

## **AUSTRALIAN SOLAR INSTITUTE LAUNCHED IN NEWCASTLE**

Federal Energy Minister Martin Ferguson has launched the Australian Solar Institute in Newcastle, New South Wales. The Institute is a \$100 million initiative which delivers on the Government's election commitment to fast-track solar research in Australia. "In 2007, the Australian Labor Party went to the Federal Election committed to providing \$150 million for an Energy Innovation Fund, which would include \$100 million for solar research and development," says Ferguson. "Today, I am very pleased to deliver on that promise with the official launch of the Australian Solar Institute here at its Newcastle headquarters in the CSIRO Energy Centre," he says. The Australian Solar Institute will provide vital support for researchers in the field of solar photovoltaics and concentrating solar thermal to help solar power become cost competitive with other energy sources, according to Ferguson. "The Government believes cost competitiveness is achievable and that solar power is a commercially viable energy option for the Australian community," he says. The Institute will support this innovation drive through greater collaboration between Australian and international researchers in solar energy technologies in addition to providing funding for research and development of solar thermal and solar photovoltaic technologies across Australia. As part of the initial funding for the work of the Australia Solar Institute, the Australian Government is providing \$15 million to establish three foundation projects: \$5 million to support the development of a crystalline silicon pilot line at the University of New South Wales; \$5 million to establish a state-of-the-art solar thermal tower at the CSIRO in Newcastle; and, \$5 million to assist in the establishment of a world-class process and characterisation solar research facility at the Australian National University in Canberra. Ferguson has announced that Jenny Goddard will Chair the Institute's Establishment Committee and that Dr Bruce Godfrey will commence immediately as the Institute's Interim Executive Director.

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