

Elon Musk said Tesla could build Australia a power storage system in 100 days. Now we'll see



Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk speaks during a news conference Friday in Australia. (Ben Macmahon / EPA)

By **Makeda Easter**

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Elon Musk bet a few months ago that Tesla Inc. could build a grid-connected energy storage system in Australia within 100 days, or he'd eat the costs. Now he has a chance to prove it.

Tesla announced Friday that it will build the world's most powerful lithium-ion battery storage system in the state of South Australia. Musk pledged the project would be completed in 100 days or it's free.

Tesla, based in Palo Alto, said it will team up with French renewable energy firm Neoen to complete the project by December — in time for Australia's summer to begin. With 100 megawatts of capacity, the system would provide enough power for more than 30,000 homes. It said the project's capacity will be three times that of the current biggest such battery installation.

Last September, 1.7 million residents in South Australia were left without electricity after a storm damaged critical infrastructure, and early this year, more blackouts occurred. To prevent further blackouts, the South Australian government sought out a renewable energy solution.

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connected battery system in South Australia
outs, going back and forth on Twitter with

Australian software billionaire Mike Cannon-Brookes.

At a news conference Friday, Musk said Tesla could end up losing \$50 million if the company can't finish the system in time.

Although Musk is known for his ability to hype his products, his pledge isn't so far-fetched, said Robert McCullough, an energy consultant who runs Oregon-based McCullough Research.

In January, Tesla unveiled one of the world's largest energy storage facilities in partnership with Southern California Edison. Using 400 Tesla PowerPack units, the facility can store enough energy to power 2,500 homes. That storage project was completed in 90 days.

"The good news about the equipment is it's modular," McCullough said. "If you can install one, you can install 100."

During the news conference, Musk said large-scale battery applications were the way of the future. "I do see this as something that the world will look at as an example," Musk said.

"The bottom line is we're getting close to prime time," McCullough said.

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