

BUSINESS SOUTH-EAST

Chipping in for biofuels

By NARELLE COULTER

REBECCA Yee and her business partner Dale Barnett are big fans of the humble fish and chip dinner.

The more people tuck into this take-away staple the more source product the entrepreneurial duo has for their fledging biofuel business.

Rebecca and Dale's Dandenong South business, Biofuel Innovations, turns waste oil into biodiesel, an environmentally friendly alternative to petroleum diesel.

Rebecca, who has a doctorate in chemical engineering and Dale, who is also an engineer, met through friends.

They share a commitment to sustainability which has now grown into a business.

"It all started because Dale was brewing his own beer and using biofuel to run his car," explained Rebecca.

"I love gardening and grow a lot of my own food. We both shared a passion for sustainability and both thought we had the know how to make a contribution."

In an Australian first, the pair have perfected a second generation technology method which uses a natural catalyst enzyme to convert used fish and chip fryer oil into biodiesel.

About 10 Greater Dandenong fish and chip shops store their waste oil for Rebecca and Dale to collect once a month.

They also collected the waste oil from the weekend's Lunar New Year celebrations in Springvale.

"A lot of people don't think about their waste," said Rebecca.

"Fish and chip shop owners have a lot of things to manage and in many cases up to 20 litres of oil a week is just dumped," Rebecca said.

Much of Australia's waste commercial cooking oil is sent overseas.

"We export our waste oil then import it back again, but we don't know what has been done to it. We essentially wash our hands of it. That's where we want to get involved."

"We want fuel that is Melbourne made," Rebecca said.

Rebecca Yee is making a contribution to both business and the environment. Picture: GARY SISSONS



Biodiesel can be used in any diesel engine without modification as a replacement for fossil diesel.

Biodiesel's lubricating qualities helps prolong an engine's life and is much better than diesel for the environment with cleaner exhaust emissions and zero sulphur emissions.

Biofuel Innovations sells its fuel wholesale direct to trucking and transport companies for \$1.10 per litre.

Biofuel Innovations also sells glycerine, a by-product of the refining process, which is used for soap, cosmetics and candles and as a hand degreaser.

At the moment, the company is producing 30,000 litres of biofuel a month. Rebecca said that would be the business moves to

new permanent premises in England Street at the start of April.

"Demand is out there, it's just a matter of finding the right people interested in sustainable fuel. A lot of businesses we talk to are very supportive."

"A lot of people are particularly keen on the whole made in Melbourne aspect of our business, that our product is made by accredited engineers to accredited standards."

Before Christmas Biofuel Innovations was awarded an \$8000 City of Greater Dandenong business grant.

Rebecca and Dale are using the money to fund their move to a larger factory and buy equipment.

"The grant has really helped us get

a foot in the door with a lease."

They are delighted to be part of the Dandenong South business community, which has welcomed them with plenty of expert help and friendly advice.

Through the business grant process, Rebecca met fellow recipient Mona Lumani, owner of Arabian Bites. Biofuel Innovations is now collecting Arabian Bites's waste oil.

"Dale grew up in Endeavour Hills and I grew up in Wantirna so Dandenong South was perfect for our business," Rebecca said.

"I love that whatever we need, like a steel or glass fitter for instance, you can find them here in Dandenong. You

draw up a plan, they make it and we go pick it up."

And she and Dale love popping into central Dandenong for lunch, lured by the array of international fare on offer.

However, fish and chips are not high on their list of lunch favourites.

As Rebecca shows the Journal around the firm's temporary factory, she lifts the lid off a drum of newly arrived waste oil.

"Initially working with this oil did put us off eating fish and chips but you do get used to it," she said.

For more information on Biofuel Innovations email info@biofuelsinnovations.com.au.