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Leighton Contractors enters strategic partnerships to develop renewable energy solutions

Leighton Contractors has expanded its capability in the Australian renewable energy sector by executing agreements with two global technology providers to explore and develop wave and solar power projects in the region.

As part of the collaborative effort, Ocean Power Technologies (Australasia) Pty Ltd (a subsidiary of US based Ocean Power Technologies Inc) and Leighton Contractors will develop and commercialize OPT's unique, ocean tested wave power technology in Australia and New Zealand.

Leighton Contractors also recently signed an agreement with MAN Solar Millennium to develop solar thermal power plants in Australia. A Joint Venture between MAN Ferrostaal AG and Solar Millennium AG, the German based company specialises in power plants which utilise direct solar irradiation converted into heat for large-scale generation of electricity.

Phil Cooper, Executive General Manager for Leighton Contractors said the company was committed to developing its expertise across a range of renewable energy technologies and boosting the number of green energy options available to consumers over the coming years.

"It is clear that a range of different energy solutions will have to be investigated if Australia is to meet the Federal Government's renewable energy targets by 2020," Mr Cooper said.

"As such, we are taking a portfolio view of the renewable energy market, and we believe solar thermal and wave energy will each play a role as we move to lower carbon energy sources," he added.

Commenting on the agreement, OPT's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. George W. Taylor, said Leighton Contractors was an early mover in the rapidly developing market for renewable energy.

"The Australian Government is committed to developing long-term renewable energy and carbon reduction initiatives. We are delighted to have formed a strategic alliance with Leighton Contractors to help us develop and implement new technologies to achieve this outcome," Mr Taylor said.

Mr Cooper said OPT's track record and technical strength made it an ideal partner for Leighton Contractors.

"OPT's 'PowerBuoy' technology will play an important role in developing alternative energy solutions across Australia. This technology harnesses ocean wave resources to generate reliable, clean, and environmentally-beneficial electricity," Mr Cooper said.

Leighton Contractors is also exploring solar thermal power solutions with MAN Solar Millennium. Solar thermal power plants convert sunlight into heat for the large scale generation of electricity. These plants are capable of producing environmentally friendly dispatchable electricity in the range of up to 250 MW.

“Australia has one of the greatest solar energy potential in the world due to high solar irradiation, so it makes a lot of sense to utilise this resource,” Mr Cooper said.

Christian Beltle, Member of the Executive Board of MAN Solar Millennium and CEO of Solar Millennium, explains: “With parabolic trough power plants MAN Solar Millennium is applying a proven technology to solar power generation. We have leveraged it into a completely new dimension by using energy storage systems. Thus, our plants can supply electricity on demand, even after sunset. I am delighted to develop our environment-friendly plants also in Australia in partnership with Leighton Contractors. The natural preconditions in Australia are perfect.”

MAN Solar Millennium is one of only a few companies in the world that have real large scale experience in developing solar power projects and it is currently in the process of realising the 50MW solar thermal power plant Andasol 3 in Southern Spain. It is the third project on this site, identical in construction with Andasol 1 and 2 totalling 150 MW.

Leighton Contractors is committed to becoming a leading solutions provider for the renewable energy sector and has been involved in a number of sustainable energy projects in recent years, including the design and construction of numerous wind farms, biofuel projects and clean power stations throughout Australia.

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About Leighton Contractors

Leighton Contractors is one of Australia’s leading construction, mining, services and telecommunications groups with over \$9.4 billion work in hand, employing more than 10,000 people across Australia and New Zealand.

About MAN Solar Millennium

MAN Solar Millennium (Germany) is specialised in solar thermal power plants. The company was founded as a 50-50 joint venture between MAN Ferrostaal AG and Solar Millennium AG with the goal of becoming the leading global supplier of these plants. MAN Ferrostaal AG is a globally active company and plant constructor. Solar Millennium AG is a leading technology supplier and experienced project manager for solar thermal plants. As a general contractor MAN Solar Millennium develops, constructs and finances large scale solar thermal power plants with a power output from 50 to 250 megawatt.

About solar thermal power plant technology

Solar thermal power plants generate electricity using thermal energy converted from solar radiation. In a parabolic trough power plant, the solar radiation is concentrated by trough shaped mirrors onto a pipe in the focal line of the collector and absorbed by a heat transfer fluid which, thus, heats up to about 400°C. The heat is transported by the fluid to the power block where it generates steam by means of a heat exchanger. As with conventional power plants, the steam powers a turbine to generate electricity. And by integrating a thermal storage, electricity can be supplied on demand, even after sunset.