

## **CSIRO To Focus On Clean Coal Technologies**

The CSIRO is backing coal-friendly technologies, saying it will focus more on research into clean coal rather than renewable energy.

Australia's chief scientific organisation says it will invest \$90 million in new energy and minerals projects – including low emissions technologies such as carbon sequestration – instead of wind and solar ventures. About \$50 million will come from government funding and \$40 million from partnerships with Australia's resources and power sectors.

The organisation has also confirmed jobs will be cut from its current workforce of 6500 and traditional research projects in agriculture and manufacturing would also be scaled back.

In November, a 10-page document revealed CSIRO's shift in research priorities for 2006-07. The CSIRO will focus on cleaner coal-fired electricity, new materials such as polymers, minerals and metals, biosecurity, information technology, nutritionally enhanced food products, and coal, gas and oil exploration.

Four or five renewable energy projects will be wound up by CSIRO over the next couple of years in areas such as solar power, biological hydrogen and photo-catalytic water splitting.

CSIRO says it will proceed with major new research and development in areas such as solar thermal technology and was not abandoning the renewables field altogether.

Chief executive Geoff Garrett says industry and consumers depend heavily on coal to fire electricity and that was unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

CSIRO deputy chief executive Ron Sandland says "we can have more impact by focusing our energies more in clean coal".

Governor-General Major-General Michael Jeffery meanwhile has used his Australia Day address to call for more research and development into clean energy sources.

Major-General Jeffery acknowledged the important role that mineral resources such as coal played in Australia's economy, but warned they were finite and said alternative sources of energy should be considered.

"Our land is our golden soil, yielding mineral wealth to miners and opportunity for farmers," he says.

"Mineral resources, including offshore oil and gas reserves, generate tens of billions of dollars annually in an energy and construction-hungry world.

"But our mineral resources are not infinite. In particular we need to encourage further research and development of alternative, safe, efficient and clean energy sources."

[SOURCE ESAA NEWS]