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Construction Starts on Australian Plant to Demonstrate Revolutionary Sliver® Solar Technology

Leading Australian energy company, Origin Energy, has announced construction of a solar photovoltaic (PV) cell and module manufacturing plant in Adelaide, South Australia.

The new facility will demonstrate the revolutionary Sliver® solar cell technology owned by Origin Energy and developed with the Australian National University's Centre for Sustainable Energy Systems.

Designed to initially produce up to 5MW of PV modules per year, the plant will be readily expandable to 25MW per year should it meet all design objectives and prove Sliver® technology can be applied at mass produced scale. It will use world-class solar cell manufacturing technology and specially developed automated module assembly techniques.

Construction of the A$20 million plant is now underway and modules incorporating the new Sliver® technology are expected to be available to market by January 2005. The first Sliver® modules will suit applications such as powering homes and telecommunications in grid connected and remote locations.

Sliver® PV technology is revolutionary in several ways. Using up to 90% less of the expensive silicon material compared to current conventional solar PV modules, Sliver® technology delivers commercially competitive cell and module efficiencies. Micromachined to less than 70 microns in thickness from monocrystalline silicon wafers, Sliver® cells demonstrate efficiencies of 19.5%. Sliver® cell trial modules tested by Sandia National Laboratories show efficiencies comparable with other solar power module products now on the market.

Sliver® cells also differ radically from conventional solar cells in size and shape. They are long, ultra thin, quite flexible and perfectly bifacial. These unique and versatile Sliver® properties open up opportunities to use the sun to power a wide range of potential new applications including:

- Transparent Sliver® cell panes in buildings
- Flexible and roll up solar panels
- Small and very high voltage solar panels for consumer electronics, and
- Remote surveillance systems.

In 2004, Origin Energy will be seeking global technology and marketing partners to develop the full application potential of these unique Sliver® cell characteristics.

An A$1million grant from the Australian Government, through the Australian Greenhouse Office, contributed to the project.

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Origin Energy Sliver® solar cell PHOTOS available by clicking:
http://www.originenergy.com.au/environment/environment.php?pageid=1131

About Origin Energy: *With a history dating back 140 years, Origin Energy is a leading Australian energy company. It participates in most segments of the energy chain including power generation; energy retailing and trading; natural gas exploration and production; and asset management services. Origin Energy supplies energy to more than two million Australian homes and businesses. The company is now the largest retailer of grid-connected solar systems in the Victorian and South Australian markets, the largest markets for grid-connected solar power in Australia. Since 1998, Origin has invested over $6 million in solar power research with the ANU's Centre for Sustainable Energy Systems. Visit the website: www.originenergy.com.au*

The Australian National University is the premier research University in Australia. The ANU Centre for Sustainable Energy Systems (CSES) has an international reputation as a leader in R&D in the areas of photovoltaics, solar thermal power and solar energy systems. CSES undertakes work spanning basic research through to commercialisation of technology. Visit the website at http://solar.anu.edu.au