



West Australian
Tuesday 14/01/2020

Page: 43
Section: Business News
Region: Perth, AU
Circulation: 135996
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 104.00 sq.cms.



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Graphite plant planned

STUART MCKINNON

Ecograf has signed a letter of intent with contractor GR Engineering to build a new \$US72 million (\$104 million) graphite refinery at Kwinana.

The plant is expected to cost \$US22.8 million for an initial 5000tpa operation, followed by a further \$US49.2 million investment to expand production to 20,000tpa.

The company, formerly known as Kibaran Resources, plans to import natural flake graphite from existing producers and convert it into spherical graphite for the anodes of lithium-ion batteries using its own environmentally friendly, patent-pending technology.

Most of the battery-grade graphite is produced in China in relatively dirty processes.

The Kwinana plant will be built on a 6.7ha site and create 250 jobs during construction and more than 60 direct jobs in operation.

The proposed development has a pre-tax net present value of \$US141 million, generating an internal rate of return of 37 per cent and annual earnings before interest tax depreciation and amortisation of \$US35 million.

The Andrew Spinks-led company said it had received strong interest from prospective customers and was making excellent progress towards offtake and sales agreements.