

More charging stations, please

Jon Solmundson

More charging stations should be built around the city for Perth's growing number of electric cars, according to a Perth renewable energy expert.

UWA Renewable Energy Vehicle Project director Thomas Braünl said electric car sales had increased substantially in 2012.

According to one professional installer, EV Works, 253 electric cars

were sold in Australia last year, up almost 500 per cent from 2011.

"I think we'll need significantly more infrastructure," Professor Braünl said.

"Commercially, there's no money to be made on a network of charging stations, so that's why we're not seeing anything happen yet."

Professor Braünl said the stations should be funded by the State Government or the RAC.

"I think it's important to have a target

and apply some measures and incentives to reach that target, especially to decrease emissions and improve air quality for our cities," he said.

The Renewable Energy Vehicle Project has set up 23 charging points across Perth, which are operated from the University of Western Australia.

Murdoch University engineering and energy academic Jonathan Whale said he expected to see a large growth in electric cars in the next 5-10 years as new technology from the United

States is rolled out.

It takes 3-4 hours to fully charge a car battery, but the new technology will allow an 80 per cent charge in 20 minutes.

Dr Whale said cars converted to electric power had a range of 100-150km when fully charged.

Professor Braünl said hundreds of thousands of people worldwide had already converted their cars from petrol to electric.

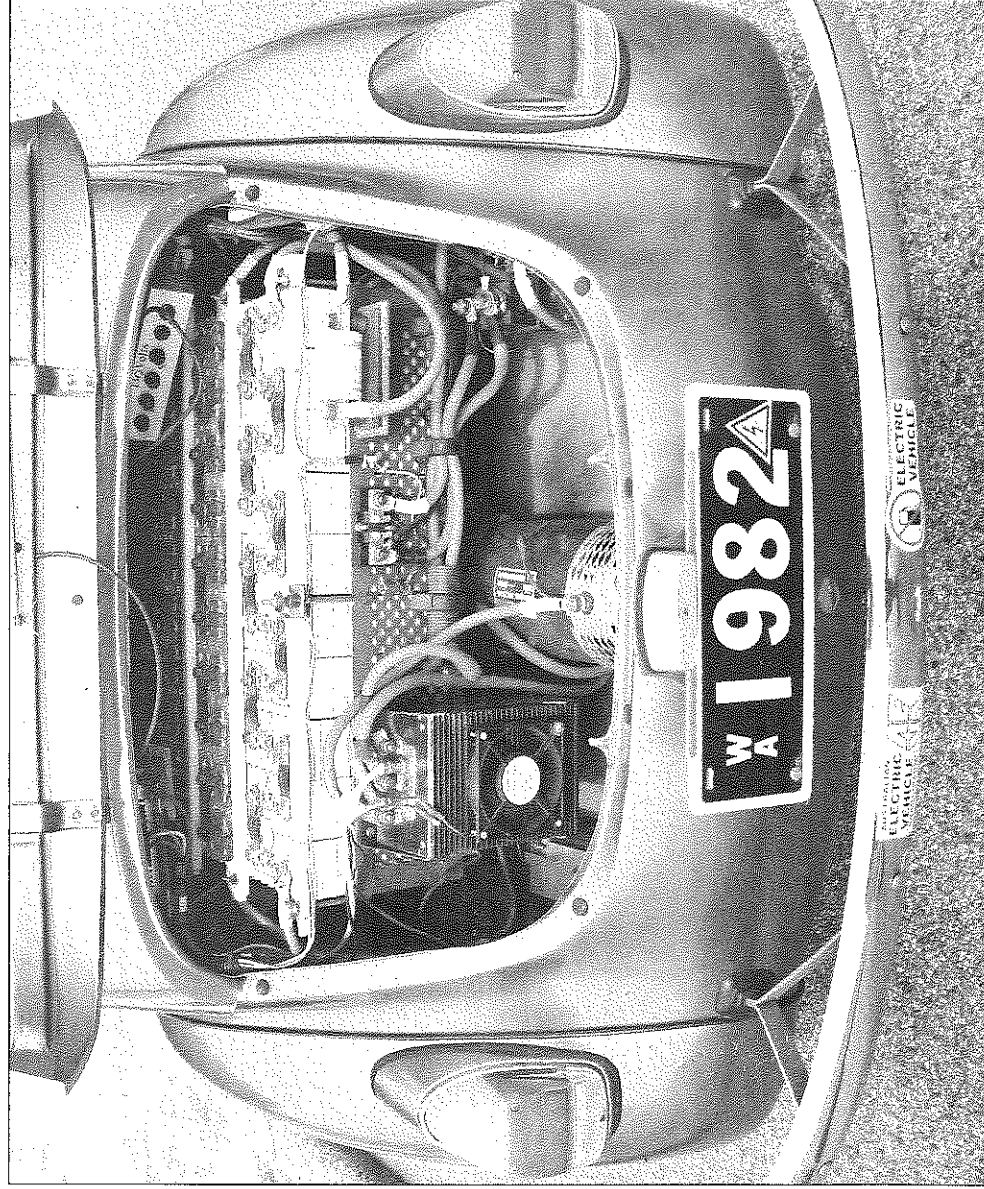
As an emerging market, electric con-

versions are split between hobby projects and professional work by installers like EV Works in Landsdale.

EV Works owner Rob Mason said the company had done more than 30 conversions since 2006.

Mr Mason said the cost of conversion depended on the size of the vehicle. Conversion costs ranged from \$20,000 to \$30,000, he said.

"Generally, if you buy electricity from the grid, at full retail price it's about 3-4 cents a kilometre," Mr Mason said.



NO MONEY IN CHARGING: The electric engine of a converted car.

PHOTO: Tessa Maybery.



EMERGING: An electric car owner charging his car. PHOTO: Tessa Maybery.