



# Bid for new power source heats up

By ADAM IPSEN

THE Latrobe Valley has been declared a "dream location" for geothermal power generation in Australia following several underground surveys.

Geothermal power involves drilling and harnessing natural heat flows underneath the earth, turning it directly into energy.

Simon Molesworth, the chairman of Geothermal energy company, Greenerth Energy, confirmed the Latrobe Valley had signs of underground heat.

"I don't think there's a better (geothermal) prospect in Australia. There is very real heat opportunities in close proximity to the brown coal power producers and to the industrial heartland of Gippsland," he said.

Recent surveys conducted by the company indicate temperatures were about 150 degrees celcius just three kilometres under the surface.

Only 90 degrees celcius is required to run reliable baseload power from a geothermal generator.

"Unlike all other energy services, geothermal is available for baseload power production and baseload is what a nation needs since you need a certain amount of

continuously made power," he said.

"If sufficient water can (also) be located at this depth then such temperatures offer the potential for it to be utilised for a range of direct heat uses."

He said this superheated water could be used for drying brown coal, assisting local industry and further power generation.

"There is a very real prospect that this can assist with the challenges that brown coal producers have by potentially helping to dry brown coal," he said.

"Discussions are proceeding with a number of major utilities and industries

in the Latrobe Valley that have significant greenhouse gas footprints."

Mr Molesworth said Greenerth Energy was also building relationships with the region's high energy users and those involved in technical innovation for more efficient brown coal use.

"You really have got the concentration of population, power producers, immediate access to the power grid and major industry producers in one location (Latrobe Valley)," he said.

"(With geothermal) you often have to start from scratch and produce a whole power production and transmit it from a remote location.

many of the more remote sites are also working at a far greater depth (than the Latrobe Valley) of four to five kilometres deep.

"It's almost a dream location because we believe the resource can be proved (to exist) and we believe there is a market right there."

Innovative micro-earthquake studies will be conducted at the Loy Yang 2 well to detect underground resources and possibly confirm geothermal potential.

"(The studies) will be well below the brown coal of the area and hence receive signals that would not normally be received at the surface," he said.

Greenerth Energy has already entered into an agreement with oil and gas explorer, Lakes Oil to share survey data of the Valley's underground structure.

"(That arrangement) gave us a very good impression on where the heat opportunities are, and they're very real. It's win-win for everyone," Mr Molesworth said.

"This is not pie-in-the-sky but proven technology. Small binary (geothermal) power plants are about the size of a large farm shed. For the size on the surface they can produce small to middle power needs to run industry or a small town."

## What lies beneath:

Geothermal energy could be the Valley's next power source.

