

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to Minister for Renewables and Energy:

Renewable energy in remote communities

In April 2021 the NT Government announced a \$2 million fund to Indigenous Essential Services to enable a two stage procurement process for new renewable energy assets in remote communities across the NT. Its stated aim is to achieve private investment in the order of \$400 million in renewable energy generation.

In order to do this it has been suggested that the existing diesel power stations in these communities, and other energy distribution assets, would be included in the offering to private entities.

1. Please advise whether existing energy generation assets will be sold off as part of the proposed procurement process and if so, how this privatisation of remote power generation assets doesn't conflict with commitments to retain public ownership of the Territory's energy networks?
2. Please advise what the roles of PwC and Indigenous Essential Services will be in the procurement process?
3. Please advise whether any consultation with stakeholder groups including land councils, the Electrical Trades Union, or other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations has taken place, or is proposed to take place, to inform the proposal for private investment procurement?
4. Please advise on proposed timelines in relation to tender release and procurement processes?

Pre-paid metering and solar power connections on low-income households

Increasing numbers of low-income households across the Northern Territory are attempting to reduce their power bills by installing rooftop solar on their homes. However, these customers (a large majority of whom are Indigenous Territorians) are being advised by PwC that they will not be approved to export additional solar power back to electricity networks and must only connect on a 'no-export' agreement.

5. Please advise why customers with pre-paid meters are not entitled to the same conditions of connection as other customers within the Territory's regulated electricity networks, and how these disparities are being addressed?

6. Why has Power and Water instigated caps on the installation of solar systems in remote communities such as restricting community stores, organisations and other businesses from installing rooftop solar?

Review of Solar SetUp Program

Power and Water Corporation reports indicate that the solar SetUp program has failed to achieve savings for Power and Water Corp and has instead suffered a significant financial loss.

7. Please confirm the amount of money lost under the SetUp program and;
8. Please advise how much of this loss is attributable to the fact that the SetUP solar arrays have been poorly designed and integrated with the existing diesel power plants in host communities, requiring the systems to be switched off during peak solar production?
9. Please provide a breakdown of solar curtailment in each of the SeTUP host communities?

Darwin – Katherine Network

Large scale **solar arrays** such as those at Katherine, Batchelor and Manton Dam have been recently constructed.

10. Please confirm the current status of these **Solar Farms**?
11. Please explain the current challenges the Northern Territory Government faces with the onset of more 'before the meter' renewable energy generation and how the stability of the Darwin - Katherine is affected.
12. Please advise of identified risks to 'system security' with more renewable energy coming onto the system and how these are being addressed?

Electricity Market requirements vs Generation Operational needs

The Electricity Market and the optimum operational configuration of generation assets have different priorities in being able to meet their respective requirements/objectives.

13. Please advise how Market requirements and Generation Operational needs are prioritised to ensure that generation assets are protected and run in their most efficient configurations?
14. Please advise who has the final say in Generation merit order - The Electricity Market or Operations?

15. Please advise any challenges being experienced in both satisfying the Electricity Market and Generation providers?
16. Please advise of any identified or potential risks to 'system security' in relation to Electricity Market influences on the operation of generation assets?