



Australian High Commission
Solomon Islands

MEDIA RELEASE

CLEAN ENERGY FUELS NEXT-GEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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Last week, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong announced more than SBD3 billion (AUD550 million) in new grant financing for infrastructure in the Pacific, with a continuing focus on climate resilience and renewable energy.

But Solomon Islands doesn't have to wait for those new projects to come online – because locally, Australia is already leading the use of clean, alternative sources of energy on public infrastructure projects.

At the soon to be opened Naha Birthing and Urban Health Centre, 350 solar panels will power the centre's daytime energy needs for free.

New markets in Buala, Malu'u and Seghe also have solar power systems, ensuring vendors and the public have a safe, user-friendly space to market and overnight in.

The completed Buala Market solar power system produces 29 kilowatts of power, with battery storage supplying essential lighting for up to one week during prolonged rainy conditions.

Australia's High Commissioner to Solomon Islands, Jeff Roach, said both countries were committed to reducing global emissions, with Australian-supported infrastructure helping Solomon Islands meet its Paris Agreement targets.

"Next generation solar, wind, hydropower and batteries are powering the world with clean, reliable energy," Mr Roach said.

“Green power not only makes good climate sense, it reduces the operating cost of infrastructure and lowers Solomon Islands’ exposure to global fuel prices. This means government can spend less on power bills and more on frontline services.”

Tunnel boring at Solomon Islands’ first hydropower scheme, the Tina River Hydropower Development, will soon commence. The completed project is set to deliver reliable power to Honiara, further reducing power bills for households, government and business.

Australia is funding the construction of 22km of transmission lines to connect the hydropower site to Honiara’s electricity grid, as well as constructing project office buildings and access roads. This represents Australia’s largest climate financing investment in the Pacific, delivered in partnership with international development banks.

High Commissioner Roach said Australia’s commitment to high quality, climate smart infrastructure meant taking the time to understand the environmental impact of new infrastructure developments, as well as reducing the impact of our changing climate on infrastructure.

“With the Naha Birthing and Urban Health Centre, we’ve worked with communities, health professionals and building experts to design a health facility with shading from the hot sun, cooling cross-ventilation, and garden spaces. The building will stay cooler for longer and have a lower energy use than traditional buildings.”

The Good Samaritan Hospital in Guadalcanal has recently installed a solar-battery-diesel system with Australia’s support.

Serving over 60,000 people, including maternal health and childcare for over 21,000 women, the innovative hybrid system is yet to use diesel power, providing increased energy security at the same time as lowering power bills.

Mr Roach said Australia would continue to support clean energy and climate smart infrastructure across the Pacific.

“Renew Pacific is a AUD75 million program launched last year. It is already rolling out off-grid renewable energy infrastructure projects in Solomon Islands, working with local suppliers to upskill the sector in delivering and maintaining renewable energy solutions.”

“When put together, these investments reflect Australia’s long-term commitment to sustainable infrastructure, delivering long-term benefits for Pacific governments and Pacific communities.”

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PHOTOS:



Photo 1 – The solar and battery system at Buala Market will support clean, renewable power to essential services event during extended periods of rain.



Photo 2 – Building shading and cross-ventilation will keep Naha Birthing and Urban Health Centre cool, while 350 solar panels installed on the roof will power its daytime energy needs.



Photo 3 – Australia is working with local suppliers to ensure Solomon Islands has the workforce to install and maintain solar power systems.



Photo 4 - The hybrid solar-battery-diesel system has produced reliable and free power for the hospital since being switched on.