

Business with the breeze at its back



Austeng managing director Ross George said the wind turbines are "a no-brainer if you put a price on carbon and this thing reduces carbon." Picture: Ian Kenins.

North Geelong engineering firm Austeng has unveiled what it hopes to be the first of many new wind turbines that will help reduce energy costs for manufacturers throughout Australia.

In conjunction with a Brisbane-based developer Michael LeMessurier and Renewable Energy Solutions Australia (RESA) the eco-whisper turbines provide 20 kilowatts of power that it claims will reduce power

consumption by 20 to 40 percent.

Michael LeMessurier describes the 21.1 metre high turbine as an ideal size for industry. "There's nothing else like these in Australia. The European ones are too small and are not cheap while the ones you see on the coast are too big. Ours produce commercial quantities of electricity to really have an impact on power production."

operate almost silently. Mr LeMessurier expects manufacturers will have an average of four turbines per site.

Each turbine retails for \$146,000 which includes the cost of laying foundations and installation. Michael LeMessurier said "In the best case scenario a business can expect payback within four to five years, and eight to ten years worst case scenario. It all depends on the site and how much wind it receives. Windier areas produce more power."

Another benefit to business, said Michael LeMessurier, is that Victoria has a net feed-in tariff of one-to-one in which any electricity a company exports to its power provider is paid back in full.

Austeng managing director Ross George said the market for the turbines could be quite significant and a real boon to his company.

"We need to reinvent our customer base because old customers are sourcing products from overseas, so this is ideal. We're in the business of engineering solutions and the solution most people are looking for at the moment is energy conservation. There's a potential to pick up government work with a directive that federal departments have to get at least 20 percent of their energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020."

In the short term Ross George says any contracts will secure employment at his plant. "Manufacturers in Australia are struggling to keep jobs going and this will maintain jobs and keep hold of our skills base."

Both Ross George and Michael LeMessurier said that although the eco turbine concept began two years ago, the introduction of carbon pricing is fortuitous. "You think it would have to help," said Ross George. "It's a no-brainer if you put a price on carbon and this thing reduces carbon."

Michael LeMessurier said "The carbon tax is great for us and will affect big emitters looking for ways to reduce their carbon output."

Ian Kenins

Mr LeMessurier said Geelong, being a windy area, is ideal for the turbines that have already received the council's tick of approval concerning planning regulations. He added that the CoGG have been "exceptionally supportive" during the development phase.

The aluminium structures look like a giant vintage hairdryer making them more visible to birds and