

Securing the future of Australian oil refining

Southern Oil Refining is driven to enter new markets to stay ahead of international competition. Together with CSIRO, they have developed a new process to improve their products, with industrial-scale trials planned for 2014.

Wagga Wagga-based company Southern Oil Refining (SOR) produces a range of quality base oils recycled from waste lubricant oils.

The company's process is unlike traditional refining processes that use crude oil. Re-refining has significant environmental benefits by preventing the release of waste oil into the environment and ensuring that contaminants are properly removed and safely disposed of.

"Our current base oil products meet Group I category, and while the domestic and international market for them remains strong, demand is expected to move to higher quality Group II oils in future," says SOR research and development manager, Dick Dexter.

"We wanted to get a step ahead and enter into the Group II market. To do this, we needed to find a way to remove the sulphur from our oils to improve their quality," says Mr Dexter.

There was no information freely available around existing technologies, so the company had to undertake its own research.

CSIRO's SME Engagement Centre assisted SOR to access valuable expertise through Enterprise Connect's Researchers in Business program, which placed key researcher, Michael Batten, in the business to work together on a solution.

"We undertook testing in the lab and then assessed which combination to remove the sulphur worked best and how to bring it to market," says Dr Batten.



Southern Oil Refining re-refines about eight per cent of Australia's waste oil.

The team have come up with a new process that will improve the quality of SOR's products. Mr Dexter says they hope to trial the process at an industrial-scale in early 2014.

"We're continuing to work with CSIRO beyond the Researchers in Business project to help bring it to market. Ongoing research and development is critical for the business to remain competitive, compliant and to meet changing market needs," he says.

The Enterprise Connect Researchers in Business program is an Australian government initiative that supports the placement of a researcher in a business to develop a commercial idea.

CSIRO's SME Engagement Centre is ready to work with SMEs who want to use science to gain competitive advantage, improve profitability and help their business grow.



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