

Renewable Energy Innovation Clinic

“How can off-grid renewable energy solutions support business in remote areas?”

This is the question that was discussed at an Innovation Clinic held in Cairns on 20 February 2014. The Innovation Clinic was sponsored by the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts (DSITIA) and facilitated by the Australian Institute for Commercialisation (AIC). Innovation Clinics connect key players along a value chain to bring a diversity of views towards developing innovative solutions to industry problems. Innovation Clinics also facilitate collaborative, project-specific discussions.

Participants benefits from a series of presentations on renewable energy solutions for remote locations from industry, research and funding perspectives, covering:

Craig Chambers, GM Power Generation, AECOM provided a scene setting presentation for the Innovation Clinic, which included high-level information on the Australian market for off-grid RE. Craig presented data from recent work conducted by AECOM for the Australian Trade Commission on opportunities for investment in Australian Remote Renewables.

Mark Strizek, Managing Director, Vital Metals presented from the perspective of a remote energy end-user, discussing the Watershed Scheelite Project, a large tungsten deposit located 160km north west of Cairns and the remote energy needs of his business.

Mark Paterson, Future Energy Partnerships, CSIRO presented from the research perspective contending that the future is about the entire ‘electricity ecosystem’ including technology, regulation, economics, new business models and social license.

Frank Boland, Senior Development Manager, Infigen Energy discussed the challenges and benefits of integrating wind and solar PV energy and presented information on hybrid solar/diesel installations

James Archer, Manager Operations – Isolated Systems, Ergon Energy discussed approaches to renewable energy investments in Ergon’s isolated systems

Lyndon Frearson, General Manager, CAT Projects presented on the barriers to deployment of remote renewable energy systems, drawing on his experience managing such projects in Australia and overseas.

David Stegehuis, Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) discussed financing options for renewable energy projects, and detailed some of the lessons from the CEFC’s extensive involvement in this area.

Participants defined the energy needs of users in remote locations and identified opportunities for renewable energy to be further utilised. Whilst the technology is mature the value chains required to implement solutions are not. An important outcome of the Clinic was to enable networking and information sharing across the industry value chain.

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Following on from the Innovation Clinic, an action plan was developed to guide future initiatives in the industry. Actions include information sharing from ARENA's extensive experience in financing off-grid renewable energy projects. Additionally there was an agreement on future dialogue and information sharing between industry regulators and developers.

To find out more about other AIC Innovation Clinics and events call 07 3364 0700 or email info@ausicom.com.