Electric cars on trial in the west

A fleet of 11 electrically powered Ford Focus cars will be cruising the streets of Perth by year’s end, as part of a two-year trial to research the performance, environmental and economic benefits and infrastructure needs of the electric vehicle industry.

The trial, launched in March, was initiated by CO2 Smart Pty Ltd in collaboration with research partner, the University of Western Australia’s Renewable Energy Vehicle Project.

The vehicles will be converted from petrol to electric by EV Works and will be tested by trial partners from state and local government and the private sector.

Up to 12 ‘fast-recharge’ bays will be installed around Perth, which can recharge empty batteries in three hours. The charging stations will collect data relating to charging behaviour, which will be used to forecast power and grid capacity requirements in the future as electric vehicle numbers increase.

The trial is the first step in establishing a knowledge base for widespread use of electric cars in Western Australia – which has some of the largest average commuting distances in the world – and subsequently, the rest of Australia.

CO2 Smart Chief Executive Officer, Terry Mader, and UWA’s Professor Thomas Bräunl, said the trial will answer questions about how people will recharge and at what times, and what infrastructure is required on the street or at home.

Wendy Pyper

New toolkit of building material life cycle resources

A toolkit of life cycle assessment resources for Australian building materials, products and buildings is due for release in November. The toolkit will include life cycle information on some 100 building materials, and provide a method to standardise interpretation of the ISO 14040 (life cycle assessment framework) in Australia. It will also contribute to the Australian Life Cycle Inventory Database Initiative (AusLCI) being developed by the Australian Life Cycle Assessment Society (ALCAS).

The toolkit will enable high quality life cycle assessment (LCA) studies to be conducted for buildings, assemblies, products and materials and support LCA-based design tools and the development of life cycle based eco-labels and environmental product declarations. This may provide architects, designers, retailers and consumers with a benchmark for comparing and assessing the sustainability of products. Suppliers may also use it to appropriately promote the environmental attributes of their products and services.

The $1.6 million project is jointly funded by the Building Products Innovation Council (BPIC) and AusIndustry, while partners include ALCAS, CSIRO, BRANZ and state and federal governments.

BPIC CEO, Mr Ian Frame, said that the Green Building Council of Australia has expressed interest in life cycle based credits from the BPIC and AusLCI projects and may incorporate these into future Green Star ratings.

Wendy Pyper

IPCC Fifth Report

CSIRO’s Dr Mark Howden will continue to be a major contributor to the IPCC’s reports.

A team of 827 climate change experts has been selected to author and edit the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The experts are drawn from fields including meteorology, physics, oceanography, statistics, engineering, ecology, social sciences and economics.

For the next four years the experts will contribute to three Working Group Reports that will comprise the AR5. Working Group I (WGI) will focus on the physical science of climate change; WGII will assess the impacts, adaptation strategies and vulnerability related to climate change; and WGIII will cover mitigation response strategies.

Approximately 3000 individuals were nominated for the expert panel – 50 per cent more than were nominated for the Fourth Assessment Report, published in 2007. Of those selected about 30 per cent come from developing countries or economies in transition, some 25 per cent are female and 60 per cent are new to the IPCC process. IPCC Chairman, Dr Rajendra Pachauri, said the selection reflects the IPCC’s efforts to increase regional and gender balance and bring in new knowledge and perspectives.

The AR5 will be published between 2013 and 2014, and a Synthesis Report in 2014.

Wendy Pyper

More information
IPCC: www.ipcc.ch/