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A Greener North Australia

The Daly River community in the Northern Territory will be less reliant on diesel thanks to a new project targeted at increasing solar penetration in remote towns and communities.

Australian Solar Institute (ASI) Executive Director Mark Twidell said ASI is providing \$500,000 to the Northern Territory's Power and Water Corporation to investigate ways to increase solar energy generated electricity in Daly River.

"In partnership with the local community and Charles Darwin University, PWC will undertake a feasibility assessment and develop a Solar/Diesel Mini-Grid Handbook, paving the way for roll out across the Territory," Mr Twidell said.

"There are over 52 isolated diesel mini-grids throughout the Northern Territory, servicing remote Indigenous communities that could benefit from this project and solar's clean, readily available electricity."

Power and Water Corporation General Manager Remote Operations Darryl Day said it will aim to increase solar penetration on the Daly River grid through two mechanisms: generator optimisation and load management.

"We will challenge traditional operating principles of diesel generators, such as the need to keep a minimum diesel input, to optimise the solar output," Mr Day said.

"Through load management, we will work to show solar output can be matched to consumer demand in real time, increasing its attractiveness as an alternative to diesel.

"Our learnings will be recorded in a Handbook that will help utilities to make informed project planning and design decisions."

Mr Twidell said mini-grid solar systems are often located in areas with optimal solar resources, and can provide reliable power at a price competitive with diesel.

"Ultimately this project will reduce reliance on diesel generation, reduce remote community vulnerability to rising diesel fuel costs and improve energy security," Mr Twidell said.

The Australian Solar Institute is a \$150 million commitment by the Australian Government to develop photovoltaic and concentrating solar power technologies. By 1 January 2013, ASI will join the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, part of the Australian Government's \$17 billion commitment to renewable energy. Further information about ASI at www.australiansolarinstitute.com.au