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## **POWERING QUEENSLAND'S REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

Two of Australia's most remote Indigenous communities are a step closer to finding long-term sustainable energy solutions.

Hon Warren Entsch MP Member for Leichhardt said "Muralug (Prince of Wales) Island in the Torres Strait and Napranum in Cape York will be the focus of studies investigating and demonstrating how microgrids can supply reliable electricity, improve quality of life, boost resilience and allow the communities to respond locally to climate change by reducing their reliance on fossil fuels".

Microgrids are small, localised power grids that operate independently to provide an environmentally friendly, reliable power supply. They can be made up of power sources including solar, wind, wave and waste to energy systems, and usually incorporate battery energy storage.

The Far North Queensland-based partnership, EnergyConnect has been awarded \$1,732,940 of Commonwealth funding to undertake the two-year feasibility project.

"We are greatly looking forward to working closely with the communities of Napranum and Muralug, just as we are currently working with the Yarrabah township, just south of Cairns. We will be investigating community build, own and operate microgrid solutions for both communities, neither of which is connected to the national grid," said EnergyConnect spokesperson Nikki Huddy.

Torres Shire Council Mayor, Vonda Malone said Muralug Island is home to fewer than 100 residents who are currently reliant on household scale generators, adhoc solar panels, battery systems and LPG for their energy needs, largely at their own cost.

"This study will explore local solutions to ensure Muralug residents have equitable access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy in line with the nearby communities within Torres Shire" she said.

Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council CEO Janelle Menzies said the community, near Weipa, relies on Rio Tinto for its energy supply and is facing an uncertain future, with mining operations expected to cease within 10 years.

"This project will pave the way for Napranum to decouple from the Weipa power system, securing the community's future through independent electricity generation that will hopefully lead to local employment and a reduced impact on the environment," she said.

The project will entail community engagement to identify energy options, assess of energy demand and new energy supply options, identifying sustainable employment and funding options, and in the case of Napranum consideration about the future role of electric vehicles.

"At the end of this study, these communities will have baseline energy use data and will be empowered to make decisions about which options are most suited for a sustainable energy future," Ms Huddy said.

The project is one of 20 microgrid feasibility studies worth more than \$25.6 million funded through Round Two of the Federal Government's Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund.

It will complement EnergyConnect's current microgrid feasibility project in Yarrabah, due for completion in February 2022.

Media enquiries: Nikki Huddy 0437 673 947