

# Time for some bright sparks

## The State cops an F grade for its EV policy but the Government says it's acting now

**SAM JEREMIC**

Today will see events held across the globe as part of the first World EV Day, including up to 100 electric vehicles gathering at Crown Perth, but Australia's leading electric vehicle body says WA is failing in its efforts to prepare for widespread EV use.

In its State of Electric Vehicles 2020 report issued last month, the Electric Vehicle Council awarded WA an F grade for its lack of an EV policy.

EVC chief executive Behyad Jafari said WA had gone backwards since signing a memorandum of understanding in 2017 to develop an electric vehicle policy and other strategies to support EV uptake.

"Since that time, they've been steadily working away on it but it's been three years and the work is still ongoing," he said.

"In previous analysis we've scored WA higher because they were at least working towards it, but I think we've called time on that. Other major States and Territories have their plans in place and they've been executing them for some time; it's now well past time to actually see that action out of WA."

"I'm sure it will eventually

come. When it does land and it's been executed, we'll shift that score back up. But they should have delivered by now."

The State Government defended its action on EVs, with a Department of Water and Environmental Regulation spokesperson saying the Western Australian Electric Vehicles Working Group was finalising an Electric Vehicle Strategy for Government which it expected to release within the next six months.

"The Western Australian Electric Vehicles Working Group has been investigating a range of actions to support the uptake of electric vehicles focusing on the areas of charging infrastructure, fleets, standards and guidelines, and stakeholder awareness," the spokesperson said, before adding there were already initiatives under way.

"The Western Australian Government is already acting to support the uptake of electric vehicles, including installing charging infrastructure in State Government buildings, making it easier for Government agencies to purchase electric vehicles for their fleets and installing and/or supporting the rollout of fast and medium-speed charging stations in Perth and in

**'We've got some really bright companies doing things.'**

**Behyad Jafari**

regional areas such as Collie, Esperance, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Warmun and Broome.

"The McGowan Government has also extended buyback payments as part of the



Charging infrastructure needs to be expanded.

Distributed Energy Buyback Scheme to export energy from electric vehicles in the same way as rooftop solar."

The spokesperson also pointed out many Government entities, including Western Power and the Water Corporation were testing electric vehicles across their operations, while a trial of electric buses on the Joondalup CAT route will begin in 2022.

However, Mr Jafari maintained WA was behind other States.

"Look across the other side of the country, New South Wales is going through the process of making 100 per cent of its bus fleet electric," he said. "The time for trials has passed now."

The Northern Territory and Federal governments were also deemed to be failing, while the ACT was awarded a B for recent initiatives including adding hydrogen vehicles to its fleet and testing vehicle-to-grid technology with Nissan Leafs.

Mr Jafari said States were in many respects hamstrung by a lack of action at a Federal level.

"A lot of the levers and policies required to shift our market are Federal ones; the Federal Government should be leading and the States



WA sites such as Mineral Resources' Wodgina project already mine the lithium needed for EV batteries. Picture: Mineral Resources

complementing policies," he said. "But given that hasn't occurred, States are having to step up and fill that gap."

Mr Jafari said WA's natural resources meant it was in a particularly good position to capitalise on EV growth, claiming the issue was clouded by being dragged into the "climate wars".

"I sometimes joke if they weren't a clean energy, we'd have acted on them just because of all the other benefits they provide," he said.

"The whole world shifting to electric vehicles means they need the minerals that are in WA in order to support that transition — we have quite a lot to gain," he said, before adding it was a matter of when, not if, EVs would become the norm.

"This is the way we're going,"

he said.

"Doing nothing means that it will happen here about 10 years later than other developed markets.

"We've got some really bright companies doing things like building charging infrastructure, developing software and tools for electric vehicles.

"A lot of companies would like to go down the value chain of building the batteries and battery management components to help us really take advantage of some of those natural benefits and competitive advantages we have here.

"If we take up EVs 10 years after everyone else, all of that goes away — it would be like trying to start Facebook here if we didn't have the internet."

## Electric dreams

### WA's vast expanses aren't the obstacle many imagine for cars that shun fossil fuel

**SAM JEREMIC**

With its seemingly endless road network cutting through vast, desolate areas, WA would appear to be one of the more difficult places to own an electric vehicle.

Gemtek Group director and Tesla Roadster owner Florian Popp admits range anxiety remains the number one concern among people he talks to. But he also has a pretty convincing argument up his sleeve.

"I've crossed the Nullarbor in an electric car," he said.

Mr Popp, who is also a

committee member of the Australian Electric Vehicle Association's WA branch and helped organise Perth's EV event being held at Crown today, says despite work being needed to address power systems and EV servicing in regional areas, the feedback he has received indicates EVs can be an option for more than just city dwellers.

"The reality, is even in regional areas, the local traffic doesn't drive to Perth every day; they drive into town and back home," he said. "The actual mechanics of it are there already, it's possible to drive an electric car anywhere.



Florian Popp's Tesla Roadster in the Targa rally. Picture: Tim Allott

"It's more a cultural shift, hearts and minds. We all think we're driving to Exmouth — we're not. We probably drive there once a year, or once every three years.

People drive a LandCruiser to

go pick up the kids from school every day: do we really need to be driving these big 4WDs everywhere? Probably not."

Mr Popp also stressed EV ownership didn't have to be all about environmental concern.

He bought his Roadster in 2017 to compete in the 2018-19 Targa West rally.

A Tesla Model 3, meanwhile, took out the Targa 130 category at the Targa South West at Pemberton last month.

Mr Popp said it was important car and motorsport enthusiasts realised they wouldn't be left behind in a shift to EVs — in fact, it could help prolong their favourite cars' lives via converting to electric.

"We're not just preaching hippy and green," he said.

"That's why we do the Targa events: it's actually engaging with the car guys in a positive way and it's a good place to engage with the TAFEs and the element of people who are car enthusiasts, the motorsport guys. There are so many great cars in WA, instead of doing a swap, you could chuck an electric motor in it and it adds years of life."