



Solar-powered buggies a clean, green solution

THESE quiet, unassuming golf carts have been spotted driving around James Cook University's Douglas campus but few may know the sun's rays are helping them scoot about.

The solar assisted vehicles (SAVs) are powered by a large solar cell on the roof, allowing them to run for up to two weeks without being recharged.

With the abundance of sun in Townsville, the SAVs provide an ideal, low emissions alternative to petrol driven vehicles, said Adam Connell, Environment Manager for JCU's 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 and the solar panel does the rest."

The SAVs, which have a small utility tray at the back for carrying equipment, are used by Facilities Management staff such as gardeners, plumbers, electricians, maintenance staff and project managers for getting to jobs around campus.

Mr Connell said the vehicles could 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," he said.

"We now have three SAVs and have removed three petrol utes from our fleet."

Mr Connell said as well as reducing emissions, the SAVs saved money as they were far 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. The compactness of the SAVs means they can be driven on paths across campus rather than having to travel around the ring road," Mr Connell said.

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," Mr Connell said.



JAMES Cook University Environment Manager, Adam Connell, with two of the university's solar-powered buggies

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