

Media Release

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BUNDY POWER PROJECT OPENS UP NATIONAL, GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES

IN THE quiet cane fields of Bundaberg, an innovative is opening up exciting opportunities for farmers that could have global benefits.

“Tailored technologies to reduce pumping costs for irrigating farmers are desperately needed, whether the crop be sugarcane, cotton, wheat, canola or small crops,” said Dale Holliss, Deputy Chair of the National Irrigators Council and member of the Energy Consumers Australia Board advisory committee.

As Company Secretary of the Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group (BRIG), Mr Holliss is heading a hybrid solar / grid power supply project that is already showing outstanding results – a reduction in irrigator electricity costs by 73%.

“The project has, during the trials to date, quite literally reduced the pumping cost from \$116 per megalitre to \$23.14. That’s a massive cost saving for any farmer.”

The “Adapting Renewable Energy Project” is funded by the Federal Government’s Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). The three-year project closes in 2020, and the project team is able to present compelling results and opportunities that could benefit all farming operations dependent on bulk water usage. The project is being delivered with the support of Bundaberg CANEGROWERS and Bundaberg Sugar Services Ltd.

“This step forward in irrigation and other bulk water usage has huge implications not just nationally, but globally. Any farming or other operation using megalitres of water on an ongoing basis – whether high pressure or trickle – could reap the benefits,” said Mr Holliss.

“Australia is already acknowledged for its world-class research, and this project is confirming that status. This knowledge will be shared across the globe to benefit the whole world.”

The benefits are not limited to cost savings.

“This project is in line with global thinking around sustainable production of food and fibre, and maximising use of the natural resource of sunlight, of which Australia has ample supplies,” he said.

“This hybrid technology will empower irrigating farmers to water to suit their crops, not to fit in with power tariffs,” he said. “It also has a major value add – it is putting long-awaited lifestyle choices into irrigated farming. The system can be operated remotely, via a mobile phone or other smart device. A farmer can be at home in their living room, or on holiday, and still be able to turn their pumps on and off.”

The farm on which the solar / grid power project is being trialled just outside Bundaberg is owned by the Killer family.

Josh Killer said that the project had already delivered enormous benefits to his operations, and he would continue with it after the project finished.

“Our farm management strategy is no longer constrained by energy costs, and we are much more able and willing to irrigate according to crop need rather than worrying about the enormous expense of turning on the pumps,” he said. Mr Killer also is able to be away from his farm, yet still turn on the pumps as required.

On Wednesday May 15, a special showcase of the project will be held at the trial site just outside Bundaberg, Queensland. Exhibitors will include suppliers and business enterprises providing vital components of this ground-breaking project.

Transport to and from the event is being provided by BRIG from Brothers Sports Club, Takalvan St, Bundaberg. Bookings are essential. Go to Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/adapting-renewable-energy-project-field-day-tickets-3339056207>

Mr Holliss said a range of ways to offer flexible, affordable options around solar / grid combos had already been identified.

“The whole operation sits within a small shed, and the solar panels can be placed on a multi-purpose general shed. The project has utilised existing piping infrastructure, which means that farmers don’t have to undergo an expensive overhaul – they just add the capacity to bring the hybrid elements of solar and grid power together.”

To find out more about the event go to www.facebook.com/BRIG