water efficiency theme

Energy

44. Identify energy efficiency opportunities for Alice Springs'

45. Pursue 'Solar City' theme for Alice Springs (even if Fed funding is not obtained)

46. Install smart meters to all metered connections then upskill, educate and enthuse users to reduce total energy use and peak use

47. Install a peak demand indicator on the Town Council lawns (summer only)

48. Introduce multi-tariff energy pricing to encourage energy conservation

49. Modify Power Water's business model as per 31 to encourage energy efficiency.

50. Reduce peak energy demand at power station to 20% above average

51. Commercial users reduce peak power demands and shift consumption to off peak periods via financial incentives, 'Sustainability Funds', input of employees ideas.
52. Develop financial mechanisms to increase grid-connected PV systems on roofs.
53. Make solar installations numerous and visible around Alice Springs (e.g. solar street lights, centrally located Solar Systems dishes)
54. Set a renewable energy target of 10% for Alice Springs, focused on solar technologies. Offer Green Power to Alice Springs energy customers
55. Promote and conduct home energy audits (as per COOLmob audits)
56. Assess lifecycle impacts of refrigerative vs. evaporative air conditioners and promote the least impacting.
57. Conduct energy & water leaders challenge (for civic leaders plus for whole towns).
58. Establish co-generation facilities at hospital and other major institutions
59. Employ an NT Government energy conservation officer in Alice Springs, for NTG, businesses and community to access
60. Encourage 'nega-watt' enterprises that provide energy efficiency services to other businesses at a cost lower than previous supply bills
61. Alice Springs Town Council achieve milestone 5 of Cities for Climate Protection program (significant energy reductions)
62. Promote energy efficient hardware purchasing by homeowners (e.g. new 6-star fridge, timer for electric hot water system)

Waste

63. Conduct 'Scrub Up the Town' days (as per Tangentyere proposal)
64. Declare Alice Springs a 'Plastic Bag Free' town
65. Introduce container deposit legislation (5 cent refund) to reduce litter, increase recycling and reduce landfill (NTG)
66. Expand regional litter education campaign to reduce litter in Alice Springs
67. Install drop-off points for bottles, cans, paper, plastics at suburban supermarkets (as per Bowerbird Enterprises proposal to Town Council)
68. Explore and develop local reuse/recycling options for paper, glass and plastic
69. Conduct least-cost assessment of Alice Springs landfill - enact cost-effective recycling and waste recovery options (Town Council)
70. NTG agencies and Town Council pioneer 'Green Office' initiatives to reduce paper waste and increase recycling