



Picture: Environment Manager, Adam Connell displaying the large solar panels that power the SAVs.

Solar assisted vehicles

You may have noticed these quiet, unassuming golf carts driving around the Douglas campus in recent months. What you may not have known is the carts are predominately powered by the sun. The solar assisted vehicles (SAVs) are powered by a large solar cell on their roof allowing them to run for up to 2 weeks without being recharged.

“With the abundance of sun here in Townsville the SAVs provide an ideal, low emissions alternative to petrol driven vehicles”, said Adam Connell, Environment Manager for the Facilities Management Office.

“Instead of filling up with fuel every few days, all we need to do is park the SAVs wherever there is sun; the solar panel does the rest”.

Adam said the vehicles can be plugged into mains power to give the batteries a top up, but this is usually only done once every two weeks.

“Previously staff would need to use a petrol driven ute to get to jobs around campus, no matter how big or small. Now staff can utilise the SAVs, which means reduced greenhouse gas emissions,” Adam said.

“We now have three SAVs and have removed three petrol driven utes from our fleet”.

Not only do the SAVs reduce emissions they save money as they are much cheaper to purchase and run than traditional vehicles.

“After some initial hesitation, the vehicles are becoming popular with our staff as they provide a quick and easy means to get to jobs around campus”, Adam said.

“The compactness of the SAV’s means they can be driven on paths across campus rather than having to travel around the ring road.”

The SAVs are just one of the initiatives being introduced as part of JCU’s push to become more sustainable.

“We have some great sustainability programs running here at JCU but most people don’t know what’s happening. Part of my job is to boost the sustainability profile and implement more initiatives like this around campus”, Adam said.

Keep an eye on this site for more on what’s happening in terms of sustainability at JCU.