

EV pioneer

Its new four seat Electron Deep Green "S" will have a claimed city range of 160 kilometres and can be recharged using the standard public recharge outlets in just two hours, some six hours faster than its rivals.

Mr Blade said his company had also developed a world-first battery cooling system.

"Until now the heat generated from fast charging could not be easily removed but that barrier has been broken and the technology is now being adapted for production," he explained.

The Society of Automotive Engineers Australasia has offered Mr Blade a speaking position in a forthcoming conference.

The society's executive director, Max Chanter, called Mr Blade a pioneer in the world of electric vehicles.

"He's recognised by most people in the industry as being one," Mr Chanter said.

"He has done a tremendous job to get as far as he has with limited resources.

"But if you go through the history of the motor car, pioneers are always the ones having difficulties."

Mr Chanter said Mr Blade, who he likened to orbital engine developer Ralph Sarich, was not on the main conference speaking list because he "didn't fit the program agenda".

He said Mr Blade had been offered a "five to 15-minute presentation" during the lunch break.

Another company involved in the electric vehicle sector is Melbourne-based Better Place.

Better Place plans to dominate electric vehicle infrastructure in Australia by setting up battery switch and charge stations across the country.

The company's CEO is former Victorian ALP politician Evan Thornley. Ben Keneally, husband of former NSW ALP premier Kristina Keneally, heads strategy and marketing.

And there's no denying the line-up of corporate heavy hitters in the Better Place ranks.

According to the company's website, other executives have worked at GM Holden, ExxonMobil, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley.



CUTTING EDGE: The Blade Electron DGL is a remanufactured Hyundai Getz.



Harrison Young is Better Place Australia's chairman. Mr Young is currently the chairman of the National Broadband Network.

One senior executive, Talal Yassine, is the former director of corporate finance of Babcock and Brown.

Mr Yassine was awarded an OAM last year, according to the company's website.

Simon Holmes a Court, chairman of Hepburn Wind, is an investor in Better Place.

Better Place plans to raise \$1 billion before 2013, according to reports.

So Mr Blade is a very small fish.

He said his technology would fall outside that offered by Better Place, with Blade vehicle owners owning, not swapping,



their batteries, and Blade cars continuing to offer the option of recharging from any home powerpoint.

Mr Blade's challenges have been taken up in federal parliament by DLP Senator John Madigan.

Senator Madigan asked Minister for Innovation Kim Carr why General Motors Holden, a beneficiary of \$140 million in government green car funding, was withholding vehicles from Blade while supplying them to Better Place, a company he called "predominantly foreign owned".

Mr Carr denied GMH was withholding vehicles and said it was not a matter the government would involve itself in directly.

Today Blade is instead

negotiating with a leading Chinese automotive manufacturer to import new vehicle bodies to expand production at its Castlemaine factory.

This week the Member for Bendigo Steve Gibbons told *The Courier* he had raised the Blade issue on "several occasions" with the government.

"I spoke to the Prime Minister about it when she was here in Bendigo ... and I raised with it with the secretary of the Cabinet. I'm not aware of any department that has taken it up yet because I suspect the departments aren't all that interested.

"We'll just keep trying. Beyond that, I'm not going to say any more."

A Holden spokesperson said its commercial arrangements were confidential but Holden had not "refused" to supply vehicles to Blade.

Calls from *The Courier* to the office of Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese on the issue of Blade's involvement in a Federal Government trial went unreturned.

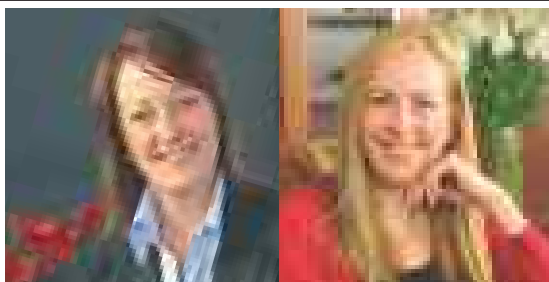
A Better Place spokesperson said the company had made no donations to the ALP, nor had received federal government funding.

Better Place "strongly" believed in and supported competition, the spokesman said.

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