

press clip



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# The North West **STAR**

EDITORIAL

## Solar project shines bright

**C**LONCURRY is officially recognised as one of the hottest and most intense areas for solar radiation in the southern hemisphere.

So it seemed a given when plans were mooted four years ago by the State Government to develop a solar power plant there.

In those years the State Government has had its hurdles to jump, including having to spend \$900,000 on a University of Melbourne study into glaring, then the withdrawal of a development foundation which was to pay \$24 million to help set up the plant with the Government adding \$7 million.

So last Friday's announcement in Cloncurry of preferred tenders for the project, by Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy Stephen Robertson, was a welcome, final piece in the puzzle for a project that began with \$30 million assigned for a solar thermal power station in November 2007.

The initial plan for this ground-breaking solar power station was to save about 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually produced by burning diesel to generate electricity.

It was also going to provide power to more than 4000 local homes and sell excess power to the national grid.

Unfortunately, the final version announced on Friday when Ingenero was announced by the minister as the preferred tender is for a 2.128 megawatt facility producing enough electricity to power just 500 households.

Still, it is a start, and the potential to build on this is concrete.

The Cloncurry solar farm will be the second of its kind to be built in Queensland, with the first solar farm located in Hervey Bay.

It is part of the Bligh Government's commitment to make Queensland the "solar state" and its ClimateQ strategy to address climate change at a time when many governments are just paying lip service to carbon taxes and the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Harnessing solar power, and providing enough incentives for people to convert, is finally making it on the agenda of all levels of government.

The support of the Cloncurry Shire Council and residents who can see tangible benefits should ensure this farm is a success and one on which to expand for the future of the North West.