



Papua new guinea australia solar power

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During a state visit with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Canberra on Feb 8, Papua New Guinea (PNG) Prime Minister James Marape welcomed Australia's recent completion of the construction of two new solar farms in West Sepik and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

The Aitape (West Sepik) and Arawa solar farms will provide electricity to more than 50,000 households and both leaders expressed looking forward to continuing a pipeline of solar farms and household solar projects in 2024, including in Central, Madang and West New Britain Provinces.

Under the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP)'s Pacific Climate Infrastructure Financing Partnership, a contribution is also being made to a new solar entrepreneurs' partnership, which is expected to deliver rural renewable energy for up to 4,000 households in the Milne Bay and West New Britain Provinces.

The AIFFP is providing a \$229 million (USD150 million) grant and concessional loan package to PNG to support the repair and upgrade of key energy assets, confirmed during Marape's visit to Australia.

The commitment includes upgrades to the Port Moresby grid, where the focus is on installing new capacitor banks and transformers at crucial substations to strengthen power stability, mitigating instances of power outages in the region.

Previous talks in January between the PNG Minister for International Trade and Investment, Richard Maru and the former Australian High Commissioner to PNG Jon Philip saw Maru ask for help to fund the development of hybrid electricity systems, especially solar farms, in areas using expensive diesel generators, like Manus, New Ireland and East and West Sepik provinces.

Currently only 20% of residents in PNG are connect to electricity with the government's being 70% of the population by 2030, which was bolstered late last year during the signing of an agreement to establish the 5 MW East New Britain solar farm and storage project on 10 hectares at Wairiki.

Australia has committed \$350 million in climate infrastructure for the Pacific region generally, including \$75 million for a program for off-grid and community scale renewable energy in remote and rural parts of the Pacific.

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