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First Solar and UQ Launch Australia's Largest Solar Photovoltaic Systems Research Facility

Australia's largest solar photovoltaic systems research facility launched

Brisbane, March 27, 2015 - Sunshine is being turned into energy and knowledge at The University of Queensland's [Gatton campus](#), where the state's largest solar array will be launched today.

The 3.275 megawatt Gatton Solar Research Facility comprises more than 37,000 thin-film photovoltaic panels, mounted on the campus's 10ha former airstrip.

The advanced technology photovoltaic (PV) modules from First Solar will produce enough clean energy to power more than 450 average Queensland homes and will displace the equivalent of 5600 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

Industry and Science Minister [Ian Macfarlane](#) opened the new research facility this morning at an event attended by federal, state and local officials and national energy industry leaders.

"One of the world's great challenges is ensuring safe and sufficient access to sustainably sourced energy," Mr Macfarlane said.

"This facility will not only benefit the University in terms of its own electricity supply, but the knowledge coming from the research will enable the global community to be better equipped in addressing energy security needs.

"It's an honour to be the one to throw the switch on such a significant solar project."

UQ Vice-Chancellor and President [Professor Peter Høj](#) said the Gatton facility was one of the most advanced research facilities of its kind in the world, and its commissioning was a landmark in UQ's clean energy journey.

"This infrastructure brings UQ's total solar generation capacity to more than five megawatts," Professor Høj said.

"UQ made a significant step into solar power generation and research four years ago when it installed a 1.22 megawatt solar system across four rooftops at St Lucia. That remains Australia's largest rooftop system.

"The Gatton system is almost three times bigger than the one at St Lucia, and takes the University's renewable energy research to greater heights.

"This project is a great example of UQ working hand-in-hand with industry and government to ensure our excellent research and technology contribute to a viable clean energy future for the world."

Project partner [First Solar](#) managed the facility's engineering and construction and supplied the panels.

First Solar Asia-Pacific Regional Manager Jack Curtis said the Gatton facility's advanced capability and research potential was unrivalled almost anywhere in the world.

"This landmark installation will be a showcase for the region, helping to ensure that solar plays a strong role in Australia's energy mix," he said.

"The lessons learned here will have global impact."

UQ Solar director Professor Paul Meredith said the facility would be a game-changer in renewables research.

"This research is about improving the way that we integrate solar into our state's overall energy mix. It also works towards establishing and proving the business model for solar generation in Australia at the megawatt scale."

"Queensland gets about 2700 hours of sunlight a year. This site turns that into energy, and into knowledge about how to better service local, national and international energy needs through effective solar technologies," Professor Meredith said.

The development is funded by a \$40.7 million Federal Government Education Investment Fund program grant administered by the Department of Education.

The Gatton project is part of research collaboration between UQ, the University of New South Wales, First Solar and AGL PV Solar Holdings Pty Ltd, an affiliate of AGL Ltd.

The UQ Solar initiative, managed by UQ's [Global Change Institute](#), seeks to better understand the cost efficiencies of solar technologies to improve the integration of solar energy into the electricity grid, paving the way for future large scale solar systems to be connected.

For the first time in Australia, multiple PV mounting technologies including fixed-tilt, single-axis and dual-axis tracker technologies will be in operation side-by-side in the same field to inform electrical and economic performance.

Professor Meredith said the Gatton facility was an exemplar of how clean energy could integrate with agriculture and was a test bed for off-grid applications such as remote communities or mining settlements.

"This project features state-of-the-art, thin-film panels, configured in tracking and non-tracking geometries," he said.

"It is a world-first and will position The University of Queensland at the forefront of renewable energy research globally."

The plant will also include battery storage to improve understanding of the value of short- and medium-term energy storage, its impact on the quality of power supply and any resulting economic benefits.

About the Global Change Institute

The [Global Change Institute](#) at The University of Queensland, is an independent source of game-changing research, ideas and advice for addressing the challenges of global change. GCI advances discovery, creates solutions and advocates responses that meet the challenges presented by climate change, technological innovation and population change. UQ is one of Australia's premier learning and research institutions. Measured through a combination of four key global university rankings, UQ is currently ranked in the top 100 of all universities worldwide. It is also a founding member of the national Group of Eight universities.

About First Solar

[First Solar](#) is a leading global provider of comprehensive photovoltaic solar systems which use its advanced module and system technology. The company's integrated power plant solutions deliver an economically attractive alternative to fossil-fuel electricity generation today. From raw material sourcing through end-of-life module recycling, First Solar's renewable energy systems protect and enhance the environment. For more information about First Solar, please visit www.firstsolar.com

For First Solar Investors

This release contains forward-looking statements which are made pursuant to safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These forward-looking statements include statements, among other things, concerning: our business strategy, including anticipated trends and developments in and management plans for our business and the markets in which we operate; future financial results, operating results, revenues, gross margin, operating expenses, products, projected costs, warranties, solar module efficiency and balance of systems ("BoS") cost reduction roadmaps, restructuring, product reliability and capital expenditures; our ability to continue to reduce the cost per watt of our solar modules; our ability to reduce the costs to construct photovoltaic ("PV") solar power systems; research and development programs and our ability to improve the conversion efficiency of our solar modules; sales and marketing initiatives; and competition. These forward-looking statements are often characterized by the use of words such as "estimate," "expect," "anticipate," "project," "plan," "intend," "believe," "forecast," "foresee," "likely," "may," "should," "goal," "target," "might," "will," "could," "predict," "continue" and the negative or plural of these words and other comparable terminology. Forward-looking statements are only predictions based on our current expectations and our projections about future events. You should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. We undertake no obligation to update any of these forward-looking statements for any reason. These forward-looking statements involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties, and other factors that may cause our actual results, levels of activity, performance, or achievements to differ materially from those expressed or implied by these statements. These factors include, but are not limited to, the matters discussed in Item 1A: "Risk Factors," of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2013, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, Current Reports on Form 8-K and other reports filed with the SEC.

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