

Securing Cleantech Benefits for Australia

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Australia has the chance to secure its long term economic security from taking a leading role in cleantech. What's more the current financial downturn presents the perfect opportunity to make a step change to sustainable industries, replacing those emissions-intensive industries that will inevitably decline, and underwriting Australia's GDP growth for decades. It will however take some bold and confident steps to be taken by Government and companies to fully secure these benefits.

Australia has a choice on whether it wishes to be a future technology taker or to become a global leader in clean technologies. There are many jurisdictions around the world that are seeking to establish themselves as centres of excellence for cleantech. In North America, regions such as Ontario, the North-Western States and Los Angeles have all been pushing hard to create industries of the future. In our region, the Singaporean Government have placed cleantech high on its priority list of industries for which it wants to become the 'gateway to Asia'. Only this week, the Florida State Government issued a document titled *Florida: Building a Foundation for Excellence in Clean Energy* in which it considered the State's strengths in solar, biomass, fuel cells and ocean currents and its strategy to become a global leader in each.

Australia clearly has world class natural resources in solar, wind, wave and geothermal energy. Through its lack of water, it has also been forced to innovate with some clever water management and efficiency technologies. So the question is then how does the country secure the greatest benefits from these natural advantages.

Government's clearly have a part to play in this through targeted grants and other measures such as renewable energy targets (RET). In Australia, the RET will underwrite the roll out of mature wind technologies developed elsewhere, the Clean Energy Program (CEP) will hopefully drive some Australian innovation in solar and wave technologies and the Geothermal Drilling Program may further Australia's leading position there. Despite protestations to the contrary, Governments alone will

not do enough to guarantee success in any of these fields regardless of the quantum of grant money.

To create the best chance of success requires entrepreneurs and technology developers to collaborate and build companies and solutions that are ready to be sold to the world.

One technique that is being undertaken by a number of companies is to consolidate technology offerings. By pooling a number of similar development technologies, the chances of success for all involved are greatly improved. As part of a consortium, the individual technology developers can leverage off the greater scale to market their technology globally; investors have the opportunity to invest in a diverse portfolio of technologies rather than just backing a single product; and Australia benefits by seeing more of its technology commercialised at home and thereby builds a sustainable future for its communities.

Governments at all levels can assist in this process by providing hubs for this collaboration to occur as well as grants to help things progress, but it is those with the technologies that have the greatest influence on the success of this strategy. By choosing to become part of a group rather than being a stand-alone company changes the route to international commercialisation. Technologies are no longer the ‘babies’ of their inventors but rather become part of wider offering. Inventors must give up the need for total control and become part of a team – a team that has a greatly increased chance of success.

Two companies that I am involved with that are pursuing this strategy are GPAus and CleanFutures. GPAus is building a suite of emerging wind technologies that it can then take to global wind turbine manufacturers to enable them to accelerate their progression towards Gen-2 wind turbines. CleanFutures is assembling diverse nanotechnology-enabled environmental solutions that can be backed and commercialised as a portfolio.

Australia can be a technology exporter of future high value products that will create an advanced and sustainable manufacturing base for the country. This will occur if Governments provide the right environment and technology developers choose to work as a team to the benefit of all. It is the cleantech providers that join forces who

will have the greatest chance of succeeding on a global scale and if they succeed then Australia will be the greatest beneficiary.

Companies interested in discussing participation with GPAus or CleanFutures should contact the author [link to john.obrien@auscleantech.com.au](mailto:john.obrien@auscleantech.com.au) in the first instance.

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