

## **Environmental services: BP Solar Australia has energy to supply growing demand**

The international photovoltaic industry uses solar cells to convert light into electricity. With concerns over global warming increasing and technological advances driving prices down, the market is growing by 25 per cent each year. The composition of demand also is changing. In the 1980s and early 1990s, most solar panels provided remote area power supply or powered consumer products such as watches, calculators and toys, but from around 1995, industry efforts have focused increasingly on developing building-integrated solar panels for grid connected applications. Australian science and innovation are central to the development of solar power.

BP Solar has manufactured in Australia since 1981. It employs over 150 staff and uses the latest Australian technology; its new manufacturing facility at Homebush Bay, Sydney, should meet increasing Australian and overseas demand for solar cells.

BP Solar demonstrates its capabilities to foreign markets by drawing on its success in supplying sustainable and reliable energy solutions in remote Australia, such as solar powered telecommunication networks. BP Solar is pursuing major overseas projects, including supplying power to 36 000 homes in rural Indonesia, installing 1000 solar devices to provide power to 400 remote villages in the Philippines, and setting up a rural electrification scheme in Malaysia to provide power to 30 000 remote homes in Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia.

### **Student exercises**

1. If a 'grid connected' application refers to an electricity grid that could power a house, what is solar power increasingly be used for?
2. How does BP convince foreign buyers of its capabilities?
3. Prepare a short reply to someone claiming that exports cause environmental damage.