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$1 million wave energy project completed

HUW CUSHING

KEPPEL Prince continues to broaden its position in the manufacturing market after completing a $1 million contract for a Perth wave energy project.

Today three piles and three conductors, weighing roughly 28 tonnes each, will be transported across the Nullarbor by Portland-based company Porthaul, for Carnegie Wind Energy's Perth Wave Energy Project (PWEP)

It's the first time Keppel Prince has worked in the wave energy sector in 10 years, after previously manufacturing components for Ocean Power Technology.

The 14-metre long piles will be drilled into the ocean floor and will be tethered to submerged buoys, which capture the wave energy, delivering high pressure sea water to onshore hydroelectric turbines to create zero-emission electricity as well as desalinated water.

The electricity and water will be supplied to the country's largest naval base HMAS Stirling, on Garden Island, where the PWEP is based.

The fabrication process took roughly six weeks to complete and involved up to 20 Keppel Prince employees.

Carnegie Wind Energy planning engineer Neil De Tisi said other contracts for the project hadn't yet gone out for tender and Keppel Prince would be considered in those works.

"These guys have been excellent, not only have they delivered on schedule but the quality of the product is excellent and the relationship we've developed between Carnegie and Keppel is really coming along," Mr De Tisi said.

Keppel Prince production supervisor Stuart Batten said manufacturing the piles has a lot in common with wind tower production, plus some new challenges.

"Some of this material has been a lot bigger and heavier than what we're used to... it all had to be dead accurate, within 2mms of exactly where it needs to be, so it's actually quite technical, it's not just welding some bits of steel together," Mr Batten said.

Each of the piles required large amounts of highly skilled hand-welding, which were magnetically particle tested to ensure no leaks.

Mr Batten said the project was another example of Keppel Prince broadening its place in the market.

"Other examples are the lighting towers at the Geelong football stadium, the wind and wave energy and solar energy - we've got our fingers in lots of pies which is always great.

"It fitted in really well with two wind tower projects we were working on so we were really pleased to do it."

RIGHT: A diagram showing how the Perth Wave Energy Project will work.

KEPPEL Prince production supervisor Stuart Batten (left) hands over one of the steel piles to Carnegie Wind Energy planning engineer Neil De Tisi for a final inspection before being trucked to Perth today.

Picture: ELLY HATELEY 131004EH06

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