



Media Release

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Valuable collaboration advancing solar thermal industry

The Australian Solar Thermal Research Initiative (ASTRI) has held a symposium as part of its ongoing efforts to advance the concentrating solar thermal industry in Australia.

ASTRI is a collaboration of research institutions aiming to transform Australia into a global leader in solar thermal technologies. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) is providing up to \$35 million to support the \$87.3 million initiative.

ARENA CEO Ivor Frischknecht said ASTRI was at the forefront of efforts to forge strong links between researchers and industry players interested in deploying solar thermal technologies into the field.

“The symposium brought together solar thermal researchers and end users to share knowledge and discuss ways to lower the cost and improve the value and deployment of solar thermal internationally and in Australia,” Mr Frischknecht said.

“Australia has one of the best solar resources in the world and solar thermal has the advantage of being able to collect and store energy for use on demand at later times.

Mr Frischknecht said ARENA is well placed to invest in new projects with a clear pathway to commercialisation that are working towards reducing solar thermal costs.

“It is clear that ongoing support for long-term research and development and pre-commercial demonstration projects will be vital in making solar thermal energy more competitive with other sources of power generation,” Mr Frischknecht said.

“The well-attended ASTRI event highlighted the advantages of solar thermal in smoothing out peak electricity demand and as an alternative to costly network upgrades in fringe-of-grid regions.

“Over the next five years, ASTRI aims to reduce solar thermal costs to 12c per kilowatt hour through novel technologies, know-how and ground breaking research and development.”

Dr Ranga Pitchumani, Chief Scientist of the US DOE SunShot program attended the symposium and commended ASTRI for its enthusiasm, professionalism and well-articulated research propositions.

“I encourage researchers to maintain an industrial perspective and to understand how their research in each subsystem interfaces with adjacent subsystems and fits within the context of the overall concentrating solar thermal system,” Dr Pitchumani said.

Dr Luis Crespo, President of the European Solar Thermal Electricity Association also attended and commended the CSIRO-led ASTRI for delivering a well-structured program.

“ASTRI and supporting initiatives in the USA and Europe stand to play an important role in moving concentrating solar thermal technologies down the cost reduction curve as soon as possible,” Dr Crespo said.

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About ARENA

ARENA was established by the Australian Government on 1 July 2012 to make renewable energy technologies more affordable and increase the amount of renewable energy used in Australia. The Agency invests in renewable energy projects, supports research and development activities, boosts job creation and industry development, and increases knowledge about renewable energy.

About CSIRO

CSIRO, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, is Australia's national science agency and one of the largest and most diverse research agencies in the world. The CSIRO National Solar Energy Centre in Newcastle is home to some of the largest solar demonstration research facilities in the Southern Hemisphere, in both concentrating solar thermal power and photovoltaics.

About ASTRI

In its third year of operation, ASTRI is a collaboration between Australian and US researchers, and leading international and Australian solar thermal companies. ASTRI is led by CSIRO and involves six leading Australian universities, the Australian National University, Flinders University, Queensland University of Technology, University of South Australia, the University of Queensland and the University of Adelaide. The founding US Collaborators are Arizona State University, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories.