BUSINESS & INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Greener transport future in sight for ACT

The ACT is well placed to lead the introduction of more environmentally-friendly vehicles. Find out what the future holds for motorists of electric vehicles in the ACT.

Canberra is well known for its use of cleaner gas-fuelled buses. Now it is the turn of cars and other vehicles to contribute to a lighter carbon footprint for the city. This will be done not with gas or biofuel, but by using electricity from renewable sources.

While motorists in the ACT have been early adopters of hybrid vehicles such as the electric and fuel powered Prius, widespread development and adoption of pure electric vehicles has been stymied here and around the world by a lack of an effective charging infrastructure.

Global company *Better Place* has now announced that Canberra has been selected with two other cities around the world as the first where it will develop its new electric car infrastructure.

Better Place has the support of ActewAGL and the ACT Government for its launch of the ACT city-wide roll-out.

ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope is a strong supporter of the project saying the design of Canberra as a city built for motor vehicles presents many environmental challenges.

"We are well-placed to support this exciting new technology which will use renewable energy to power electric vehicles on Canberra's roads.

"The ACT Government remains committed to leading the nation in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the announcement shows we are well placed to attract both new investment and new green jobs to Canberra," Mr Stanhope said.

Better Place proposes a regional network of charge spots and switch stations which will provide convenient, reliable opportunities to charge electric vehicles (EVs).

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It anticipates that within the next three years it will begin establishing charge spots at private homes, workplaces and public locations such as retail and other commercial areas, car parks and streets.

The company proposes to build an electric vehicle network capable of supporting the switch of Australia's 15 million cars to zero emission vehicles.

Its Australian rollout is also in the only country chosen so far with a domestic vehicle manufacturing capability.

Switch stations will also be built so that drivers can exchange batteries during longer journeys in less than the time it takes to fill a petrol tank.

AGL will provide all of the renewable energy needed to power the electric vehicles from wind and other sources.

Work with developers and suppliers of renewable energy is the key to ensuring delivery of zero emissions driving to customers.

The ACT Electric Vehicle Council has now been established to promote EVs as a viable and sustainable transport alternative in the ACT and surrounding region.

The Council—industry, science, business, community and government representatives—is the first Electric Vehicle Council in Australia.

Ivan Slavich, the founding Council Chairman and ActewAGL Executive, said the Council envisages that the widespread adoption of EVs can and will occur in the ACT with effective support and direction from appropriate stakeholders.

He said ActewAGL was able to source renewable energy through AGL, Australia's largest generator of renewable energy.

"ActewAGL is also the only utility in the country to own both a distribution and retail network, making the rollout of electric vehicle infrastructure a much more straightforward exercise than it will be in other cities", Mr Slavich said.

Chief Minister Jon Stanhope has shown that the Government wants to encourage the transition to electric vehicles recently announcing the ACT Government is considering the introduction of EVs to the Government fleet.

This would not only reduce the impacts of government business on the environment, but also help foster wider adoption of EVs in the Territory and encourage car manufacturers and EV infrastructure companies to invest in the ACT market 'sending a signal that there is a vibrant market in the Territory for new, zero emission vehicle technology'.

During a recent trade mission to London Mr Stanhope met with representatives of London City Council which has made a firm commitment to the uptake of EVs and the installation of charge points. ■