

**ELECTRIC MOVE:** Dorrigo energy company installs micro-hydro system in Vanuatu

# Power to village people

DORRIGO micro-hydro company Pelena Energy has had a dramatic reversal of fortunes since being on the brink of closing down last year.

In the face of regulatory hurdles in Australia, the company has continued its work in bringing electricity generation to remote villages in the South Pacific.

The latest project has taken a Dorrigo-built turbine and control system to Vanuatu's remote Talise Village, where the system was installed and community members trained to maintain and operate the equipment.

Vanuatu's acting president and a host of government ministers were joined by Pelena's Peter Lynch, Jared Henley and Nixon Silas at an official ceremony last week.

Arriving by fibreglass canoe after a 19km trip across open ocean, the delegation was joined by about 400 community members in celebrating the milestone of having powered lights in the village.

"Micro-hydro has the grunt to allow for real development through electricity because it operates 24 hours per day without the need for batteries," Mr Lynch said.

"There are real kilowatts



**LEAP FORWARD:** Vanuatu officials and residents inspect the Dorrigo-built turbine and control system installed in Talise Village at an official start-up last week.

generated, which allows people and entrepreneurs to go to local stores and buy common appliances and tools to improve their own lives.

"Solar and wind cannot provide this because it is intermittent and requires batteries for storage.

"Batteries are too expensive, resulting in many failed

solar and wind systems throughout the Pacific and elsewhere unless heavily subsidised from outside the villages."

Mr Lynch said this stage of the project was just the generation phase and connection of the electricity to the villages was yet to start.

The end result will connect almost 340 houses,

schools, clinics, businesses and churches to the 75kW system.

Pelena Energy has delivered similar systems in the Solomon Islands and developed ways to avoid the use of bulldozers and other large plant, which is notoriously unreliable in remote tropical areas.

"We expect to gain further

projects in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in the near future," Mr Lynch said.

"The rural-focused technologies Pelena has developed and their increasing acceptance and praise overseas spurs us on to see the proposed Dorrigo Energy Centre become a reality as a hub for further rural development."