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Solar farm jobs on offer

Genex recruiting 65 workers for Kidston project



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SIXTY-FIVE jobs are up for grabs as construction of a large-scale North Queensland solar farm gets under way.

ASX-listed company Genex Power announced in February it had successfully financed \$130 million for phase one of the Kidston Solar Project, based at a former gold mine.

Executive director Simon Kidston yesterday told the *Bulletin* the company had already hired 20 staff to work on construction at the site, 270km northwest of Townsville, and was recruiting another 65.

"A lot of them are coming from Townsville, others from towns like Einasleigh, Georgetown and Mareeba," he said.

Recruiter WorkPac has advertised on Seek for crane operators, riggers, trades assistant, forklift operators, trailer drivers and telehandlers. The contract roles are for Townsville residents willing to work bus-in, bus-out on a four-week-on, one-week-off roster.

Mr Kidston said it was a great opportunity to work on a unique project.

"It's the highest solar resource of any project in the country. We're creating a world-first renewable energy hub," he said.

"It's a groundbreaking project. We've got people all around the world looking at it."

Mr Kidston said the company had already completed

substation works and expected to begin solar panel installation from May. The farm is expected to begin commissioning power from November.

"The project's going really well, it's on budget and on time. We weren't impacted by the cyclone, construction carried on," he said.

Mr Kidston said once construction was completed, most likely in January next year, eight to 10 maintenance crews

would be employed at the site for the next 30 years.

Townsville Chamber of Commerce president Troy Popham said he was pleased Genex was sourcing local labour for the Kidston project.

"It's a great announcement to help local unemployment, it's another good project for North Queensland," he said.

"Townsville's ideally placed ... it makes sense for families to base themselves here."

Genex is working to fund phase two of the project, a 270MW solar operation and pumped storage hydro station worth about \$300 million.

Mr Kidston said construction of phase two would create "hundreds of jobs on site".

Mr Popham said the project was a sign of an economy in transition. "If we support the next stage of the project, we know there will be good downstream economic benefits for the region," he said.

Phase one is predicted to in-

crease total renewable energy generation in Queensland by 5.5 per cent.