

News

**Solar projects keep containers coming**

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THE first of an expected 6000 containers carrying millions of panels for solar projects across North Queensland have begun arriving at the Port of Townsville.

The work is involving three shipping companies, two Townsville stevedores and several transport operators who will handle and haul the containers to sites throughout the region.

About \$1.5 billion worth of renewable energy projects are being developed this year at centres including Collinsville, Mt Emerald, Lakeland, Normanton, Kidston, Hughenden, Rollingstone and Townsville.

Materials mostly are being shipped from Chinese factories producing 60,000 container-loads of solar panels a year but some technology is also coming from Europe and the United States.

The first 200 containers destined for FRV's Clare Solar Farm and Genex's Kidston solar project have been arriving over the past few weeks, while hundreds more are expected soon for Sun Metals solar farm at its Townsville zinc refinery.

Port of Townsville trade development manager Maria James said she was delighted the solar project developers had chosen Townsville as the major import hub.

She said the port had provided extra land for storage to handle the influx of containers – which at 6000 was around 10 per cent of annual handling.

"These projects will result in excellent economic benefits and create more than 300 local jobs," she said.

Stevedores Townsville Bulk Storage and Handling and NSS said each ship was carrying between 50 and 200 container loads of materials for solar projects.

TBSH general manager Mark Zwisler said each 100 MW of panels required between 1200 and 1300 containers.

"It certainly keeps our guys employed. Every little bit of cargo helps the local economy," Mr Zwisler said.

Panels for the Sun Metals project, which has been increased in size during detailed design, are expected to arrive in the next couple of weeks.

Sun Metals director Kathy Danaher said it was now a 125MW (AC) project with a budget around \$200 million where it was originally proposed at 115MW and \$182 million.

She said around 310 construction jobs would be created during the peak period. Meanwhile, Genex has welcomed a State Government announcement to study development of transmission infrastructure for renewable projects. Genex executive director Simon Kidston said transmission was a key piece of the puzzle to develop Kidston's next stages of a 250MW pumped storage hydro project and a further 270MW of solar to add to its 50MW first stage.