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National code needed

PARTICIPANTS at a national roundtable on wind energy this week agreed on the need for a National Code for Wind Energy Installations as a 'matter of priority', according to federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell.

The meeting agreed to form a working group to drive the code's development.

Representatives of all spheres of government, the wind energy industry, the planning industry, community groups and non-government organisations attended the roundtable.

Campbell said participants affirmed the importance of wind power in Australia's energy mix, but acknowledged that concerns about its potential impact on the landscape and the environment must be addressed if the industry was to enjoy broad community support.

Campbell said there was a need to balance the challenge of managing climate change with maintaining a strong economy and protecting environmental, cultural and landscape values.

'The community must be properly included in the planning process for new wind energy installations to ensure that community confidence in, and support for, this important source of power continues,' Campbell said.

He said the Code would provide consistency, certainty and transparency in public consultation and approval processes.

It would include guidance for wind energy developers on engaging the community, including minimum consultation standards; recognise values of concern to local communities, such as wildlife preservation, landscape and amenity; and promote and accommodate community needs in decisions about the siting of wind energy installations. ●

Meeting importance acknowledged

THE Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE) said the national roundtable on wind energy was an important step in addressing the social, economic and regulatory concerns of wind farm development in Australia.

BCSE executive director Ric Brazzale said the meeting confirmed that renewable energy and wind energy in particular will play an important role in Australia's future energy mix.

Ensuring both investment and planning certainty for all energy technologies will be essential if Australia is to be successful in developing a clean and viable energy sector, be it renewable, natural gas or cleaner coal technologies.

The BCSE welcomed the formation of a working group to

strengthen the Australian Wind Energy Association's Best Practice Guidelines. ●

Australia lags

TWO international reports on solar and wind energy conclude that the global renewables market is expanding far more rapidly than previously predicted, with solar and wind now the fastest growing energy industries in the world.

Yet despite its abundant natural resources, Australia is being left behind.

Co-author Sven Teske, Renewables Director at Greenpeace International, said Australia was missing out on the global boom in wind and solar energy because of the lack of political support.

'Australia is one of the most ideal countries in the world for solar and wind energy, yet its renewable industries have been suffocated by Federal Government inaction and provide only a tiny proportion of Australia's energy,' Teske said.

'When we first reported growth predictions for solar and wind five years ago we weren't taken seriously: there is a long history of underestimating the potential of renewable energy. Yet we have found that growth has far outstripped even our estimates.

'The global solar market has increased at a rate of 40 per cent annually for the past decade and wind 30 per cent.

'If the Australian Federal Government heeded Al Gore's warnings about climate change needing immediate action, it could go much of the way to solving the problem simply by getting behind the solar and wind industries already growing around the world.' ●

Inaugural winner named

BARRICK Cowal Gold Mine and Xstrata Coal are the winners of the inaugural NSW Minerals Council Environment and Community Excellence Awards.

Barrick won the community award for its work on the Lake Cowal Gold Mine proposal.

The first gold was poured on the mine in April this year, 23 years after exploration commenced at the site. The project included a historical Native Title Agreement with the Wiradjuri Community and saw the establishment of the Lake Cowal Foundation, an independent body to protect and enhance the environs of Lake Cowal.

Barrick also won the People's Choice Award, which was voted on by the 253 delegates attending this year's conference.

Xstrata Coal NSW was announced as the winner of the environmental award, for its rehabilitation of the New Wollend Colliery. The project, which included the re-

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establishment of Maryland Creek, illustrates that land used for mining can be rehabilitated effectively for future alternative use.

The winners were selected from a field of 10 finalists by a panel of judges representing industry, government and the community. ●

Competition encourages greenliness

NSW families will have the chance to win a share of \$100,000 in Australia's biggest-ever environmental competition, launched this week by *The Daily Telegraph* and Easy Being Green.

Running for three weeks from Monday 11 September, the competition will show NSW and ACT households that it's cheaper and easier to be green.

By registering and installing a Climate Saver Pack, readers will save money, water and energy — and enter the competition.

The standard free-of-charge Climate Saver Pack contains six energy-saving light globes and an AAA-rated water-saving showerhead, valued at over \$100.

'Scientists keep telling us that climate change is the greatest threat to mankind's future and we must urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions,' said Paul Gilding, chief executive officer of Sydney-based environmental company Easy Being Green.

'With the help of *The Daily Telegraph*, we want to make 300,000 more families energy efficient by 30 September,' said Mr Gilding.

Once registered, households go into the draw to win a share of \$100,000: the first lucky winner drawn will win \$50,000; the next five families will receive \$10,000 each. ●

New biodiesel plant

THE construction arm of MPI Group Australia, MPI Projects, will design and construct a new \$16 million biodiesel production facility for Riverina Biofuels Pty Ltd in the country town of Deniliquin, NSW.

The Deniliquin facility, with an ultimate capacity of 120,000 tons each year, will be delivered on a turnkey basis, including technology integration.

The facility will convert natural oils such as tallow and vegetable oil into biodiesel through a process known as transesterification.

MPI identified biofuels [as] a future high-growth sector in 2000. This led it to form a specialist inhouse biofuels group.

With current involvement in five biofuel projects, two feedstock projects and a lot more potential projects in the pipeline, the group's chief executive officer, Jim Ferretti, said the company had positioned itself as a major provider of complete engineering solutions to the industry, in both Australia and Asia. ●

Cleaning up the world

TENS of millions of volunteers in 122 countries are ready to clean up their streets, parks, beaches, rivers and mountains this weekend as part of Clean Up the World.

The Clean Up the World campaign was started by Ian Kiernan AO in 1993 following the success of Clean Up Australia Day and is held in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

'The idea is simple but the result is so powerful that Clean Up the World has grown steadily to now be active in 122 countries. It is clear that communities across the world want to make their own difference to their environment,' Kiernan said.

Since the start of the campaign, Clean Up the World members worldwide have collected an estimated 3,574,991 tons of rubbish.

Among the campaign's estimated 30 million volunteers across the globe, dozens of Australians will be working with overseas communities this year to help 'clean up, fix up and conserve the environment'.

Locally, Dive 2000, one of Australia's most experienced dive centres, is organising an underwater clean-up at Sydney's Balmoral pool and beach on Sunday, while HarbourKeepers, a branch of the NSW National Parks Association, will be conducting clean-up dives in Mosman and Watson's Bay, as well as foreshore clean-ups jointly with NSW Scouts. ●

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