

Media Release

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Approval for state-of-the-art solar facility

Victorian Minister for Planning and Community Development Justin Madden, has granted planning approval for Solar Systems to construct its first large-scale solar demonstration in Bridgewater, near Bendigo.

Melbourne-based company Solar systems will commence construction of the \$10 million test facility early next year, for completion in 2009. The facility at Bridgewater represents the first milestone in the scale up and reconfiguration of Solar Systems existing solar concentrator technology for large-scale power generation into the national grid. The technology demonstrated at Bridgewater will be utilised in the \$420 million, 154MW large-scale power plant in the north-west of Victoria.

The project is to be located in the outskirts of Bridgewater on 30 hectares. Two fields of rectangular mirrors called 'heliostats' will be controlled by software to track the sun and focus its light onto photovoltaic receivers installed at the top of central towers. The highly efficient receivers directly convert concentrated sunlight into electricity.

This is Australian technology: Solar Systems has developed the technology required for the photovoltaic receivers, control software and closed-loop cooling systems. Solar Systems will utilise the Bridgewater facility to test and optimise this technology for deployment of the 154MW demonstration in Victoria and for future deployment of commercial, large-scale solar projects.

Bridgewater locals have expressed great support for this world-class clean energy facility. Victorian Government planning approval for the project has been granted following an extensive period of local consultation. Solar Systems adopts an active approach to local consultation for all new projects; in Bridgewater this process included extensive discussions with local council, a drop in centre in town for community members and meetings with neighbours and local community groups.

To maximise the local appropriateness of the project, Solar Systems incorporated areas of revegetation with indigenous plant species and site screening into the facility design to enhance safety and visible amenity. In addition, Solar Systems is working to ensure locals will be aware of the opportunities for employment, contracting and services that will arise as a result of the \$10 million investment.

In parallel with the construction of this project, Solar Systems is also developing a high-tech manufacturing plant in Melbourne in order to supply the photovoltaic components for future large-scale solar projects.

Solar Systems Managing Director Dave Holland says, "the construction of this facility represents a major step on the pathway to deploying commercial, large-scale solar technology for mainstream clean power generation.

"Solar Systems' business has focussed for 17 years on commercialising concentrator solar power technology. This effort has seen smaller solar dish power stations deployed in central Australia – a market that is continuing to grow both in Australia and overseas.

"Our company's drive to develop a cost effective, clean method of electricity generation is delivering technology with enormous potential in an increasing market for low emission energy sources."

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