

# Ian Macdonald

Minister for State and Regional Development  
Minister for Mineral and Forest Resources  
Minister for Major Events  
Minister for the Central Coast

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## MINISTER MACDONALD OPENS SILEX SOLAR MANUFACTURING FACILITY

Minister for State and Regional Development, Ian Macdonald today officially opened the \$30million **Silex Solar's solar panel manufacturing plant at Sydney Olympic Park** - the biggest plant of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

The NSW Government was instrumental in Silex Solar's decision to purchase the plant - ensuring it retained its important presence in Sydney.

*Industry and Investment NSW* secured the decision through financial assistance in the form of partial tax rebates conditional upon employment milestones. The details of this agreement are confidential.

**The Sydney Olympic Park facility is the largest photovoltaic manufacturing plant in the entire Southern Hemisphere.**

The manufacturing plant was commissioned in 2000 and has undergone numerous expansions and upgrades to keep it in line with the latest solar production techniques.

**Silex Solar** has taken over the operations of the Homebush site from BP Solar, ensuring the ongoing operation of an important NSW manufacturing facility.

In addition to the manufacturing capabilities, the Homebush site is home to:

- Research and development facilities;
- Testing facilities;
- Engineering workshops;
- A purpose-built warehouse to cater for raw and finished goods; and
- Sales and administration offices.

**Silex Solar is the only significant Australian-owned manufacturer of solar cells and panels. It is expected to double its workforce to around 100 people by the end of 2010.**

"Green energy is the way of the future, that's why the NSW Government has supported Silex Solar to base its operations here in Sydney," Mr Macdonald said.

"Solar power will become an increasingly important industry - the NSW Government is helping secure this for the State's future.

"Silex Solar will use Homebush as its base for the commercial scale manufacture of high performance solar cells and modules at the lowest possible cost.

"The panels made by Silex Solar are suitable for both residential and commercial use – being affordable for families through to large companies.

“Sales have already begun in Australia, and Silex are confident of their prospects for export of solar cells from Homebush to Asia and America.”

Mr Macdonald said the NSW Government supports development and growth of the solar industry with its *Solar Bonus Scheme* delivering the most effective rebates in Australia. NSW has adopted a ‘Gross Feed-in Tariff’ which means households are paid 60 cents for every kilowatt hour of renewable energy they generate.

Under the scheme, an average household with a 1.5 kilowatt solar system will earn around \$1500 a year in NSW.

“NSW households and small businesses with solar panels now receive higher payments for the clean energy they generate than anywhere else in Australia,” Mr Macdonald said.

“The Solar Energy industry creates employment opportunities and further development of our renewable energy sector.

“This announcement is good for the NSW economy as well as the environment.

“The way of the future is through the technology of Green energy, that’s why the NSW Government has supported Silex Solar to base its operations here in Sydney.

Mr Macdonald, said Silex Solar will bring strong experience to the field.

“Silex Solar is not only leading NSW’s solar development, but is demonstrating national leadership and commitment to the Australian solar industry,” Mr Macdonald said.

“The Silex Solar team is world class with highly experienced experts – some with 25 years’ experience, including in the United States and Europe.

“They have expertise across a range of disciplines, including cell and module research and development, large scale PV commercial fabrication, project sales and marketing.”

Mr Macdonald said Silex Solar is well placed to develop and commercialise Australian intellectual property in solar technology.

“Silex Solar recently purchased the assets of Solar Systems Limited, a Victorian-based company that developed utility-scale solar power technology,” Mr Macdonald said.

“This again helped ensure the retention of Australian solar technology.

“And Silex Solar has already developed a strong partnership with the University of NSW, an Australian and world leader in the field of solar technology research.”

## **Background notes**

### Solar Bonus Scheme

- The NSW Government is making solar more accessible and affordable for all families and small businesses through the Solar Bonus Scheme.
- The NSW Government has introduced the most generous solar payments in the country, making it affordable for many families to invest in solar energy for the first time.
- NSW households and small businesses with solar panels now receive higher payments for the clean energy they generate than anywhere else in the country.
- NSW has adopted a ‘Gross Feed-in Tariff’ which means that households are paid 60 cents for every kilowatt hour of renewable energy they generate.

- An average household with a 1.5 kilowatt solar system will earn around \$1500 a year in NSW.
- And families who could never have afforded to install solar previously are now taking it up in droves.
- The Solar Bonus Scheme will provide a huge boost for the local renewable energy sector, supporting around 500 new solar installation jobs in the first year alone and tripling the number of solar panels on roofs in NSW.

### Green Energy

- The NSW Government is aggressively pursuing renewable and clean energy investment for our state... and the results are beginning to show.
- Almost 2,000 MW of new gas and wind generation has come on line in NSW over the past 18 months and there are many more projects in the pipeline.
- For example, planning approval has now been granted for the Kyoto Energy Park at Scone - a \$190 million renewable energy farm.

### Renewable Energy Precincts

- The Government has introduced a package of planning policy reforms for renewable energy, which will attract green investment and create green jobs across NSW.
- Measures include financial incentives, more timely assessments, dedicated resources, increased certainty, industry partnerships and community partnerships.
  - Financial incentives. The Government is waiving the additional fees associated with a renewable energy project being classified as 'Critical Infrastructure' from August 2009 onwards, providing significant financial incentives.
  - Timely assessment: The Government has said we will assess any major renewable energy project application within four months - around half the current average time.
  - Dedicated resources: A team of dedicated "go-to" people has been employed within the Department of Planning, to assist renewable energy investors in NSW to negotiate the planning approvals process.
  - Increased certainty: All renewable energy projects with a generating capacity of 30 megawatts or more will be declared 'critical infrastructure', providing them with a standardised assessment process
  - Community partnerships: The Government is establishing Precinct Advisory Committees, involving councils and community members in six Renewable Energy Precincts, to provide community input into renewable energy issues. These are located in the areas with the best wind resources: the NSW ACT Cross Border Region; the Central Tablelands; the New England Tableland; the Upper Hunter; the South Coast; and the Cooma Monaro Region.
- The Government will follow these measures up with measures to encourage investment and job creation in other forms of clean and renewable energy, such as solar, co-generation and tri-generation in urban areas.
- The Government's adoption of a 20 per cent Renewable Energy Target in the updated State Plan - in line with the Commonwealth's target – which will drive major new investment in the generation of renewable energy.
- While these measures will streamline the development of renewable energy projects in NSW they will not detract from the existing rigorous assessment processes applied to wind farm projects.