
NEWS

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POTENTIAL FOR GEOTHERMAL AND SOLAR

HYBRID ENERGY SOLUTIONS

The potential to combine geothermal energy with that of the sun to create “hybrid” energy solutions is being examined by one of Australia’s foremost geothermal developers, Petratherm Limited.

The ASX-listed Petratherm says combining geothermal and solar energy into a hybrid is a natural evolution for Australia’s renewable energy hungry economy and is ideally suited to the public expectations for climate-driven greener energy.

Petratherm owns the advanced Paralana geothermal project in South Australia’s northern Flinders Ranges and which is expected to provide Australia’s first commercial hot rocks electricity supply when it enters production early in 2010.

“We are examining how geothermal and solar energy technologies can be united to form a hybrid solution,” Petratherm’s Managing Director, Mr Terry Kallis, said today.

Addressing the Solar Cities Congress 2008 today in Adelaide, Mr Kallis said few other countries were blessed with Australia’s solar footprint nor the natural abundance of its hot radiogenic granites.

The address by Mr Kallis – who is also the Deputy Chairman of the new Australian Geothermal Energy Association - focused on the growing Australian geothermal sector – outlining the current state of play and enormous potential of the sector to provide low cost base load power.

“We are examining the potential of combining solar with geothermal to ‘top up’ the heat from the underground reservoir. This could reduce the capital costs of drilling and improve the overall efficiency of energy production,” Mr Kallis said.

“It is still early days but there could be significant infrastructure savings in particular by providing large-scale, base load power for remote or off-grid applications – notably in the booming mining sector”

Mr Kallis told Solar Cities Congress delegates that independent energy analysts, including the Electricity Supply Industry Association of Australia (ESAA), were tipping geothermal energy to supply 8% of Australia's total energy consumption as early as 2030 – equivalent to around 4,000 megawatts per annum.

Mr Kallis said the geothermal sector was, however, stepping rapidly up to the challenge, with more than 33 hot rock explorers now active in Australia and around 277 geothermal exploration licences granted – most of them in South Australia.

The critical project issues facing all players, however, were:

- A sufficient revenue stream that would be influenced in future by the price of carbon and competition amongst various power technologies in the national electricity market
- The significant capital cost of drilling, plant and grid connections; and
- Identifying and developing a thermal resource which offered sustained performance in temperature differential, volumes and achieved commercial rates of flow.

Petratherm (ASX:PTR) is progressing its flagship JV Paralana Project and is planning to drill its first deep well in the second half of 2008.

The project is being developed in conjunction with leading Australian energy group, the listed Beach Petroleum Limited.

Petratherm and Beach have already completed the major seismic study to determine where best to locate the 4 kilometre deep heat exchanger well.

Initial commercialisation of Paralana will involve the deployment of a 7.5 MW power station and expanding to 30 MW over time, to supply the nearby Beverley Uranium Mine

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