



Australian Government  
Australian Trade Commission



Investment success story | Better Place

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## Better Place selects Australia as a priority market for zero emissions transport

### Why a world-leading electric car charge network chose Australia

Since the first electric car was built in 1835, manufacturers have struggled to solve its biggest problem: an affordable battery that lasts. Now, with improvements to lithium-ion batteries and capacity improving each year, mass electric-powered transportation is finally within reach.

One international company – already far advanced down this road – has brought its technology and business model to Australia to demonstrate that the electric car is an affordable, convenient and attractive option for mainstream drivers.

Better Place is building the charge network – infrastructure and services – that keeps electric cars on the road and extends their range via a unique battery-switching model. The infrastructure includes private and public charge spots, battery switch stations, and sophisticated in-car GPS software.

The company has been in the business of clean technology for only three years but its early success with zero-emissions transport has captured the attention of the biggest names in the automotive and renewable energy industries.

A large car market, long driving distances, existing knowledge of smart grids and support for clean technology projects makes Australia an ideal location to show that electric cars are an attractive alternative in large countries as well as small.

### Australia's role in a global operation

Headquartered in Palo Alto, California, and with international operations, Better Place works with all sections of the global transportation chain, including automakers, battery suppliers, energy companies, and the public sector. It has hundreds of employees around the world in Israel, Denmark, China, France, Japan, the United States and Australia, where it now has 46 employees.



Image courtesy of Better Place

Work on Better Place's Australian charge network is underway in Canberra, ACT.

**“Australia is an open business environment that is conducive to starting a new business, undertaking planning and establishing channels and operations.”**

Evan Thornley, Better Place Australia CEO

Better Place is currently rolling out its electric car charge network in Israel and Denmark. The Australian charge network has already begun going into the ground in Canberra, Better Place's first entry point, with the aim of customers coming online in the middle of next year and a progressive national rollout due to follow.

In November 2010, Better Place launched its Australian Operations Centre (OC) in Melbourne. The OC is the brains of the Better Place service in Australia. It houses the smart-charge software, call centre technology, monitoring equipment and operations employees that will help ensure that drivers on the Better Place network always have the energy they need.

This will be fundamental to the success of Better Place as more Australian drivers switch to electric. The OC will manage hundreds of thousands of electric cars on the roads as the Better Place infrastructure is established.

Recently, the company signed a landmark A\$60 million agreement with Australian multi-utility company ActewAGL – the largest renewable energy deal of its kind in Australia. Under the agreement, ActewAGL will supply renewable energy from wind, hydro and solar sources to Better Place's electric car charging network in Canberra. This is the first such deal of its kind for Better Place and similar deals are expected to follow as the company expands its network.

## The advantages of Australia

Better Place says Australia has many competitive advantages as an early location for electric car charge networks. Australia is a large car market where more than a million cars are sold per year. It has a strong fleet network in place. The average Australian motorist drives about 15,000 km a year, making petrol a major expense. Australia has a high proportion of two-car households; and many homes come with off-street parking that makes charging an electric car simple and convenient.

Finally, Better Place says Australia has a sophisticated electricity market, existing knowledge of smart electricity grids, and an understanding of the significance of electric cars for renewable energy opportunities.

Better Place Australia CEO, Evan Thornley, says the large-scale adoption of electric cars is a natural step for Australia as it moves towards a low-emission economy.

"Australia was selected because it is such a big country," says Thornley. "The Better Place solution is scalable, and a large country like Australia can demonstrate this well. There is a common misconception that electric cars are small and can only be driven short distances by people living in the inner city.

"But it is actually those people who spend the most on petrol – driving large, powerful cars long distances – who will benefit most from electric cars. The bulk of petrol consumed in Australia is by people who live in outer suburbs of our major cities.

"Additionally, Australia has a domestic car industry that can benefit from being at the forefront of the new generation of driving. Australia knows how to make large, powerful vehicles. It also has an opportunity to be the world leader in building large, powerful electric vehicles that offer zero-emissions driving.

"We are part of EV Engineering, a consortium that is building seven proof-of-concept electric Holden Commodores with battery-switch capability. The goal is to demonstrate the technical viability and attractiveness to customers of a large electric car. The project will allow technologies to be considered for possible future mass production and will help to develop electric vehicle engineering skills and components within the Australian supplier industry."

"Australia is an open business environment that is conducive to starting a new business, undertaking planning and establishing channels and operations," adds Thornley.

## Australia as a priority market

The strategic intent behind Better Place's decision to invest in Australia was to prove its business model in a large market.

"Australia is a priority for Better Place," says Thornley. "It's an advanced economy that is performing well. It has a sophisticated automotive market with a wide range of vehicle classes and a local car manufacturing industry. The driving patterns of fleets and private motorists are ideal for the switch to electric, on both economic and environmental grounds. Australia is the proving ground that will demonstrate our model works at scale in a large country, with application for future markets such as North America."

However, the benefits are not for Better Place alone. The company says its electric car charge network will help Australia reduce its dependency on fossil fuels, revolutionise local transport infrastructure and habits, and help reinforce Australia's reputation as an environmentally-friendly country.

Says Thornley: "Australia has helped us grow stronger, with a successful local capital raising in 2009, recruitment of world-class management, and rapid progression towards implementing the largest electric car charge network in the world. Better Place is making sustainable transport a reality for Australia."

## About Austrade

The Australian Trade Commission – Austrade – is the Australian Government's trade and investment development agency. Through our global network, we assist Australian companies to succeed in international business and attract productive foreign direct investment into Australia.