

Eskom's investment into renewable research

Eskom puts money into renewable energy research by both the CSIR and Stellenbosch University, even though there appears to be a lack of will by the power utility's top brass to finalise the power purchase agreements for independent renewable producers.



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“Eskom’s unique role in driving the socio-economic growth requires us to work intimately with academic institutions to develop path-breaking knowledge base in the science environment,” divisional executive for corporate affairs, Chose Choeu said.

Stellenbosch University

He said that Eskom’s Power Plant Engineering Institute (EPPEI) has a renewable energy specialisation centre as part of the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies (CRSES) based at Stellenbosch University.

Echoing Eskom’s contribution in the renewable space, Choeu pointed out that CRSES received R2.6m in 2016, from Eskom’s EPPEI, and planned funding for 2017 is projected at about R4m. They also receive funding from the research, testing and development (R,T&D) business unit for a two-year renewable photovoltaic penetration study valued at R2.5m.

Choeu highlighted Eskom’s partnership with CRSES, which completed its 10th academic year in 2016.

“Over the period of its tenth academic year, the centre was involved in the graduation of three doctoral, 22 masters and a number of postgraduate diploma students. The centre has also been very successful in attracting additional funding from industry and government,” said Choeu.

In 2012 EPPEI identified concentrating solar power (CSP) and wind energy as the two focal areas for Eskom in the field of renewable energy and, subsequently, solar photovoltaics (PV) was added.

“Stellenbosch University has established itself as one of the leading universities in CSP research, in the world, and has developed a number of unique experimental facilities and technology. Eskom is proud to have made its substantial contribution to this journey,” Choeu said.

CSIR

He stated that Eskom has a R30.8m multi-year collaborative projects with CSIR, currently in progress, of which Eskom's contribution is R23.4m. Choeu said they also have another R17.5m in collaborative projects actively under consideration, currently.

“As Eskom, we have a deeply-rooted appreciation of academic independence. We encourage this by investing, in science research, without any contingent conditions that have a potential to remotely impede this canonised independence,” added Choeu.

He emphasised that Eskom is proud of their partnerships with various academic institutions on scientific research and technical work.

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