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BUSINESS INSIGHT



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With hydro and solar power projects on line the region flexes its muscles

Northern powerhouse

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THE FAR North's status as a renewable energy source is growing as a mega hydropower project surges forward.

Genex Power Limited has this week completed the Technical Feasibility Study for its \$300 million Kidston pumped storage hydro project at a former gold mine 400km southwest of Cairns.

The project is now fully designed with construction flagged to begin late next year.

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ARENA CEO IVOR FRISCHKNECHT

Genex executive director Simon Kidston said the TFS finalisation was a “major milestone” with the company now turning its attention to financial arrangements.

“Between now and financial close we will put in place various contracts with various partners,” he said. “A lot of logistics and subcontractors will come from Cairns or Townsville, most likely a combination of the two.

“North Queensland has the best solar resources in the country.”

Mr Kidston said construction of the “significant” hydro project, which will have a 250MW generation capacity, could create up to 300 jobs and take about two years to complete.

When fully operational, the



DAM FINE: The upper reservoir of the proposed Kidston pumped storage hydro project, which is a step closer to powering up the Far North.

Picture: Supplied

mega-facility could power up to 100,000 homes.

The hydro project is being coupled with a large-scale solar operation, worth more than \$120 million.

Construction of the 50MW solar farm is set to begin before the end of this year.

The Australian Renewable Agency is providing up to \$4 million funding to support the

hydro storage project. “This is a very positive milestone and a springboard for Genex to develop and finance the full-scale project,” ARENA chief executive Ivor Frischknecht said.

“The favoured design would be capable of rapidly delivering enough electricity into the grid to power over 100,000 homes when it's needed most. Early indications show it could pro-

vide low-cost storage that's significantly cheaper than other options such as batteries. It comes at a time when cost-effective storage options are becoming increasingly important as more large-scale renewable energy generation enters the national electricity market.”

The plant is designed to pump water into an upper storage reservoir through the day

or overnight when prices are low, then release it into a lower reservoir to generate power during periods of high demand.

Construction is set to begin next month on the Tablelands' \$380 million Mt Emerald Wind Farm and two large-scale solar farms near Lakeland, 250km northwest of Cairns, are also in the pipeline.



MILESTONE: Simon Kidston.