



New battery stuck in legal limbo

EXCLUSIVE

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A potentially game-changing breakthrough in renewable energy technology to make batteries commercially viable is mired in legal and patent disputes.

Former CSIRO scientist Patrick Glynn has developed thermal batteries, or “thermal energy devices”, which use abundant silicon rather than the rare-earth metals lithium and ion, and are heralded as far more efficient and cheaper than lithium-ion batteries, the next best thing.

Dr Glynn developed the first technology while with the CSIRO as lead scientist in the area and lodged his first patent in 2000.

He later registered four more patents, each concerning new versions of the technology.

In two cases the patents were sold to commercial operators, but the most recent patent Dr Glynn allegedly gave to his former employer, Adelaide-based CCT Energy Storage, to encourage the advancement of renewables.

Now CCT has taken out an injunction against Dr Glynn — to be heard in South Australia’s Supreme Court today — seeking to prevent his working in the field.

Dr Glynn’s lawyer, Alex Moriarty of Brisbane firm AJ & Co, said yesterday that Climate Change Technologies (CCT) was suing on a “one-page agreement” with no intellectual property, restraint of trade, confidentiality or remuneration provisions.

“CCT is bringing the injunctions to stop Dr Glynn from fur-



LYNDON MECHIELSEN

Patrick Glynn meets lawyer Alex Moriarty in Brisbane

ther innovation in this emerging field, given he is the original inventor and the only person in the world who fully understands the technology,” he said. “The injunctions ... seek to assert and maintain a monopoly over Dr Glynn’s brain, preventing him from any further innovation or work in this very important, emerging field of science.”

CCT could not be reached yesterday despite repeated calls.

CCT is also in dispute with fellow Adelaide-based commercial rival 1414 Degrees over the thermal energy battery technology invented by Dr Glynn.

The fourth patent filed by Dr Glynn in August 2010 was sold soon after to 1414 Degrees. In November, 1414 Degrees lodged an objection with the patent office, disputing the originality of CCT’s thermal battery patent.

“Now that the patents are suddenly valuable after almost two decades’ research and development at the CSIRO by Dr Glynn ... these companies all want to stake their claim to their terri-

tory,” Mr Moriarty said. The disputes could have ramifications for the South Australian government, which has called for tenders to build a 100MW battery storage plant — which would be the nation’s largest — as part of its \$550 million power infrastructure plan. It is understood CCT and 1414 Degrees have submitted tenders for the \$100m-odd contract, intending to use the technology invented by Dr Glynn.

Powerful and economic batteries will be crucial in the shift to renewables because power must be stored for use at night — when no solar energy is generated — and when there is little or no wind to power wind turbines.

Mr Moriarty said Dr Glynn had received no compensation for the patent he and fellow inventor Neil Parkinson gave CCT.

“Dr Glynn is not primarily driven by commercial interests like these other companies but by a desire to make a lasting contribution to humanity’s efforts to transition to sustainable, renewable energy,” he said.