

# Western Cape initiative keeps small businesses afloat during power cuts

By [Lindsey Schutters](#)

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In a bid to support small businesses crippled by South Africa's ongoing power outages, the Western Cape Provincial Government has launched a programme to shield them from the effects of load shedding. Premier Alan Winde and Provincial Minister of Finance and Economic Opportunities, Mireille Wenger, visited the Arendsnes Trading Hub in Wellington, commending the successful installation of solar power solutions.



The Western Cape Alternative Energy Support Programme, has allocated R12.5M for Solar PV in trading and township hubs, helping 50+ businesses stay open.

In 2012, the Drakenstein Municipality made approved the use of Erf 13047 and later Erf 13046 on Wellington's Main Street to establish an informal trading market as part of the Arendsnes Development.

"This well-located site opposite a shopping centre will not only improve exposure for the traders but allow the public easy access to a growing niche in a business environment," Lourens du Toit, the portfolio holder for Integrated Economic Development and Tourism at the time, had remarked.



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The project aimed to transform an underutilised municipal asset while preserving its heritage status. Initial renovations included painting the building and paving the exterior.

Extensive discussions and agreements were reached with the Wellington Informal Traders Association to ensure a smooth relocation of traders to the Arendsnes complex.

The provincial government has allocated R12.5m to its Alternative Energy Support Programme. This initiative installs solar backup systems at trading hubs where small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) operate. Similar systems have been installed at 12 hubs across seven municipalities within the province.

## Diverse economy

"The Western Cape has a diverse economy with SMMEs at the forefront of our growth," Winde stated. "We must continue helping small business owners... because small businesses create jobs."

Wenger echoed these sentiments, emphasising the critical role SMMEs play in South Africa's economy, especially in areas outside major cities. "SMMEs are the backbone of the Western Cape economy... creating up to 70% of the jobs in South Africa," she said.

The officials highlighted that the solar energy solutions are crucial for the ongoing success of these businesses. "Many SMMEs, particularly in the informal and township economies, don't have the resources to buffer the impact of load shedding," noted Winde.

The Alternative Energy Support Programme forms part of the broader 'Growth for Jobs' economic plan. It aims to create a thriving provincial economy driven by robust job creation.

"We are determined to do everything we can to shield small...businesses from the devastating impact of power cuts," Wenger concluded.

## ABOUT LINDSEY SCHUTTERS

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