

Ramokgopa says hospitals need micro-grid islands as answer to load shedding



By [Katja Hamilton](#)

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The electricity minister, Kgosientsho Ramokgopa today expressed his gratitude to the Chinese ambassador Chen Xiaodong whose country is working with SA to ensure that the government is able to keep its hospitals powered up.



Source: [Pexels](#)

He was speaking at the tabling of the Budget Vote which was presented at national assembly today, 31 May.

Ramokgopa said it will be thanks to micro-grid islands that the State could ensure that there is an uninterrupted supply of quality electricity to hospitals and keep the power running to their critical and strategic installations.

A micro-grid island refers to a localised electrical grid that operates autonomously and independently from the larger main power grid. It can function as a self-contained energy system, providing power to a specific area or community. Micro-grid islands often incorporate multiple energy sources, such as solar panels, wind turbines, small-scale hydroelectric generators, or even diesel generators.

The Department of Health has identified 218 hospitals in need of power supply and, of these 76, are excluded from load shedding.

"The idea is to further exclude another 46 hospitals from load shedding," Ramokgopa said. "We have done modelling and think that we have the capability to address the 137 hospitals that are remaining [in need]," he said.

To this end, the State is looking at a set of interventions on renewable energy sources which includes photovoltaic (solar) batteries and inverters for small hospitals.

"If we aggregate them we will need about R10.1bn worth of investment. If we juxtapose this with the diesel cost for small hospitals we will need to spend about R89m to buy generators and effect R3.3bn in operating costs for the purposes of running these generators."



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Ramokgopa said the State will be putting out a request for proposal before the end of July 2023 and outline a procurement process to secure the IPP (independent power producer) for micro-grids in the country.

Ramokgopa's announcement [aligns with](#) Eskom's declaration in February this year that it is deploying micro-grids that will serve as an alternative solution to addressing load shedding.

The technology will be used to complement the grid, serving as a backup electricity supply to hospitals and households.

Progress in micro-grid technology

According to the power utility, it is conducting feasibility studies at more than 80 project sites around the country.

Most of the identified sites will use solar photovoltaic (PV) as the primary source of energy and lithium ion batteries for storage capability.

Other sites will use micro wind turbines and small-scale hydro turbines, based on the most optimum energy source available.

The roll out of these projects will be phased over the next five years.

Eskom currently has four sites being powered by the microgrid technology in Ficksburg (Free State), Lynedoch (Western Cape) and Swartkop (Northern Cape), supplying renewable electricity to over 200 households, a police station and businesses in that area.

Eskom is making notable progress in this regard, with the construction of the first energy storage facility under Eskom's flagship Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) project having already begun at the Elandskop BESS site in KwaZulu-Natal in December last year.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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