

## World expert appointed to head hot renewables initiative

**Dr Manuel J Blanco has joined CSIRO as Director of the Australian Solar Thermal Research Initiative (ASTRI). ASTRI is an AU\$87 million, eight-year international collaboration transforming the energy industry in Australia by bringing down the cost of solar thermal, a unique energy technology that can create electricity, heat and fuels.**



Credit: CSIRO

Dr Blanco, a world-renowned solar scientist with almost three decades of academic, research and development managerial experience, comes to ASTRI from Spain's National Renewable Energy Centre (CENER), where he was Director of the Solar Thermal Energy Department.

Dr Blanco has made an invaluable contribution to the international solar thermal industry, including paving the way for the first commercial solar thermal system installed in Spain and chairing the International Energy Agency's SolarPACES executive committee, the 20-country network for solar thermal collaboration.

'Australia has one of the best solar resources in the world. It is a natural fit for an international solar thermal research collaboration to use this resource and our expertise to make solar power the cheapest, cleanest energy source it can be,' he said.

‘We will reduce the cost of solar thermal to just 12 cents a kilowatt hour by 2020 and provide zero-emission energy to people when they need it. It’s a technological leap but we will do it. We are working with the best in the world.’

Concentrating solar thermal power uses mirrors to focus sunshine to generate heat, which can be used to power a turbine to create electricity.

Concentrating solar thermal technologies can also be used to drive chemical reactions to produce solar derived products, such as fuels. CSIRO’s solar thermal tower in Newcastle, New South Wales is an example of a concentrating solar thermal technology.

**ASTRI** led by CSIRO. Current partners include seven universities and the United States Department of Energy’s national laboratories. The initiative is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).

Source: CSIRO

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