

Setting a new benchmark

The new solar system on top of the Ministry of Education building in Nikao captures energy from the sun and turns it into electricity – allowing the department to benefit from lower power bills.

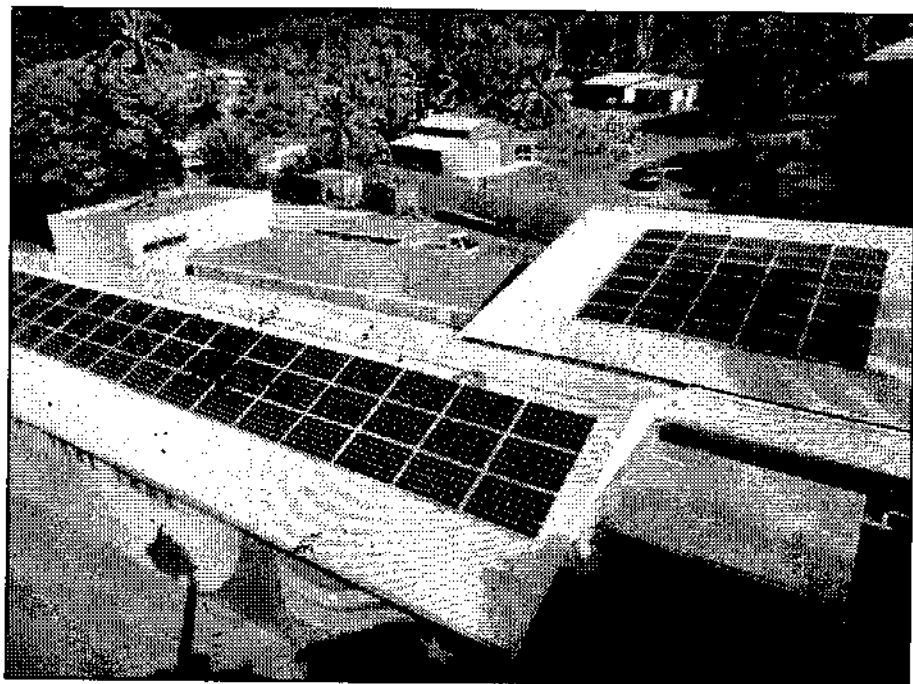
It's replicating in essence what has already happened in many homes and some businesses on Rarotonga with solar panels. Yet people are already talking about this new solar system as setting a new benchmark.

So what's different with the education system? You could also ask the identical question of the systems on top of the TAU buildings in Tutakimooa and Avatiu which share the same designer and builder and the same installer.

The quick answer is that they are larger than most. But the right answer is that those systems are the result of an accumulation of knowledge and workmanship gained from years of development in renewable energy. They are the best on the island. They have upped the standard for everybody.

And guess what? People installing larger solar systems in future will expect theirs to be just as good as the education and TAU systems.

Benchmarks also flow into performance. A local electrician said



Photovoltaic installation on TAU administration building in Tutakimooa

he picked up tips from the installers on a better way to install solar systems for his own customers. When you look at it this way in terms of a functioning model and shared experience and knowledge, it's easy to understand how the Cook Islands took a big leap forward with the handover of the completed solar system last Friday.

Clearly with two high quality systems, we are up to par in the Cook Islands with latest developments. They are basically the benchmark for us in moving forward

with larger installations.

The solar systems were contracted by NZAid in 2011, designed and built by NZ company David Reid Technology, and installed in conjunction with John Koteka Electrical Ltd. The physical installation began in August 2012 and last Friday's handover ceremony marked the completion of rooftop solar systems on the TAU building in Tutakimooa, the power station in Avatiu and the education building in Nikao.

