



MONEY DOWN



Inventor Dean Cameron of Biolytix has created an ecosystem in a tank that takes in grey water and flushes out biowater suitable for garden use

Queensland based Biolytix blends environmental innovation with employee ownership and is winning international recognition for its modular waste treatment systems

UP TO THREE MILLION dollars down the drain, quite literally. Fed to worms, beetles and billions of microorganisms. That's what has been spent by Biolytix in developing environmentally advanced sewage treatment systems.

Based in Maleny, the Sunshine Coast hinterland, the multi-award winning company is at the technical forefront in developments that see human waste as — quite literally — the source of creature comfort.

Ecologist and inventor Dean Cameron is the brains behind the novel wastewater treatment system, or ecosystem in a tank. In goes grey and black household sewage and, 30 minutes later, courtesy of hundreds of busy and hungry worms and beetles and billions of microscopic organisms, out comes clear 'biowater' that's suitable for gardens and lawns. Adding waste from the kitchen insinkerator makes for one big "gastronomical delight" for the industrious insects.

"It's a septic tank without the smells or pump-out, there's no chemicals, methane or grease traps. It's a natural ecosystem with all creatures dependent on each other," explained Cameron.

With an ability to process up to 1600 litres daily, the organic ecosystem is hailed as the most compact biological system in the world; even the pump uses 90 per cent less energy than conventional systems.

The team at the Biolytix factory build about 1500 systems annually. Fully installed the system, which comes with a 20-year guarantee, costs around \$10,000. Increased demand sent production up 38 per cent last year and a fast-paced 40 per cent is forecast for the year ahead.

Cameron, who has a real passion for urban ecology and inventing bio friendly systems, describes himself as a "pathological creator."

"I'm driven to lateral thinking and often working on the next need," he admits. On his drawing board is a series of next generation eco-friendly systems and big picture projects. "I'm also a reluctant entrepreneur ▶

THE DRAIN



and would gladly shed the business aspects where I can't add value," he revealed. That's why Cameron has appointed John Martinkovic as CEO of Biolytix.

With a market restricted to off-main sewerage, the majority of Biolytix customers are in remote or rural locations. However several urban water authorities and councils are now interested in reducing the flow of waste out to sea and instead using Biowater — networked Biolytix systems — in the community. This means the treated water can either be used on peoples' gardens or for parks and golf courses etc.

"It's better to treat waste water at its source rather than developing vast amounts of infrastructure and kilometres of pipes," Martinkovic told *My Business*. "Up to 50 per cent of capital costs can be saved using Biowater."

Remote regions sporting the larger modular ecosystem, which can handle 80,000 litres of waste daily, include Flinders Ranges' Rawnsley Park, Mt Warning's Mebbin Springs, Fraser Island, Lord Howe Island, Hunter Valley Mine and Timaru school in New Zealand.

Through an IP joint venture, Biolytix systems can also be found in South

Africa's five-star resort Bushman's Kloof, but despite large and looming demand across the globe — particularly in the US and Japan — more widespread exports have been put on hold until early next year.

"That is, provided a joint venture/developer can be sourced [to manufacture the systems overseas] to reduce the carbon footprint otherwise caused by transportation during exportation," Cameron said. "Exports to Pacific islands are high on our agenda — especially where public health and sanitation is lacking and we can help stamp out disease."

Among the biggest of several prestigious awards picked up by Cameron was the ATSE Clunies Ross Award for Science Innovation and the Global Environmental Technology Award at the World Expo in Japan in 2005.

Judged by world leaders in their field it is presented to "globally significant environmental technologies that contribute significantly to the resolution of global environmental problems and the realisation of a sustainable future." Biolytix was nominated by the Australian government for this award and recognised as being in the top six environmental technologies in Australia.

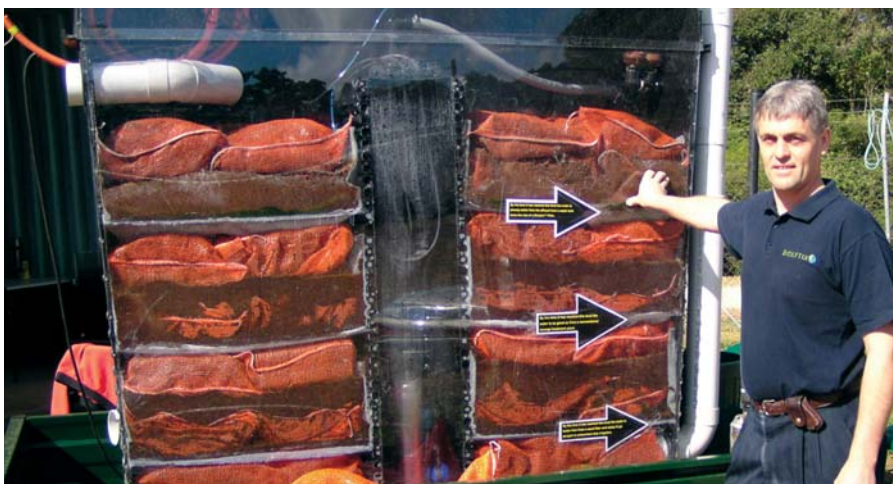
Biolytix was also twice winner of ABC TV's *The New Inventors* in 2004. "Generating 800 phone calls and 1500 web hits *New Inventors* was a turning point," Cameron said, "Very significant exposure for Biolytix. It even sparked interest across the Indian Ocean in South Africa."

Sustaining staff and profits has been another company priority. Biolytix runs an innovative Employee Share Ownership Program (ESOP), which rewards employees contributing to the company's success. Cameron implemented employee ownership in 2004 (three years after start up), it's a model more commonly seen among large public companies rather than private companies.

The ESOP scheme stems from the company's early days when several employees worked long hours for small wages. Currently 23 of the staff of 50 are involved in the scheme, many of whom are female and with "significant ownership". Shares are allocated to staff according to their employment level and performance appraisal.

Cameron has made it clear he does not fit the conventional businessman stereotype and illustrating this quite fervently is his long-term vision to help supply practical, replicable and affordable sewage systems to the 2.5 billion people in undeveloped nations who have inadequate housing, water, sanitation and nutrition.

His wife Jenny, an author and environmentalist, stands beside him in this aspiration and is already looking at accommodation in Southern India for them and their two young children, who will accompany their altruistic parents on the mission... ●



Dean Cameron stands beside the ecosystem manufactured by his company, Biolytix

For more information visit
www.biolytix.com