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**Committee for Portland calls on the government to reach agreement with Alcoa**

The Committee for Portland is urging the State and Federal Governments to reach an ongoing, sustainable agreement with Alcoa to save the Portland Aluminium smelter.

The call comes as soaring energy prices increasingly threaten the future of the smelter, which brings significant economic and social benefits to the region.

The committee, with the support of local businesses and the community, is asking the government to support the provision of electricity to the plant at a competitive price through the introduction of an easement tax, which has been used in the past, or a similar measure.

They are concerned about the economic and social cost to the community of Portland, the region and the state, if the smelter closes.

Since its inception in 1986, Portland Aluminium has been the backbone of the town, creating more than 1100 jobs. Its workers inject tens of millions of dollars into the town and the surrounding community, and half of Portland’s retail income is estimated to come from Alcoa workers.

According to The Australia Institute’s 2020 report titled *Rebooting Australian Aluminium: The Economic, Social and Environmental Potential of the Portland Smelter*, the smelter is Victoria’s largest single exporter, generating total revenues of approximately $800 million each year.

Committee for Portland Chair Steve Garner said the smelter was crucial to the future of the town.

“The Committee for Portland is committed to ensuring that Portland and surrounding areas is a vibrant and economically sustainable community in which to work, live and thrive. Portland Aluminium is a key to the achievement of our vision of the future,” Mr Garner said.

“The closure of Portland Aluminium would be devastating for Portland; the population would decline as people and families left the area in search of employment, businesses and community institutions like schools would correspondingly struggle to survive; and, community vibrancy would be diminished with fewer volunteers and less support for community institutions.”

Glenelg Council CEO Greg Burgoyne said that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Portland, and the nation, needed manufacturers like Alcoa more than ever.

“This is not the time to risk the loss of high-value jobs in our state. As the current pandemic has shown, there is a need for more manufacturing, not less, in Victoria and Australia. The closure of Portland Aluminium would be a step in the wrong direction.”

Local business owner Bruce Elijah is concerned about the impact of the closure of Alcoa on small businesses in the region.

“The future of Portland depends on Alcoa and it would certainly be devastating for businesses like the one I have run for the past 41 years if it did not get the support it needs to continue to operate,” Mr Elijah said.

“Many local families with small businesses like mine depend on the income generated by the presence of Alcoa in the region.”

The Committee for Portland also believes the closure would also squander the region’s opportunity to contribute to Australia’s green energy future. As the user of 10 percent of Victoria’s energy supply, Portland Aluminium provides the opportunity for the state to lead the way in the use of greener energy in manufacturing.

**BACKGROUND NOTE**

*The Committee for Portland is an initiative of leading business, local government and Community leaders within Portland. It was established in 2007 with the view to advocate and facilitate the future development of Portland and surrounding areas to be a vibrant and economically sustainable community.*

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