

07 July, 2010

New Zealand is to help fund construction of a solar power plant in Tonga, Foreign Minister Murray McCully announced today.

"This is a practical example of New Zealand supporting Tonga's drive to increase the use of renewable energy, and to reduce its reliance on diesel-generated power", said Mr. McCully, who is currently in Nuku'alofa.

"The plant will be built and operated by Meridian Energy, with the power sold to Tonga's state-owned power company, Tonga Power Limited, under a long-term purchase agreement.

"The construction of the 1 mega watt plant will meet up to five percent of the electricity needs of the main island of Tongatapu. It also supports the Tongan Government's 10-year Energy Road Map strategy to move away from expensive, imported fuels towards renewable energy sources."

Meridian is currently undertaking a survey of the proposed site to determine its suitability. Over the next six months, there will be detailed design work and negotiations between Meridian and Tonga Power Limited over the pricing under the power purchase agreement.

The parties are hoping that construction can start early in 2011, with completion later the same year.

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NZ to fund construction of Solar Power plant

Wednesday, 07 July 2010 16:37 - Last Updated Wednesday, 04 January 2012 22:58

Issued by the: Ministry of Information and Communications, Nuku'alofa, 2010. Media Statement for the Hon. Murray McCully, New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs on his Tonga visit and meeting with Mr. Peter McGill, CEO of Tonga Power Ltd.