

# Tenacity underlies success

By NEAL WALLACE

THE Brits are learning the benefits of sleeping on Dunedin-made woollen underlays with magnets added.

Bedding producer Ellis Fibre has spent two years cultivating the United Kingdom market. Managing director Glenn Alexander said extensive media coverage at a public launch last month at New Zealand House in London was a sign they had some market acceptance.

Mr Alexander said magnetic bedding technology was used widely in New Zealand but less so in the UK. However, that was slowly changing.

Ellis Fibre has been making woollen underlays, called magniwool, since 2003 and Mr Alexander said New Zealand sales were strong.

Research showed Europeans were receptive to the product but knew little about the technology. Encouraged by market research, in 2005 Ellis Fibre signed a distribution agreement with White Cloud Trading Company (WCTC) which sells the product via the Internet.

Mr Alexander said magnetic technology has been used for centuries to ease aches and pains by drawing the body's nutrients and elements to areas where there is pain and discomfort. With an ageing population, the future of the product looked assured, he said.

Magnets are attached to woollen underlays in a diamond design to replicate the body's shape. But unlike other underlays, Mr Alexander's have heavier woollen fleece — 400 to 500 grams — so they need magnets which are 25% stronger because of the extra thickness.

While knowledge of the technology was limited in the UK, Mr Alexander said the Made in New Zealand label was a major selling point with products viewed as being well constructed and made from quality materials.

Ellis Fibre has been manufacturing bedding products from wool, feathers and down for 40 years.

Mr Alexander bought the company in 1999 and in 2002 purchased Novadown Ltd, a goose-down duvet and pillow manufacturer in Auckland.

The company has developed a range of wool, feather and down bedding products for aromatherapy and magnetic therapy which he said enhanced healthy sleeping. The company exports products to Australia, Korea, UK and Europe.



Magnetic bed . . . Ellis Fibre managing director Glenn Alexander and machinist Julie Bennet preparing a magniwool underlay in the company's Dunedin factory.

PHOTO: JANE DAWBER.