

Media Release

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Collaboration Required to Succeed in Clean Energy Race

The federal government's acknowledgement last week that the national Green Emissions Trading Scheme may increase energy consumption costs in Australia adds additional pressure at a time when businesses and families are already feeling the squeeze from soaring global fuel prices. This increase is an unfortunate consequence of taking a proactive approach to combating climate change.

An opportunity exists however, for Australian businesses and researchers to take advantage of the opportunity this current situation offers and work collaboratively to develop innovative clean energy solutions that can compete with traditional energy sources.

Roaring 40s and Stanwell Corporation are just two examples of clever Australian companies that are trying to capitalise by developing innovative green energy solutions. The Australian Institute for Commercialisation (AIC) commends these companies for their innovative approaches to the global climate change and energy issues.

AIC Chief Executive Officer Dr Rowan Gilmore said while the current climate challenge presented an opportunity for Australia to step up to the ring and face our global competitors, strategic collaboration among the hundreds of disparate local players was needed to bring the industry together.

"The fact is the so-called 'clean-tech' sector is not unlike the biotech industry in the early 1980s – a number of undercapitalised, single product companies operating in an isolated context. One venture capitalist familiar with the sector has used the label 'cottage industry' to characterise it," Dr Gilmore said.

"What we can see is that those companies that are now making real commercial progress have done so by collaborating at both the technology development and commercialisation phases. No single entity can do it alone," he said.

"Collaborations are needed, to share the risk and to build scale. A good example is the \$30 million project to build a ten megawatt solar thermal power station in Cloncurry using hot rocks, where Lloyd Energy Systems is working in a consortium with SMEC and Ergon, with significant funding from the Queensland Government.

"8,000 mirrors will reflect sunlight onto graphite blocks, and water will be pumped through them to generate steam that will operate a conventional steam turbine electricity generator."

Sustainnovation Director Paul Hodgson said with escalating fuel prices, the introduction of new energy efficiency legislation and the trading scheme, the clean energy sector was about to boom.

"To fully grasp this opportunity, the industry needs to shake off its reliance on government rebates and subsidies by focusing on increasing manufacturing efficiencies, building commercial acumen and collaborating on new business models that fully outline the benefits of their technologies," Mr Hodgson said.

"It is not good enough to just expect people to beat a path to your door. The winners of this technology boom will be those that can best convert technology features into real and measurable customer benefits."

In collaboration with Education Queensland, CSIRO's Queensland Centre for Advanced Technologies (QCAT), the Queensland Resource Council and a range of schools, the AIC has helped to develop a comprehensive low emissions and energy teaching unit to ensure future generations have access to the latest information on the climate situation.

Entitled "Powerful Science: cleaning up our energy", the unit of work was developed for both upper primary and lower secondary school students as a result of an initiative in 2007 to provide world-class teaching resources for schools.

The AIC is a leading service organisation helping innovators achieve commercial success. Around Australia, the AIC helps business, research organisations and governments convert their ideas into successful outcomes. We address market gaps and accelerate the commercialisation of know how and technology that our clients have created.

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