

Whitsunday region coal town, Collinsville goes solar

John McCarthy, The Courier-Mail
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A \$100 million solar power station will begin construction at the coal town of Collinsville within weeks providing 120 construction jobs and 20 in operation.

Developer Ratch Australia Corporation said it had reached a financial decision on the 42.5 megawatt project with its 180,000 panels and the company would break ground before the end of the month.

The project is near the defunct coal fired power station and will generate enough power for 15,000 homes.

Ratch's executive general manager of business development Anthony Yeates said the company had been working on redevelopment options for the site for a long time and it was exciting to see it all come together.

"This significant milestone means we can now get on with construction of this project and if all goes to plan it will be generating electricity within roughly 12 months from now," he said. Mr Yeates said Ratchet had also signed a long-term grid connection agreement with Ergon Energy Queensland to have the project connected to the national electricity grid. It had also signed all the financing documents required to raise debt finance for the project. The Federal Government's Clean Energy Finance Corporation had committed \$60 million in debt to the project.

"It is really satisfying to get this project underway after such a long development process. We first started looking at solar power options for the site back in 2010 under the old Solar Flagships program" Mr Yeates said.



An artists impression of RATCH's solar farm at Collinsville, with the former Collinsville power station in the middle.

“After considering lots of alternatives, we will be building a large array of solar PV panels that will generate electricity in essentially the exact same manner as the solar panels that are installed on house rooftops.”

CEFC Large-Scale Solar Program Lead Gloria Chan said her organisation was particularly excited about the potential for this project to showcase how old power station sites could be repurposed as new renewable energy bases, benefiting from existing infrastructure, while helping to transform Australia’s energy mix.

The project is expected to be operational by June 2018 and produce enough energy to meet the needs of almost 15,000 homes.

Mr Yeates confirmed many opportunities would be provided for local workers and suppliers. He said the project would have a peak construction workforce of around 120 and employ two permanent staff once complete. Up to 20 staff will be needed to clean the solar panels as required.

Ratch is also currently developing the 180 MW Mount Emerald Wind Farm near Mareeba which is due for completion in September next year.

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/sun-shines-on-revival-of-whitsunday-region-coal-town-collinsville/news-story/49d7cabf1c391a15f5efe882fbec67a7>