



SEGRA 2009

# MEDIA RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## CARBON EMISSION CONTROLS WILL REVOLUTIONISE AUSTRALIA

A massive retrospective upgrade of powerlines across Australia will be required if renewable energy such as wind and solar are adopted, creating a huge demand for a skilled labour force to work in remote and regional Australia.

Local council's throughout regional Australia need to start preparing for this and a raft of implications, positive and negative, says Gerry Morvell, Chair of the Conservation Volunteer Association, speaking at the *Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia* (SEGRA) conference today in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

“Fossil fuels currently provide around 90 per cent of all of the energy Australia uses and they are significantly cheaper than any of the alternatives, but moves towards a low emission future using renewable energy will be expensive and it will mean a completely restructure of Australia infrastructure - yet nobody is talking about these sorts of implications,” said Mr Morvell.

There will be widespread ramifications, both short and long term, for regional Australia with a move towards a lower carbon model, but the regions have not featured in the discussion so far.

“LaTrobe Valley is the only Council I’ve heard express a view on carbon pollution reduction and the likely impact on its region, which relies heavily on the brown coal industry.

“Regions have got to engage and have a voice in this pivotal discussion. How we respond to the carbon challenge will have massive implications on employment, our revenue stream and our entire economy. We are in the middle of a revolution of comparable proportions to the Industrial Revolution - we just haven’t realised it yet,” said Mr Morvell.

Black coal is the single largest source of revenue for Australia.

Regions need to start pressuring state and federal governments for resources to manage the short and long term impacts of the shake-up that climate change adaptation will impose.

“The silence of the regions is allowing the debate to be dominated by the big industries and politicians, limiting the discussion to a carbon trading scheme. There is no discussion about funding research-and-development for technology that can help provide tools and solutions,” said Mr Morvell.

Mr Morvell says the government needs to take a leadership role and provide an environment that attracts investment to industries that will be part of the solution.

“The policy settings are a problem at the moment. The ‘stop-start’ mentality that we saw terrorise the solar industry recently is a prime example of how policy is not working.

“There will be a fundamental clash between the science and our response to the situation, and there will be real pain coming very quickly,” he said.

But Mr Morvell remains optimistic.

“We have a long tradition of innovation and there is a network of groups around the country, including the universities and CSIRO as well as industry bodies that are already making headway,” he said.

“This will be a significant wake-up call for regional Australia,” said Ms Kate Charters, SEGRA convenor.

“Regions have been swamped by the economic turmoil over the last 12 months, and it is timely to hear from an advocate as respected and insightful as Gerry.

“As the implications of climate change start to be unpacked we are slowly digesting the mammoth implications regions are facing. Regions must speak up and demand a more rounded response from governments, and funding and policies that enable them to manage both in the short and longer terms.”

SEGRA is the premier national forum for regional development professionals, policy makers and academics.

The agenda spans from key issues and emerging trends that shape regional Australia.

A full conference program is available at [www.segra.com.au](http://www.segra.com.au)

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***SEGRA 2009 is proudly supported by the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Goldfields Esperance Development Commission, Regional Development Australia, Goldfields Esperance, Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines, Desert Knowledge Australia, Chamber of Minerals and Energy, Western Australian Local Government Association, Kalgoorlie Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Water Corporation and Telstra***

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