BROWN COAL INNOVATION AUSTRALIA

Positioning brown coal for a brighter future

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MEDIA RELEASE

Community forum hears progress and opportunities for Valley's future beyond Hazelwood

Brown Coal Innovation Australia (BCIA) tonight showcased progress in emerging technologies which offer significant potential to transform Latrobe Valley brown coal into a range of environmentally responsible products – including low-emissions power, carbon fibres and polymers, fertilisers and building products.

Strong interest saw about 100 people attend BCIA's third community forum in Traralgon including local residents and business owners together with representatives of environment and sustainability groups; business, regional development and industry associations; research and education institutes and local and State politicians.

BCIA Chief Executive, Dr Phil Gurney, said: "It is really heartening to see such strong community interest in securing a sustainable future for Victoria's world-class brown coal resource."

BCIA launched a comprehensive report at the forum detailing the outcomes from its research program, and showing the way to a range of prospective new industries based around the vast resource in the Latrobe Valley. The report, '*Positioning brown coal for a low-emissions future'*, details the research, technologies and opportunities associated with the sustainable use of brown coal and covers the work undertaken by BCIA and its partner organisations during recent years.

"The planned decommissioning of Hazelwood is a stark reminder that unless we all do more to invest in making a future for the Latrobe Valley, including supporting the development of environmentally responsible uses of coal, it's not going to happen," said Dr Gurney.

The report argues that a continued strategic focus and on-going investment in research, development and commercialisation, together with a supportive policy framework, is needed to enable the Latrobe Valley's progression to a world centre for the manufacture of environmentally responsible, high-value, coal-derived products.

BCIA Chief Executive, Dr Phil Gurney, said: "The Latrobe Valley will produce low-cost power for many decades to come but our existing power stations are old and inefficient. BCIA funded research is driving the shift away from emissions intensive uses of brown coal."

Dr Gurney said future brown coal energy generation will need to be significantly more efficient and also capable of supporting an increasing intermittent power load generated from renewable sources such as wind and solar.

The BCIA-funded Direct Injection Carbon Engine (DICE) project promises a step-change in power generation technology that could significantly cut greenhouse emissions compared with existing Victorian brown coal power stations.

DICE technology uses a finely dispersed slurry of coal in water as a fuel in large two-stroke, slow-speed diesel engines. Significantly, DICE offers the possibility of low-emissions, dispatchable, load-following power which could be installed progressively in modular units as existing power generation is shut down.

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During its first five years of operation, BCIA has facilitated investment of more than $50 million in research and skills development focused on environmentally responsible uses of coal. Nearly 50 local and international companies, governments and research institutes have contributed to BCIA's research portfolio.

"We have taken projects that started in the laboratory and accelerated them towards commercial development," said Dr Gurney. "But much more work needs to be done. We are currently at demonstration scale for a number of brown coal processing innovations."

A range of new technologies show promise for the transformation of brown coal into various valuable products including industrial chemicals, hydrogen and ammonia. These can be further processed to produce higher-value products such as fertilisers, plastics, clean fuels, carbon fibres and graphene.

The research funded by BCIA has already resulted in six patents and generated more than 600 published articles and presentations. In addition, the multi-million dollar research program has supported nearly 40 higher degree students and directly funded 16 PhD scholarships; significantly contributing to the building of Australia's scientific capability.

BCIA's comprehensive report, '*Positioning brown coal for a low-emissions future'*, details the research, technologies and opportunities associated with the sustainable use of brown coal and covers the work undertaken by BCIA and its partner organisations during recent years.

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BCIA's report, '*Positioning brown coal for a low-emissions future'* is available by contacting BCIA at info@bcinnovation.com.au

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