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# Curtin gets millions to spark up battery centre

## **EXCLUSIVE** **PETER MILNE**

Perth will host a \$135 million scientific push to grow Australia's battery industry after the Federal Government kicks in \$25 million today.

Federal Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews will today announce the Government's support for a Curtin University-led consortium of almost 60 industry, government and research organisations behind the Future Battery Industries Co-operative Research Centre.

Ms Andrews said the Government had prioritised lithium, cobalt, titanium and other critical resources in its recent round of grants to CRCs.

"Batteries and battery development play a vital role in our society and present excellent export opportunities," she said.

Future Battery Industries CRC chairman Tim Shanahan said the centre had a six-year plan to fix gaps identified by industry in the value-chain from mining, processing, manufacture, deployment and recycling.

Australia exports lithium, the best-known battery metal, as a concentrated form of the ore called spodumene. Two plants being built in WA will produce lithium hydroxide from spodumene — Tianqi in Kwinana and Albemarle in Kemerton.

The next step towards a battery are precursors: chemical combinations tailored for individual battery manufacturers.

These include lithium hydroxide combined with other battery

minerals such as manganese, cobalt or nickel for the manufacture of cathodes.

FBI CRC chief executive Stedman Ellis said many miners backing the CRC wanted to man-

ufacture high-margin precursors "to be a price maker, not a price taker".

He said the battery industry differed to that of iron ore where many attempts to move down the value chain failed because of slim margins.

The centre at Curtin will fund 40 PhD students and with South

Metropolitan TAFE identify the training needed for the industry's future workforce.

It will consider how individual chemical-producing companies in industrial complexes such as Kwinana could integrate their supply chains.

Mr Shanahan said Australia had the chance to promote its

battery minerals and metals as safe and ethically sourced.

In addition to \$25 million from the Federal Government, the Centre has \$6 million from the State Government, \$22 million from companies and universities and \$82 million in-kind support such as the use of consortium members' staff.



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**Tim Shanahan says Australia has the chance to promote its battery minerals as safe.** Picture: Iain Gillespie