

Carnegie in microgrid joint venture with Lendlease

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Image: Energy Made Clean has developed a range of Utility Grade Solar and battery products which deliver reliable and low cost power.

One of Australia's biggest contractors has hopped into bed with a budding WA green energy company in a bid to tap into the rapidly growing "micro-grid" market.

Carnegie Clean Energy is believed to have struck a three-year deal with infrastructure giant Lendlease to form a 50/50 joint venture as it eyes up a market tipped to be worth \$5 billion within a decade.

The agreement will see Carnegie subsidiary Energy Made Clean partner with Lendlease to pitch for and build solar-powered energy systems that can be coupled with batteries.

And among the first opportunities that could be targeted by the new venture are "fringe-of-grid" areas in WA, which are likely to feature prominently at the upcoming State election.

Under the Barnett Government's plans to sell off 51 per cent of poles-and-wires business Western Power, \$150 million of the proceeds are to be quarantined for upgraded electricity supplies to areas at the edge of the grid. Micro-grids are looming as one of the biggest changes to the electricity system as so-called "distributed" forms of generation such as solar panels hasten a move away from traditional power plants.

They essentially involve areas that partly or completely reduce their reliance on the main electricity network through the uptake of technologies such as solar panels and batteries.

Carnegie's foray into the booming market is part of a broader push by the North Fremantle group to diversify into other areas of renewable energy.

Formerly known as Carnegie Wave Energy, the company is best known for developing one of the world's first wave energy projects off Garden Island to supply HMAS Stirling.

It changed its name last month, weeks after completing the acquisition of fellow Perth-based renewable energy player EMC for \$13 million.

EMC is also involved in several high-profile green power projects in WA, including a trial being run by State-owned provider Synergy to test large-scale battery storage in the northern Perth suburb of Alkimos.

Michael Ottaviano, Carnegie's managing director, said partnering with Lendlease would give the company a national platform to compete for projects.

Mr Ottaviano said the sector was growing rapidly as the price and capacity of battery storage systems improved and the number of households and businesses with solar panels continued to rocket.