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Heating & cooling to go renewable and provide demand response

On behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has today announced \$6.5 million in funding to the Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating (AIRAH) to develop a pathway to low emissions for the Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC&R) sector.

Known as the Affordable Heating and Cooling Innovation Hub (iHub), the project aims to support energy transformation within the HVAC&R sector. As part of the three year \$18 million dollar project, AIRAH will engage with a range of industry stakeholders to trial renewable energy technologies and demonstrate how heating and cooling can be coordinated and controlled to provide demand response.

The Australian HVAC&R industry consumes around 22 per cent of all electricity produced and is responsible for around 50 per cent of peak demand on the electricity grid.

iHub will be led by AIRAH in conjunction with CSIRO, Queensland University of Technology, the University of Melbourne and the University of Wollongong. AIRAH will distribute funding to support a series of projects to demonstrate how renewable energy technology can be optimally integrated with HVAC&R equipment.

iHub is open to applications from industry participants who have suitable demonstration projects that require co-funding. Proposals will be considered under one of three activity streams: Living Laboratories, Integrated Design Studios and a Buildings to Grid Data Clearing House.

The Living Laboratories aim to test and validate innovative technologies in real-life building applications. The Integrated Design Studios program will develop a standardised design methodology through facilitated design workshops where industry practitioners, academics and students will collaborate with clients on project case studies. The Buildings to Grid Data Clearing House will deliver an open data platform for sharing data relating to the operation of HVAC&R and renewable energy equipment.

ARENA CEO Darren Miller said iHub would help integrate renewable energy into the grid.

“The HVAC&R sector is a key focus for decarbonising the built environment. The sector provides a substantial and largely untapped opportunity for enhanced demand response, load flexibility, renewable energy uptake and integration of various technologies.”

“ARENA sees iHub as a means to bring the whole HVAC&R industry together to coordinate the goal of increasing renewable energy in the sector, tying together innovation and growth opportunities arising from emerging technology and industry skills required to accelerate uptake of renewables,” Mr Miller said.

AIRAH CEO Tony Gleeson said: “The Innovation Hub for Affordable Heating and Cooling (iHub) is designed to facilitate the HVAC&R’s industry’s transition to a low-emissions future, stimulate job growth, and showcase HVAC&R innovation in buildings.”

“The objective of iHub is to support the broader HVAC&R industry with knowledge dissemination, skills development and capacity building. By facilitating a collaborative approach to innovation, iHub brings together leading universities, researchers, consultants, building owners and equipment manufacturers to create a connected research and development community in Australia.”

For further information or to submit a proposal for funding, visit ihub.org.au.