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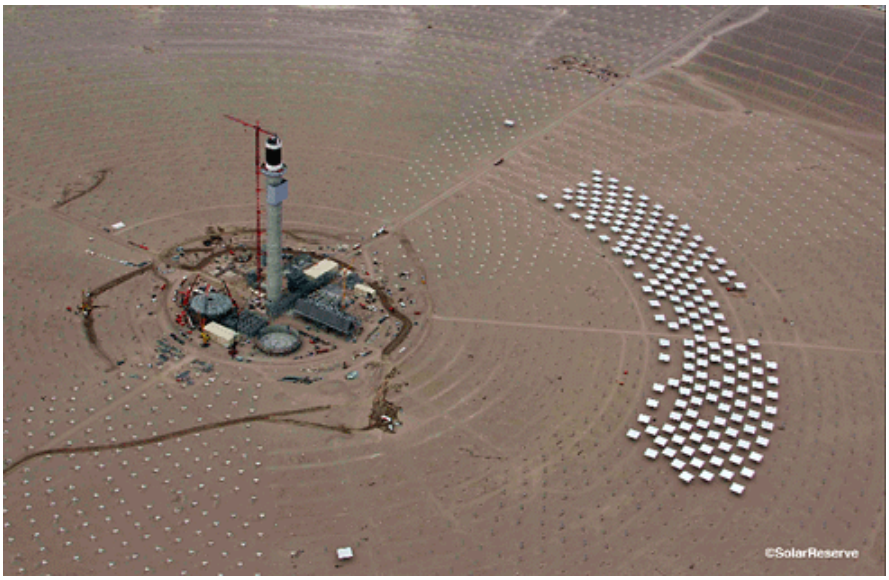
Brighter future for Australian solar thermal?

Ensuring concentrating solar thermal (CST) is a viable, mainstream renewable energy technology to help meet Australia's future energy needs was the focus of a recent energy expert forum whose speakers included Sarah Miller, Chief Operating Officer from ASTRI.



Credit: SolarReserve

Policymakers from government and industry met with researchers at the forum to address the current status of CST in the Australian context and explore strategies to reduce the cost of large-scale implementation.

CST uses curved mirrors or lenses to reflect solar energy to heat fluids, salts or even air that, once captured, are then used to drive a steam turbine to create electricity.

Director of the University of Technology Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF), Professor Stuart White, said Australia is well poised to be a global leader on CST.

'Our sunny country has a proud history in the development of concentrated solar thermal technologies.

'With countries like the United States currently building large-scale solar thermal plants, now is the time for concentrated solar thermal to go mainstream in Australia.'

Potential opportunities to reduce the cost of CST in Australia include the use of hybrid systems, combining CST with the use of biomass in regional areas, as well as the potential for CST systems to reduce the costs of grid transmission and distribution in areas where supply is constrained.

'The future of concentrating solar power in Australia: transitions and benefits' was hosted by The ISF at UTS, along with the Australian Section of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the solar thermal industry association (AUSTELA).

Workshop presentations from the forum are available from the ISF website.

Source: UTS