

Rees launches international search for clean energy

20 July 2009

NSW Premier Nathan Rees today announced a new \$5 million international prize to keep the State at the forefront of clean energy.

Mr Rees released initial details of the NSW Energy Challenge Prize at the inaugural University Government Business Forum held at the Mint today.

It will stand along side prestigious international prizes such as the Saltire Prize - a £10 million prize offered by the Scottish Government for innovation in wave and tidal energy technology.

"NSW is leading the nation in science and research innovation," Mr Rees said.

"Our State has a world-class research sector, with 11 universities and researchers who lead the globe in solar energy, astronomy and clean coal.

"We have more postgraduate students, more research academics and spend more on research than any other State in Australia.

"This prize signals to the rest of the world that we are serious about research and innovation and serious about a clean energy solution for NSW.

"It will focus the best minds from our State, the nation and the globe on clean energy alternatives for NSW."

To be eligible for the prize research teams must have two essential partners - a NSW university, and a company with its headquarters in NSW.

Mr Rees said the prize confirmed the NSW Government's commitment to finding new opportunities to develop green skills in the State.

"This is a \$5 million investment in a better future for our environment and our research industry," Mr Rees said.

Mr Rees said the first University Government Business Forum was aimed at bringing together people from business, university and government sectors to find new ways to tackle global challenges faced by NSW.

"Today is a watershed moment for the Government and the State's universities and businesses," Mr Rees said.

"The University Government Business Forum is about getting the smartest minds in NSW together to discuss solutions to meet these and other major emerging issues.

"Our business and university sectors are making progress in tackling the challenges we are facing as a society and we need to work more closely with them to translate research into real benefits for the people of NSW."

Minister for Science and Medical Research Jodi McKay said the forum involves more than 80 business, university and government leaders from across the State.

"We need to consolidate NSW's position as Australia's leading green, clever State and to do that we need to identify our research priority areas," Ms McKay said.

"Having a definitive approach to research across NSW will allow us to attract greater Commonwealth and international research funding, support new jobs and emerging industries and help NSW to become a globally competitive and highly skilled workforce."

Minister for Education and Training Verity Firth said the NSW university sector made an enormous contribution to the State's economic and social development.

"The 11 NSW universities together employ over 25,000 staff and educate, at any one time, more than 300,000 students," Ms Firth said.

"Universities work co-operatively with schools, businesses and other sections of the community.

"This Forum is about finding ways to support and extend the engagement between universities, industry and the Government for the benefit of the State."