



A biodiesel future

16 July 2007

The potential for bio diesel crops as an option, particularly in drier years and in the drier areas of the State, is exciting, Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said.

“The work being done in Australia and the United States is getting to the stage where bio fuels from a number of sources are being produced commercially, while research is addressing the difficulties attached to the fledgling industry,” she said.

Mrs Penfold was one of the guest speakers and panelists at a Frontiers In Biodiesel Workshop at Lucas Heights, New South Wales recently.

The two day workshop, organized by Dr Stephen Clarke, Lecturer at the Faculty of Science and Engineering and the School of Chemistry, Physics and Earth Sciences for Flinders University Adelaide, heard from a diverse range of speakers and delegates.

Mrs Penfold said that, while tallow and waste cooking oil are the major feed stock in Australia for making biodiesel, the potential for canola and mustard are good options for Eyre Peninsula and the mid north.

“Flinders University has become a hub for biodiesel research with eight research teams being involved in biofuels research at that University. Currently SARDI have received a \$5 million in State and Federal grants for funding bio-reactor research in algae for use as biodiesel feed stock,” she said.

Professor Dan Graiver from Michigan State University, USA, was a major contributor to the conference bringing a perspective from a much more mature industry with 148 biodiesel plants spread across America.

The Professor suggested quality control options and numerous opportunities for value adding the residual meal and cellulose from the process.

He said that very proactive government support combined with public and private funding for research and development in America is assisting the industry to progress quickly.

However he recommended that consistent laws and codes of conduct be established across Australia as they cause difficulty in the transport industry when they change across state borders as some do in America.

Mr. Barry Murphy, Chairman of Natural Fuels Australia, spoke about the Australian Bio Fuels Association, a newly formed peak body providing a focus for the biofuel industry. The body hopes to have its first CEO in place soon.

Mrs Penfold said she was amazed that the Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy specifically excludes the biodiesel industry despite it being able to replace fossil fuels, being cleaner environmentally, healthier for people and having the advantage of providing additional income for farmers.

“There is some opposition from people concerned that biodiesel will compete with food production for land and water.

“But this should not be an issue in the dry areas of Australia where horticulture is not an option and where biodiesel may reduce overheads and therefore bring down the production cost of food grains,” she said.

Mrs Penfold suggested that regional councils copy the Marion, Onkaparinga and Adelaide City Councils which are using B20 (biodiesel) in their garbage trucks to trial the fuels and to demonstrate their reliability. ENDS