

Buka Passage To Be Surveyed for Tidal Energy Potential



Australia-based companies MAKO Tidal Turbines and Kleinhardt have signed a cooperation agreement with the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), Papua New Guinea, which will see a business case and funding plan developed for a renewable-based electricity grid for the town of Buka, underpinned by tidal energy from the Buka Passage.

Under the Agreement, Sydney-based MAKO will survey the Buka Passage for its tidal energy potential and will establish a demonstration site in conjunction with local businesses.

Kleinhardt, an economic development adviser based in Cairns, Australia, will commence preparation of a business case for the upgraded grid given the key role that reliable and cost-effective electrical power will have in all the economic development projects they are helping to facilitate.

Enormous energy potential

Managing director of MAKO, Douglas Hunt, said the Buka Passage contains enormous energy potential. In fact, the preliminary estimate is that at any one time up to 35 million tonnes of water is flowing rapidly through the passage between Buka and Bougainville Islands. With the MAKO tidal turbine system, they are confident they can assess and tap into this energy to provide cost-effective and reliable renewable electricity to benefit the surrounding community.

Mr Hunt continued with stating to be pleased that the Autonomous Bougainville Government has granted a two-year exclusive mandate to bring together a group of leading renewable energy and storage technology providers to plan the region's first city-scale renewable-based electricity grid, with tidal energy from the Buka Passage as a key component.

Initially, MAKO will undertake detailed resource mapping of the Buka Passage using its proprietary systems and will separately install a tidal turbine demonstration site to provide electricity to a local shoreline business. In addition, MAKO and Kleinhardt will identify suitable partners to formulate a business case for a renewable-based electricity grid to meet the needs of the 50,000 people living in and near the town of Buka. Also, sources of funding will be investigated to ensure the electricity grid can be upgraded to meet the needs of a growing population in the region.

Benefit for local living standards

Minister for Economic Development in the ABG, Fidelis Semoso, said the ABG is happy to give support to Mako Tidal Turbines to undertake studies of the Buka Passage, to assess its potential for tidal energy generation, particularly as MAKO has agreed to share all of its data with the ABG.

If the studies find this energy potential can be unlocked, then it will change Buka town and the living standards of the people. Therefore, they really support the project, said Minister Semoso.

Mr Douglas Hunt from MAKO said they have always seen tidal energy as a means to enhance energy security and empower communities. The Buka Passage will become a regional showcase of how tidal energy can benefit coastal populations by reducing energy costs for local businesses.