

24 July 2012. His Majesty King Tupou VI [commissioned the first Solar Generation Facility](#), 'Maama Mai', located at 'Anana, Ma'ufanga, during a dedication ceremony to mark this important milestone for Tonga.



'Maama Mai', literally to mean 'Let there be Light', is a biblically inspired and symbolic name bequeathed to the newly constructed facility by His Majesty King Tupou VI.

This new facility will meet up to five percent of the electricity needs of the main island of Tongatapu and also supports the Tongan Government's 10-year Energy Road Map (TERM) strategy to move away from expensive, imported fuels towards renewable energy sources.

Currently Tonga relies almost wholly on costly imported diesel to power its electricity networks on four of its largest islands and the Maama Mai project, the first of its kind in the Kingdom of Tonga.

This \$7.9 million (approximately TOP\$12 million) project funded by the New Zealand Aid, is one of the Government of Tonga's dedication to providing access to an energy source that is clean, secure, safe but cheap.

Dedication ceremony

The ceremony was hosted by the Chief Executive of the Tonga Power Limited, Mr. John van Brink.

Amongst those present at the commission were New Zealand High Commissioner to Tonga, HE Dr. Jonathan Austin, who joined the delegations from the Pacific Mission 2012 and other leading dignitaries from Australia, Japan and the People's Republic of China.



After hymn and scripture readings by the Public Enterprises Director, Mr. 'Inoke Finau Vala, and Tonga Power Limited, Power Generation Manager, Mr. Michael Lani 'Ahokava, the Minister for Public Enterprises, [Hon. Clive Edwards](#) greeted their Majesties, the Prime Minister and invited guests.

"This project is a major and necessary tool to the improvement of the demand for electricity consumption which plays a significance role in the livelihood of the people, businesses and Government in the Kingdom," stated the Minister for Public Enterprises.

"In 2011, the Government identified electricity expenses for the Kingdom, at 9.5% GDP for power and fuel expenses, and since then the Government have been instigated to pursue its TERM goals for immediate development of renewable energy sources," he added.

Foreseeable future reductions

This renewable energy facility will provide 4% of the power demand for the people of Tongatapu.

Power prices are expected to reduce by 5.79 % to 85 cents in coming months. Before July 2012, the rate was 92 seniti, and by next month, it is expected to undergo further reductions to 85 seniti.



Tonga on its way to meeting 2012 50% reduction

The Pacific Mission 2012 who arrived in Tonga on Monday July 23 is a delegation led by the New Zealand Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Rt. Hon. Murray McCully. Five of these delegations are parliamentarians and two resident Ambassadors to New Zealand from France and Israel, who came with the Minister and Meridian Energy Chief Executive, Mr. Mark Binns in the Tonga tour.

The fifty-member delegations are representatives from Government and private sector who will engage their Tongan counterparts on issues such as tourism and infrastructure, including renewable energy.

At the dedication ceremony, the [Rt. Hon. Murray McCully](#) said that, "Tonga is to be congratulated for completion of this first project- of such a scale and type in the region."

"This is a significant step but only a first step - we are pleased that Tonga has reached this important milestone but this is not a cause for compliancy but for ambition -Tonga is in a significant journey to reach the 50% target and New Zealand have the capacity to get things done and will be a partner to for Tonga to make this happen," pledged the Foreign Minister.

"Tonga's Prime Minister, Lord Tu'ivakano and his Government are to be congratulated for their leadership, having been a recent member of the IRENA, and pushing forward with the

implementation of its [energy Roadmap \(TERM\)](#)," the Minister added.



Leading Renewable Energy sources in the Pacific

The project is a partnership between the Tonga Power Limited, the Government of Tonga through the Tonga Energy Road Map - Implementation Unit and the renewable energy developer Meridian Energy who constructed the Solar Facility with the support of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

Meridian manages and develops some of New Zealand's most iconic wind and hydro assets , with its most recent grid-connected solar facility based in the US in California, the Chief Executive of the company, [Mr. Mark Binns](#) said that, "The Meridian Energy is proud of its first closer to home project, the 'Maama Mai.'"

Having proud to deliver Tonga's project, Mr. Binns also added that, "Solar is here today - and is part of a mainstream technology - the Meridian is looking forward to work with the Tonga Power

in next 5 yrs to meet their 50% renewable objective."

Tonga Power Limited Board of Directors Chairman, Mr. Carl Sanft and Tonga Power Chief Executive, Mr. John van Brink are pleased with the completion of this first project and anticipate further negotiations with donor partners for development of solar powers facilities in the Vava'u and 'Eua islands in the near future.

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