



## **The Hon Anthony Albanese MP**

Minister for Infrastructure,  
Transport, Regional Development  
and Local Government  
Leader of the House

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# **Media Statement**

AA/xxx/2008

## **\$60M SOLAR FACILITY GIVEN MAJOR PROJECT FACILITATION STATUS**

I have granted Major Project Facilitation (MPF) status to a planned \$60 million solar manufacturing facility which has the potential to be the largest supplier of solar cells in the Southern Hemisphere.

Spark Solar Australia's Solar Cell Manufacturing Project is the first to be granted MPF status by the Rudd Labor Government, demonstrating how we are building the low carbon economy laid out in last year's White Paper.

With the right support from government, Australia can grow its renewable industries and become a world leader in green technologies, in turn creating thousands of highly skilled 'green' collar jobs and new export opportunities.

Spark proposes to use its new facility to research and develop solar cell technology as a clean energy option for businesses and households both here in Australia and overseas.

While the location of the factory has not yet been finalised, regions including Adelaide, Geelong, Wollongong, Queanbeyan and Canberra are under consideration.

Construction and fit out of the factory is expected to be completed by mid-2010, with the first solar cells set to roll off the production line by late next year.

At full production, the factory is initially expected to produce more than 10 million solar cells each year, generating an estimated \$135 million in annual export revenue and employing more than 115 Australians in high tech positions.

MPF program is administered by my Department, with the purpose of facilitating and supporting private sector investment proposals through the approval processes of Federal and state/territory authorities. It also assists with the early identification of impediments to greater private sector investment.

The program demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting major new investments in Australia such as that proposed by Spark Solar Australia.

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## BACKGROUND

The Major Project Facilitation program is administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

Under the program, the Department provides the project with a facilitation service to achieve quick and timely assistance from the Australian Government. The service ensures:

- Access to information on government approval processes;
- All relevant government processes are coordinated, including those of state and territory governments, so that as far as possible they occur simultaneously and without duplication;
- Government agencies respond promptly to issues raised by the project proponent during the approval process; and
- Assistance in identifying and accessing government programs is provided.

MPF status does not imply any Government guarantee for the commercial success or otherwise of the project, nor does it absolve the project from meeting less than the full statutory and other requisite criteria of relevant approval processes.

Proponents may apply to the Minister for MPF status if their proposed project meets the following three criteria:

1. The project is of strategic significance to Australia:
  - The project will significantly boost Australian industry innovation.
    - a) Increasing research and development (R&D) and commercialisation capability; and/or
    - b) A new application of skills and knowledge; and/or
    - c) Technology transfer; and/or
    - d) Cluster development.
  - Or, the project will have significant net economic benefit for regional Australia, taking account of a region's investment needs.
  - Or, the project's estimated investment exceeds A\$50 million and makes a significant contribution to economic growth, employment and/or infrastructure.
2. Requires Australian Government approval(s) in order to proceed and/or significant Australian Government involvement through, for example, other Federal programs.
3. Has sufficient financial resources to complete the Australian Government approval(s) process and can demonstrate the reasonable commercial viability of the project.

Further details on the program are available from the Major Project Facilitation Unit with the Infrastructure Department: GPO Box 594, CANBERRA, 2601 or telephone +61 2 6274 7251.