



Media Release

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Solar to power more than 30 remote NT communities

Remote communities in the Northern Territory (NT) will reap the benefits of solar power thanks to a \$55 million project funded by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and the NT Government, and managed by Power and Water Corporation (PWC).

ARENA CEO Ivor Frischknecht joined Minister for Industry, Ian Macfarlane, and Northern Territory Chief Minister, Adam Giles, to announce the project in Darwin today.

Mr Frischknecht said ARENA and the NT Government would each provide \$27.5 million to roll out cost-cutting solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to off-grid communities, where energy demand and costs are increasing.

“ARENA is very pleased to be partnering with Indigenous Essential Services – a subsidiary of PWC – to deliver this exciting project, which will see a total of 10 MW of solar PV constructed at more than 30 remote communities in the NT,” Mr Frischknecht said.

“This project will open the door to a more diverse, secure energy mix for off-grid communities, and will also create local jobs and boost skills during construction and operation.”

The majority of installations will achieve 15 per cent diesel fuel displacement from an aggregate 9 MW solar PV system; and one high penetration system at Nauiyu (Daly River) will achieve approximately 50 per cent diesel fuel displacement through a 1 MW solar PV facility using advanced technologies such as cloud forecasting and energy storage.

Mr Frischknecht said remote communities had, for too long, no option but to rely on diesel generators that were expensive to run and subject to volatile fuel prices.

“By integrating solar PV into existing diesel power stations, this project will reduce each community’s reliance on costly diesel for electricity generation,” Mr Frischknecht said.

“Importantly, the project will demonstrate the enormous advantages of solar/diesel hybrid systems in delivering cost-effective, reliable and safe power to remote locations.”

Mr Frischknecht said ARENA’s investments were geared to advance renewable energy technologies and hasten commercialisation by helping to drive down cost.

“One of our goals with this project is to show it makes good economic sense to utilise existing infrastructure in off-grid communities and to roll out robust solar PV that is suited to the environment and conditions in remote Australia.

“Not only does this project have the potential to catalyse further renewable energy investment in other isolated communities, it also sets up each of the participating communities to plug in more renewables as costs continue to decline.”

Mr Frischknecht said the project was a good example of what could be achieved when federal and state governments worked together to address Australia’s energy challenges.

“This project is part of a continuing collaboration between ARENA and PWC; it builds on the foundations of earlier joint research and knowledge sharing, and will further advance the use of renewable energy systems as part of ‘business-as-usual’ operations for off-grid locations in Australia and beyond.”

About the Australian Renewable Energy Agency

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) was established by the Australian Government as an independent agency on 1 July 2012 to make renewable energy technologies more affordable and increase the amount of renewable energy used in Australia. ARENA invests in renewable energy projects, supports research and development activities, boosts job creation and industry development, and increases knowledge about renewable energy.

About Power and Water Corporation

The Northern Territory's Power and Water Corporation (PWC) provides electricity, water and sewerage services across 1.3 million square kilometres to four major regional areas, including the capital city of Darwin, as well as 72 communities and 66 outstations. PWC has more than 890 staff living and working in the NT including 208 relief and full time Essential Services Operators living in remote Indigenous communities who are support by the Corporation's Remote Operations Team. PWC owns more than 50 mini-grid power systems across the NT, supplying electricity to remote Indigenous communities. These power systems rely primarily on diesel fuel, with a combined capacity of over 74MW.