

Gas a specialised stream of Energy 21C

Australia's abundance of natural gas reserves will see this resource become increasingly important as an energy source for industrial and domestic consumers.

The Australian gas distribution is valued at over \$10 billion and it services around four million connections, including households, businesses and industry, through 75,000 km of pipelines.

Gas customers are increasing, however average consumption is static or in decline. This trend is expected to continue as the nation heads towards a carbon emissions trading scheme.

At the same time, the gas distribution sector is facing a package of proposed reforms that will shape the future of network business. These changes include:

- the proposed Gas Law and Rules, which are expected to be implemented in early 2008; and
- a new Gas Distribution Standard covering network management, preparing network safety and operating plans for gas networks, and installation and maintenance of steel and plastic pipe systems.

The Energy 21C meeting in Sydney from November 11 to 14 will feature a dedicated natural gas stream, giving this sector the biggest exposure in the history of the nation's premier energy transmission and distribution conference.

Michael Kilgariff is the Director of Industry and Policy for the Energy Networks Association (ENA), the peak national body representing gas distribution and electricity distribution and transmission throughout Australia.

He said the natural gas stream at Energy 21C was in recognition of an industry facing major expansion opportunities and challenges.

"At one end of the scale, there are great opportunities in gas network marketing to grow the use of gas in the fast developing areas of NSW and Queensland," he said.

“At the other end, the sector faces challenging regulations that will influence investment decisions to expand gas networks, particularly in regional areas.

“International experience is invaluable in helping to make informed judgements and decisions on the future of the Australian gas distribution sector.

“Among the keynote speakers in the gas stream at Energy 21C will be John Williams, Chief Executive Officer of the Institution of Gas Engineers and Managers (IGEM) in the United Kingdom.

“He will deliver a message from the International Gas Union, and speak on developing the skills for a vibrant gas industry.

“IGEM President, Richard Haddon, will also speak on recent developments and regulatory changes in the UK gas distribution network.”

Other presentations will include:

- International Gas Union and distribution issues – Barbara Jinks, GHD;
- Case study of recent growth approaches – Dale Weber, ActewAGL;
- Growing gas demand in the toughest market: Queensland – Rod Johannssen, APT;
- NGV: Has the time arrived? – Andrew Staniford, Envestra;
- Developing a National Gas Passport – Peter Buck, SP AusNet;
- Training competent people in the gas industry – Neil Williams, Tenix; and
- Industry leadership in training outcomes – Catherine Vandermark, Industry Skills Development Group, Department of Education, Science and Training.

A presentation session will be dedicated to the issue of developing an integrated gas distribution standard for Australia.

“Energy 21C features a compelling program for people who wish to gain insights into the future of the gas sector in Australia and overseas,” Michael Kilgariff said.

“The emphasis is on providing expert speakers and opportunities to network with people who are abreast of local and international developments.”