



**MEDIA RELEASE - The Southland Times, 24 Jan**

## **Electric cars charging ahead**

A power company has taken charge of Southland's electric vehicle population, encouraging businesses to include the environmentally friendly vehicles into their fleets.

PowerNet was awarded \$20,000 from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority, to co fund a project encouraging the uptake of electric vehicles.

The company will also contribute \$20,000 towards the project.

PowerNet electrical engineer Dyson Gentle said in order to entice businesses, PowerNet was offering to supply free charging units and installation, and would provide any information needed to have an electric vehicle.

The company planned to target 10 businesses, and data would be gathered from the charging stations to better understand load and charging patterns for the electric vehicles.

"We're hoping to learn more about how the vehicles are charged and that ultimately helps us build a more efficient, cost effective network," Gentle said.

"EVs stand out as really beneficial for New Zealand in terms of off-setting greenhouse gases."

While the cost of buying an electric vehicle varied, some of the older models, which dated back to 2011, were quite comparable to buying a second-hand car, he said.

When plugged into a charging station, it takes between two and three hours to charge. When plugged into a normal power supply at home, it can take about eight hours because the capacity on the electric vehicle-specific chargers was more.

There are also fast-charging stations around New Zealand, but just one in Invercargill, which charges an electric vehicle to 80 per cent in 20 minutes, Gentle said.

PowerNet chief executive Jason Franklin said there were plans to install more stations across the South Island.

The company was working on a separate proposal to look at having fast charging stations "in the region as a whole", he said.

"That allows people to get over the recharge anxieties, to get to the destination they need to without the inconvenience," he said.

"We see a significant opportunity for the adoption of EVs and we realise we've got a role to play in their adoption."

Central government has also been encouraging the use of EVs, and introduced a programme in May last year to encourage the use of the vehicles.

The programme aims to double the number of electric vehicles in New Zealand every year to reach about 64,000 by 2021.



PowerNet electrical engineer Dyson Gentle hopes Southland businesses will be interested in introducing electric vehicles to their fleets. ROBYN EDIE, FAIRFAX NZ 633656250