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NZGA Press Release – 28 February 2007

Upcoming Geothermal Development

The Executive Officer of the New Zealand Geothermal Association, Brian White says he is confident that there are substantial quantities of undeveloped or under-developed geothermal resources that could be readily tapped in New Zealand at competitive prices.

He was responding to recently announced plans by both Mighty River Power and Contact Energy to invest in geothermal electricity generation over the next few years, and to the Minister of Energy's speech at the National Power Conference in Auckland.

He noted that the Government's draft New Zealand Energy Strategy to 2050 showed that there is about 1000 MWe of geothermal electricity generation possible at prices less than that of (or competitive with) fossil fuel generation. He thought any investment in low emission renewables like geothermal energy, where the decision was based on hard economics rather than a policy twist, was a positive step forward. The Government also recognised benefits in terms of reduced emissions and is now looking at policy settings to further encourage investments in geothermal energy and other renewables.

Brian noted that there is potential for direct use of geothermal energy, as well as use for electricity generation. Direct use (say for space or water heating) involves a high front-end capital cost but low operating costs, and greater numbers of people are looking at these direct use options as they face higher energy costs in terms of electricity or fuel bills. There are geothermal options in many parts of New Zealand, whether they use warm wells from identified thermal areas in either the North or South Island, or heat pumps located almost anywhere in the country.

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The **New Zealand Geothermal Association (NZGA)** is an independent, non-profit industry association with a wide membership covering developers, regulators, researchers, consultants, Maori interests, suppliers, etc. It provides information on geothermal phenomena and utilisation for industry, government and educational organisations. The NZGA supports appropriate sustainable development of geothermal resources, and works with industry and government to achieve this. Website www.nzgeothermal.org.nz