

## *Below is a short extract from an interview by Tracy Cromwell with John Ballis, the CEO of Grid Edge Pty Ltd:*

**Tracy:** Why did you choose the FIAMM SoNick battery as your preferred storage medium?

**John B:** The FIAMM SoNick battery was chosen because it addressed all of our concerns and was the only battery that ticked all the boxes for a truly ethical and renewable product. We looked for a product that would not only address the needs of today but also what we may require in the future. The FIAMM SoNick battery is 100% recyclable with a recycling end-of-life program already in place and approved by the European Union. As we say “a battery safe enough to store under the dining room table of your home”. This is a battery that can handle a large operating range and can operate under extreme conditions, and also importantly, a battery which doesn't use any of our precious metal resources.



John Ballis: GridEdge CEO

**Tracy:** How do GridEdge storage systems compare on price to other systems.

**John B:** Not surprisingly, the question of price always comes up, and if you compared the price of a similarly sized lithium ion battery, the prices will be very similar. However, the equation changes when you look at the details. For example: the average lithium ion battery has a life expectancy of 7 to 10 years, the FIAMM SoNick battery has a life expectancy of 15 to 20 years. The average lithium ion battery requires conditioning every two years, this means you need to have someone come and service it every couple of years. Comparatively, the FIAMM SoNick battery requires no maintenance at all. With the FIAMM SoNick battery, there is an end-of-life 100% recycle program in place now, whilst lithium ion batteries are not only toxic but have no recycle program for the disposal or reuse, which means ultimately the consumer will have to pay to dispose of them. These are direct costs to the consumer and I haven't even covered the environmental costs and the often unethical way lithium ion is mined in Third World countries today.

**Tracy:** John, do you think the price of batteries will come down with time?

**John B:** When I'm talking to people I often hear them say "I think I will wait for the battery prices to come down before I buy any battery storage". Now, if they can't afford to spend their money on batteries or solar, I understand completely, and yes, prices will fall further. However, if people are waiting to see how far the prices will come down, then that's when I feel a little disappointed because by waiting, there is a hidden environmental cost for everyday people delay. After all, every day we wait a little bit longer to stop climate change by protecting our environment, we get closer to the point of no return.

**Tracy:** John you say the SoNick batteries are safe, how safe are they really?

**John B:** If you mean to humans, then let me put it this way you could eat off their stainless steel casing as they are a totally sealed unit requiring no ventilation and no maintenance. If you mean environmentally, then simply if you could break them open with an axe, then worst thing that would happen is that you would end up with a pile of common salt on the ground, there is no other battery I know of safer than that.

**Tracy:** What about lead acid batteries, aren't they recyclable, and there seems to be some new advancements made in that area as well?

**John B:** Yes, most lead acid batteries are recycled nowadays and comparatively very few end up in landfill. But what I am hearing from the recyclers is that the cost of recycling these batteries is going up, and they are expecting that in the not too distant future, people will have to pay to have them recycled. With regard to the new advanced batteries and the great progress they have made in that area, the unfortunate thing is that it comes with a price. Some of the new batteries, although more efficient, are almost impossible to recycle completely and are ending up in landfill because of this difficulty and cost.

**Tracy:** Surely you're not suggesting that all improvements will come at an environmental cost?

**John B:** No that's not what I'm saying, there is a lot of great work and advancement made in many new areas using many different technologies with some great innovation and many with zero impact. What annoys me is that many companies are out there producing and promoting their batteries, and seem to show no consideration for what happens with them in the future at their end-of-life. I really believe that some of these batteries that we are all excited about today, are an environmental time-bomb waiting to happen, I suggest that when you are looking for a battery solution ask some of the companies that are making headlines today, what recycle program do they have in place and you will unfortunately hear a resounding silence.

**Tracy:** I believe John that GridEdge has formed a consortium with some major international renewables companies, can you share with us the purpose behind forming this consortium?

**John B:** As you probably have guessed by now we're pretty passionate about being sustainable with our renewables and the environment here at GridEdge, and in order to make a greater impact and fulfil our vision and goal of building large-scale renewable energy installations across Australia and the South Pacific, GridEdge formed a consortium with some major global companies that are in alignment with GridEdge's vision. Companies like FIAMM who, as I mentioned earlier are the owner of the sodium nickel chloride technology (SoNick) who are the market leaders in this type of technology. We also have Enphase, another global company who design and manufacture micro solar inverters, Q.Cells who have proven themselves as one of the world's most durable solar panels on the market with the strongest warranties around and ABB a huge global company leading the world in power and automation technologies that enable utilities, industry, transport and infrastructure customers to improve their performance, while lowering their environmental impact and like us, all these companies have sustainability as part of the corporate strategy and success.

**Tracy:** Thank you for your time John, but before we finish can you give us a brief example of your environmental mission statement?

**John B:** It would be my pleasure Tracy, even though you probably have already guessed what it contains from our interview so far, so just let me give you one paragraph with the rest of our statement available on our website [gridedge.com.au](http://gridedge.com.au). Simply put, "At GridEdge, we are passionate and committed to the creation of a sustainable future, by working with our customers and partners towards achieving this goal."