



Darwin Airport Goes Solar

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Darwin's airport will be flying on solar power by early next year, when Australia's biggest private solar farm is switched on.

Work has started on the project after a tender was awarded to national engineering and construction services company UGL to design, deliver and install a large solar farm on airport land.

The bank of 16,000 solar panels will provide a quarter of the airport's energy needs, or the equivalent of powering 1000 Darwin households.

NT Airports has pioneered the use of renewable energy in the Territory, with Alice Springs Airport almost entirely solar-powered and a solar farm planned for Tennant Creek Airport.

Alice Springs won the 2014 Airport of the Year Award for its innovative solar project, with solar panels are mounted on shelters in the long-term carpark.

The Darwin solar project will be one of the largest photovoltaic systems in Australia, the largest solar project in the Top End and one of the largest privately-funded projects in Australia.

Worth \$13 million, including work done by Darwin International Airport to prepare the site, the project is due to be completed by early March next year.

"The Darwin solar project is a chance for the airport to invest in the Territory's economic future while leading the way on the commercial use of renewable energy," Acting CEO of NT Airports Tom Ganley said.

"Although it is a major investment for us, the project will provide longer-term returns in energy cost savings and we hope will set an example for other corporate investment in renewable energy projects," he said.

"Darwin International Airport uses most of its electricity in the middle of the day, when consumption peaks at 5 MW," Mr Ganley said. "Demand is projected to grow to 6 MW by the end of 2016 as new developments come on line across the airport."

"The 4 MW PV solar farm will offset about two-thirds of our peak load, or roughly a quarter of the airport's total energy consumption a year," he said.

The solar farm is expected to provide cost savings of \$1.5 million a year on the airport's power bills, based on current peak tariff rates.

The Darwin project will see four banks of arrays supporting 16,000 Q CELL photovoltaic (PV) panels, a product suited to withstand the Top End's cyclonic conditions.

The solar farm is on six hectares of airport land not needed for aviation activities and has an expected life span of 25 years.

Work on the project includes earthworks, stormwater drains, access roads and solar modules.

Alice Springs-based CAT Projects is Superintendent for the project. Specialist solar advice will be provided by consulting firm Coronium.

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