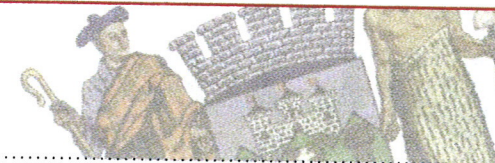


Dunedin business



Keeping out that chill



While the region is closer to Antarctica than the equator, Dunedin people will be only too happy to point out that the weather for most of the year is almost pleasant.

But it still has its fair share of long, cold and dark winters so it stands to reason the business of keeping warm in Dunedin can be lucrative and knowing how to keep homes warm is a skill the district has learned to export.

That knowledge has seen gas fireplace manufacturer Escea upgrade to a purpose-built factory this week after seven years of solid growth.

The (pictured) Green Island complex – which cost more than \$4 million to build and will be officially opened by Deputy Prime Minister Bill English today – is more than double the size of the company's previous factory in Devon St and represents the success the company has found with the gas fire models designed in-house.

The company's rapid growth since it was

established in 2002 has seen it featured in the Deloitte Fast 50 index three years in a row and as well as local sales, it now exports to Australia, Canada the US and the UK.

Like many Dunedin businesses, Escea's success has been built on its own research and development, designing and manufacturing gas fire models that include a number of new innovations, including mobile phone control.

These fires – which were launched on the New Zealand market in 2005 – were designed to be a "modern and minimalist" appliance, Escea marketing manager Mark Cowden said.

The company has gone against the flow by setting up its manufacturing facility in a city and Mr Cowden said this was to take advantage of the relatively low rent, a stable and well-trained labour force and good quality sheet manufacturing businesses in Dunedin.

He said the new factory has been specifically designed for further growth.

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