

UQ and UNSW named as research partners on huge solar farms

8 August 2012

The University of Queensland has been appointed the Lead Research Organisation for two large solar photovoltaic (PV) projects which will be built in the next three years in western New South Wales.

UQ will partner with the University of New South Wales in a \$40.7 million Education Investment Fund Research Infrastructure Program that will support the two projects totalling 159MW.

AGL Energy Limited was announced in June as the successful bidder for funding under the Australian Government's Solar Flagships program. First Solar will supply the PV modules and provide engineering, procurement and construction services for the projects.

The companies will receive \$129.7 million of federal government support to develop the projects. The New South Wales Government will provide \$64.9 million to support the projects, which are due for completion in 2015 and will have an estimated capital cost of \$450 million.

First Solar will design and construct the solar power plants — 106MW at Nyngan and 53MW at Broken Hill — using its advanced, thin-film CdTe PV modules.

First Solar will maintain both projects for AGL Energy for the first five years of operation.

UQ's Professor Paul Meredith said the research program — funded by the Federal Government through the Education Investment Fund — involved building a large PV pilot plant with research components focused on energy storage, plant optimisation, power systems and the impact of renewable energy on the national electricity market.

"The research will build national capacity for solar power research at the utility scale, and provide invaluable infrastructure for the broader Australian research community," Professor Meredith said.

"This will be a truly world-class facility for solar PV research."

UQ's Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Max Lu, said it was significant that UQ was forming a strategic partnership with UNSW, which had been an international leader in photovoltaic research for almost 30 years.

"UQ is making a strategic push into energy research — across the board — and renewables are a significant component of that work, which is taking place across the University and its institutes," Professor Lu said.

"We are also delighted to be working with AGL, First Solar and the NSW and federal governments on this landmark, large-scale project."

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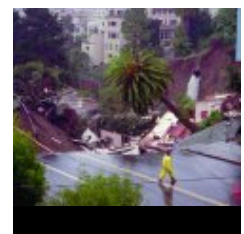
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The EIF funding will be used to build a Power Systems Interface Research Facility to investigate significant areas related to the successful integration of solar PV stations into Australia's electricity grid.

"This grant is the most significant and historically largest single investment to build a piece of power system interface research infrastructure in Australia," said [Professor Vassilios Agelidis](#), Director of the [Australian Energy Research Institute](#) at UNSW.

" It will deliver research skills and innovation towards our energy future."

[Professor Les Field](#), UNSW's Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) said the new research facility would be housed in the recently completed [Tyree Energy Technologies Building](#).

" The building, and the new power systems facility, position UNSW as a national energy research hub capable of delivering much-needed energy technologies and solutions," Professor Field said.

Announcing the Solar Flagships funding, the federal Minister for Resources and Energy, [Martin Ferguson](#), said the AGL-First Solar project was excellent value for money and gave Australia the opportunity to bring industrial-scale solar power to market.

" We have seen the cost of solar PV come down dramatically and this has allowed the Australian Government to capture this benefit and spread taxpayers' money further," Mr Ferguson said.

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Images of First Solar power plants can be downloaded here: <http://www.firstsolar.com/en/Press-Center/Media-Library>

(Sarnia project in Ontario and Copper Mountain in Nevada are similar sizes to the Nyngan and Broken Hill plants respectively.)

More information:

Resources and Energy Minister Martin Ferguson's [media release](#)

AGL Energy's [media release](#)

First Solar's [media release](#)

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