



# RedFlow powers ahead with battery rollout

**Kerrie Sinclair**

ALL too often, Karara Hotel was the pub with no power – its ATM link, fuel bowser, and business generally, flatlining.

But hotelier Natasha Hilton says it's now a pub without fear of the outages that frustrate the Darling Downs town at the end of the transmission line, 200km southwest of Brisbane. Others now covet its new weapon.

"If anything disrupted the line between here and Toowoomba, we'd be down, maybe for days. I couldn't run my business. Now, when the power's out, people come in and say 'hey, how come you've got power?'. Then they remember," she says.

Its lifeline is a power storage system, a 10-kilowatt-hour capacity zinc-bromine battery, designed in 2001 by two Queensland engineer brothers, Chris and Alex Winter. Chris is now chief technology officer and Alex chief engineer of RedFlow Technologies, the company founded in 2005 and

now taking the technology into commercial rollout.

Privately held RedFlow recently held a \$2 million capital raising for ongoing working capital, plus funds to boost output at its Seventeen Mile Rocks factory in Brisbane's western suburbs from a capacity of eight units a month to 20 currently and 30 by late-September.

RedFlow says it is believed to be the largest facility of its kind in the world. Chief executive Phil Hutchings says federal and state programs were crucial to RedFlow's early development. It now has 35 staff, including 14 engineers.

Those programs helped get foundation customers on board, including electricity distributors Energy Australia and Ergon Energy which put about 30 RedFlow systems out in the field for initial trials and feedback before the current commercialisation stage. Karara Hotel is half-way through its free two-year trial of the

RedFlow battery.

Natasha Hilton says: "Everyone who hasn't got one, wants one." Mr Hutchings says international interest is also strong.

"We've got plenty of pent-up customer demand. We have major international companies coming to us – we really are regarded as a world leader in this space.

"All that we're producing now for the next two months is fully committed; then we're putting in place sales programs to pick up the rest as we go along."

Power storage systems enable greater use of renewable electricity generation such as wind and solar, which at smaller scale need back-up power sources.

Batteries also provide power utilities with an option for meeting peak demand periods and thereby curb the need for new transmission spending which is the main cause of recent power price hikes.

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**BIG FUTURE:** RedFlow co-founder Chris Winter at their factory.

## RedFlow's bright future

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Spending by Queensland utilities on network infrastructure and upgrades is estimated to total about \$15.6 billion by 2015. Mr Hutchings says that as

more utilities and consumers switch to smart grids and local distribution, zinc-bromine batteries will play an integral part.

RedFlow estimates the global market for electricity storage

systems like its technology is already \$8 billion annually.

It says its batteries are strong rivals for lead-acid and lithium-ion batteries because overall it's cheaper and its batteries have

no limited shelf-life.

State Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development Andrew Fraser, officially opens the expanded RedFlow facility today.