

War Room summit calls for action on renewables

Jason Clout

Australia has to develop more skilled professionals in renewable energy if the country is to deal with the coming challenges.

Senior associate for sustainability at Arup, Tim Jarvis, said Australia was behind economic giants China and Japan in developing renewable energy.

"But when I go to India and other places in the region, I also find a lot of Israeli companies with technology and people skilled in the sustainable industries," he said.

"I keep thinking this is the sort of capability Australia should have, but we don't."

Mr Jarvis is co-facilitator of the Creating Climate Wealth Summit which started in Sydney yesterday. It was organised by Richard Branson's non-profit group, the Carbon War Room.

An estimate by the group of renewable energy expenditure says \$US243 billion (\$227 billion) was spent in 2010. It cites reports by the Australian Cleantech Review, Bloomberg and the World Economic Forum to support the data. But it also estimates expenditure could reach \$US1.5 trillion by 2020.

Australia was in a curious position, Mr Jarvis believed.

"The country could be among those most affected by climate change," he said. "Yet it also has enormous access to many renewable forms of energy, such as solar, wind and tidal.

"It will depend on how much effort is put into energy policy,



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which I see as the key area."

For professionals in the area, more investment in renewable energy would mean more career opportunities.

But he said it was not the only growing field for sustainability experts. Waste management and specialised broking could be other areas for professionals.

"A financial industry could develop around things like REDD schemes," he said, referring to programs to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

Arup Australasia board member and buildings practice director Peter Bowtell is also scheduled to appear at the summit. He will co-chair the construction innovation group.

The Carbon War Room describes itself as a non-profit organisation which wants to implement market-driven solutions to climate change.

The summit will include innovation labs which will explore the areas with most potential including energy efficiency, aviation and renewable fuels, shipping and freight, and agriculture.

The Carbon War Room, which is based in the US, was founded by Mr Branson and a number of others including Michael Haas.

Mr Haas was the founder and chief executive officer of Orion Renewable Energy Group. The company has a number of major wind and solar projects in the US and Britain.