

Spruiking our 'cleantech' to the world

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An Australian delegation of universities will take their hunt for venture capital to Europe next month, as they look to cash in on a global wave of interest in "clean technology" and boost research and development efforts through international partnerships.

Researchers and commercialisation experts from Australian institutions will convene in Copenhagen for the inaugural Copenmind conference, lured by the chance to be among a critical mass of more than 100 university exhibitors and more than 4000 company representatives. The conference is forecast to attract many thousands of visitors — among them venture capitalists seeking investment opportunities.

The theme of the forum is "cleantech", specifically the role of technology in solving global environment and climate challenges, and is dedicated to research, technology and innovation through university-industry partnerships.

La Trobe University, Murdoch University, and the University of

NSW are among the Australian contingent. La Trobe will showcase smart electricity metres that monitor and manage energy consumption, developed in conjunction with Melbourne-based Semitech Innovations.

The smart metres display energy usage so consumers can keep track of how much they have used and what it has cost.

The metres can also give projections about energy use and costs. Thirty of them are being trialled by tenants at La Trobe's R&D park.

Related technologies that will integrate wireless capability for a complete solution for smart homes and industrial facilities, including gas, water, electricity, and appliances, will also be on display.

The director of La Trobe's Centre for Technology Infusion, Jugdutt (Jack) Singh, said "smart living" was one of the university's research strengths.

If smart chips were wirelessly integrated with whitegoods, such as dishwashers, equipment use could be automated and appliances switched on at a time of day when electricity costs were low, if suppliers moved from fixed to real-time tariffs, he said.

"There are a number of things we do in the home to make the home smart, to eventually save energy," Professor Singh said.

"If you can show people in real time where that energy is going, and how much they're using, and how much it's costing, and the environmental impact it's having... these sort of things will start to influence behavioural change."

Professor Singh said the appeal of participating in Copenmind was the fact that environmental and energy management were global issues and the show would give the university "global exposure".

"Copenhagen is where a lot of things happen," he said, adding that commercialisation opportunities were greater in Europe.

He said it would cost the university less than \$10,000 to participate, having been given free exhibition space.

The university would use Copenmind as an opportunity to look for overseas investors, as well as an opportunity to network, and explore collaborative opportunities with other universities and organisations.

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