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## Carpark solar puts the power in centre

■ Susan de Ruyter

Undercover parking at Northam Boulevard now doubles as a solar array which generates 40 per cent of the shopping centre's energy needs.

The solar installation, which generates a million kilowatts per year, is the biggest in the State and the first to use solar panels as carpark shelters.

It has prompted orders for solar projects at hotels and shopping centres across Australia, including 17 in WA.

The work was done as part of Perdaman Group's \$15 million redevelopment of the shopping centre, which will be launched today by Regional Development Minister Alannah MacTiernan.

Of the 2211 solar panels installed at the shopping centre, 900 are over the carpark and Perdaman chairman Vikas Rambal said the solar installation provided better shelter as well as being a good choice economically and environmentally.

"Shades in carparks don't work," he said. "Fabric is a superficial shade, cars get hotter and hotter. But the solar panels absorb heat so they protect the cars. The cost of solar panels is coming down and conventional power costs are going up. The return on capital investment for panels is less than five years."

"We are working with other groups to convert their properties to solar, trying to educate where possible and I think people

Well-heeled visitors to five-star Westin Perth expected to reinvigorate at-heel part of the city.

Marriott International New Zealand and Pacific president Sean Hunt world-class hotel on a fire station site on H would attract business bring a flow-on effect surrounding area.

"Westin Perth can't that eastern end of

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van River environment jetties and kayak be built, with the f later adding public provide water taxi

ment living generation young people and t either end of the strum, the goal at k is to widen the erest with family as play spaces, ilities and park-

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Group chairman and managing director Vikas Rambal. Picture: Daneila Bevis

## WA region leads way with solar

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ple are starting to believe in it."

The next stage, he said, was blockchain technology to transfer energy. Instead of selling excess solar power back to the grid, businesses will be able to directly on-sell power to other firms.

As owners of the shopping centre and Perdaman Advanced Energy, which supplied the solar infrastructure, Mr Rambal's company was well placed to show the potential for renewable energy.

Interest has been shown by commercial property owners such as Australasian Property Investments, Strzelecki Group and Hawaiian as well as other sectors including education, aged care, agribusiness, mining and tourism.

"The Northam solar project shows what can be done with a focus on sustainability and an innovative approach to energy supply," he said.

"We have proven the commer-



The solar panels absorb heat so they protect cars.

**Vikas Rambal**

cial value of this scale of investment in retail. Lots of other industries can also benefit."

He was pleased to see an innovation in a regional area get picked up and implemented across the State.

"Historically, technology moves from the city to the regions, this is the other way around," he said.

"There is a need for creativity in regional investment."

Since completing the Northam project, Perdaman Group had installed solar infrastructure at its Port Coogee shopping centre and an industrial site in Forrestfield.