



HD Australia's academia cashes in on business ties By Christian Edwards

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SYDNEY, Feb. 17 -- Expected to pave the way towards Australian universities' march into global business is last week's historic **sale** of a groundbreaking high-tech start inspired by collaboration between business and academia.

A collaboration between Australian National University (ANU) and University of New South Wales (UNSW) special division NewSouth Innovations (NSi), Lithicon AS was snapped up for 76 **million** Australian dollars (about 68 **million** U.S. dollars) to US-based FEI **Company** specializing in imaging technology for **oil** and gas exploration.

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Little known NSi operates on the cutting edge of innovative and commercial science, its brief to operate as a gateway to research discoveries and inventions within UNSW.

NSi focuses on transforming research discoveries into successful innovations and products to benefit society, the economy and future generations.

The **sale** of Lithicon, previously known as Digitalcore, follows another NSi breakthrough last month when **China** Sunergy Co., a specialized **solar** cell and module manufacturer, announced a five-year collaborative research agreement with NSi to substantially improve **solar** cell efficiency by improving wafer material quality.

"This is an outstanding example of co-operation between two of Australia's leading research universities moving great research into use in our society and enabling new industries to evolve," said Graham Morton, general manager of UNSW's NSi.

NSi is taking to market more than 200 inventions in areas such as diagnostic and therapeutic drugs, biomedical devices, **solar** cell technology, waste recycling and nanotechnology.

The Sunergy deal will combine UNSW's advanced hydrogenation technology with **China** Sunergy's experience in cell process to enhance electrical properties of silicon wafers to gain significantly higher cell efficiencies.

UNSW will provide updates on its latest research advancements and, when necessary, provide training and education at UNSW.

"We are very delighted to collaborate with UNSW and NSi," said Dr. Jianhua Zhao, chief technology officer of **China** Sunergy.

"If this research proves successful, **China** Sunergy would gain significant competitive advantages and cost savings as we will be entitled to deploy the resulting technologies throughout our product portfolio."

Lithicon was originally set up in 2009 by ANU scientists in collaboration with colleagues at UNSW to develop an advanced computational approach to rapidly solving fluid behavior in **oil** reservoirs.

They came up with a revolutionary high-resolution 3D imaging technique with FEI planning to develop new markets outside **oil** and gas using the imaging technology.

ANU is garnering 11 **million** Australian dollars from the **sale** proceeds, representing a five-fold increase in its original investment.

UNSW will receive four **million** Australian dollars.

Prior to the start-up, researchers at ANU and UNSW created a research consortium with 14 multinational **oil** and gas companies to prove and develop the emerging technology and allow the concept to be market tested.

Lithicon general manager Dr. Victor Pantano said the Lithicon story is one of taking world-class research from two of Australia's best universities and turning it into a growing business.

"In the process we created a whole new industry segment based on high-value, intensive, knowledge-based services. It's exactly the sort of thing we should be doing in Australia and we need more of it," he said. (PNA/Xinhua)

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