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## Interest In Geothermal Energy Heats Up

**M**ore than \$430 million has been proposed in the search for geothermal energy through to 2011, with 11 companies applying for 76 Geothermal Exploration Licenses (GELs) covering more than 35,000 km<sup>2</sup> of South Australia.

Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA) Petroleum Director, Barry Goldstein, said just one GEL has the hot rock emission-free energy potential to yield electricity equivalent

to several Snowy Mountain hydro-electricity schemes. Goldstein said there was a lot of exploration interest in SA's geothermal energy belt which encompasses much of the eastern part of the State, with a particular focus in the far northeast.

"Whilst it may not eventuate, the aggregate investment for work programmes in these GELs over the next five years is estimated to be more than \$438 million, and that is an estimate which excludes any demonstration plants or up-scaling work on the road to

commercialisation", he said. "There is realistic scope for geothermal energy to fuel a significant proportion of Australia's electricity supplies." He said geothermal energy is regarded as extremely attractive in a world in which climate change is demanding low emission energy sources. "When plotted as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per megawatt hour, and electricity generation costs per megawatt hour, geothermal energy comes in first at about \$60 per megawatt hour, placing it ahead of nuclear power", he said. ■