

Hydro power back

By Lea Guy

FOUR decades after it ceased operation, Paronella Park's hydro-electricity scheme has been switched back on.

The button was pushed on Thursday to start the turbine spinning, producing enough energy to power Paronella Park and the adjoining caravan park, with some left over to pump back into the electricity grid.

"The output is around 18 kilowatts and we need about 14kW to run the park and caravan park, so we're putting about 4kW back into the grid," Paronella Park owner Mark Evans said.

The \$400,000 project takes the park back to its early days, when it was entirely self-sufficient.

"There's been about 40 years when it didn't operate," Mr Evans said.

"It's been one of our goals since we arrived here 16 years ago, to get it running again."

According to Mr Evans, interest in the project had spread quickly and the park was attracting more men as a result.

"Historically, Paronella Park is about romance and it's the women who want to come here but now the guys want to come and find out about the hydro and how it works," he said.

Students at Mena Creek State School have also taken an interest in the project, making

GREEN ENERGY:
Paronella Park's Mark Evans with the turbine that powers the hydro-electric scheme.

Photo: Lea Guy



regular trips to the park to keep track of its progress.

"It's coincided with a few things we've done at school, looking at green energy and at our waterway," principal Cameron Wedgewood said. "It's been really positive to be able to go down there throughout the whole project. The kids ask lots of questions and are really interested."

Mr Evans said he hoped further hydro-electric schemes would be established in the region.

"Jose (Paronella) proved it could be done," he said.

"It's a fairly challenging project to get involved in, but it would have been more challenging 75 years ago. It's clean and green and there are some good hydro generators around."