

Little FONZ rolls into big manufacturer territory

EXCLUSIVE

By **JOSEPH LAM**, REPORTER

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The humble automotive manufacturer behind the nation's first eMotorcycle has expanded into a micro-factory, in the first sign that Australia's sleepy electric motorcycle market may finally be picking up.

FONZ, formally Fonzarelli, quietly moved into a new headquarters along Alexandria's automotive strip on O'riordan Street, into a site it shares with Mercedes Benz that's within a stone's throw from Peugeot, Mazda, MG and [Ducati's new flagship Sydney motorcycle store](#). The space is a big step up for the little brand which has long called home to a small shop front along a main street in Redfern.

Inside the new two-storey 620sq m space, FONZ has the capacity to manufacture up to 100 bikes per month, a jump five times its original capacity at the old shop, said chief executive Michelle Nazzari.

"I can really feel a shift now, it's definitely taking off," she said. "Our sales are up 250 per cent this financial year and we were up 100 per cent on top of that in the previous year."

The new HQ is powered by solar panels across every last inch of its roof to ensure it's a carbon neutral space. "If we ever go over, we'll be buying green power," Ms Narrazzi said.

FONZ first came about in 2012 and launched its first official line of electric mopeds in 2015. Seven years on and it has sold 2700 electric motorcycles and mopeds across its network of 17 partnered dealers and repairers across Australia and New Zealand, including popular Melbourne motorcycle store Scooterama in Fitzroy North.

The brand makes four electric mopeds and a single electric motorcycle, the NKD, which has a retail price beginning at \$8990. The average NKD customer spends \$13,700 however, as most customers adjust the bike's range and speed, which can reach up to 100km p/h and travel 200km on a single charge, Ms Nazzari said.

“The biggest fear for people with electric motorcycles has been that range anxiety,” she said. “So we developed a type two charger which can work with electric car chargers.” The type two charger conversion cost \$990.

Ms Nazzari said the nation’s electric motorcycle market had been slow to gather pace compared to other countries largely due to regulation.

“The countries where they’ve seen electric motorcycles take off are where they are incentivised. At the state level, we are now seeing initiatives popping up to support electric motorcycles,” she said.

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Licensing is also an issue for some customers. In Australia, electric motorcycles and mopeds can be ridden on a car license if they’re limited to 50km p/h which FONZ has the technology to do, Ms Nazzari said. “However, it takes about 12 weeks to receive a motorcycle so my objective to the team is to convince customers to get a motorcycle in that time so they ride unrestricted,” she said.

The brand is also now starting to see more interest from women. “When we first launched the NKD, about the first 75 sales were to men. Now we’re starting to see a lot more women come on board which is exciting,” Ms Nazzari said.

And now, FONZ has even bigger plans. The manufacturer is looking to develop conversion kits for old classic motorcycles, to partner with developers to provide electric motorcycle chargers and to expand into another capital city.

“The new space is really great as we’ve got showroom facilities in here so people can come touch and feel the bikes. If we need to do any tech upgrades or adjust the bikes, we have a place where people can come and have their software updates done and change any hardware that they want to change as the bike evolves and and they evolve with the bike,” she said. “We’d now like to now replicate that in other states.”

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