



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

31 Skinner Street

South Grafton 2460

Phone/ Fax: 02 6643 1863

Web site: www.cec.org.au

E-mail: admin@cec.org.au

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SUBMISSION

to the

The Independent Pricing and Review Tribunal

PO Box Q290
QVB Post Office
NSW 1230

Review of Solar Feed-in Tariffs

Dear Chairman

The Clarence Environment Centre has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 23 years, and has a proud history of environmental advocacy. For over a decade we have been particularly concerned about the slow progress towards reducing our carbon foot-print which continues to accelerate at a frightening rate that reportedly threatens life on this planet.

It is encouraging to learn that there are now 160,000 homes and small businesses taking advantage of electricity generating solar panels. However, we estimate that this figure represents only about 5% of the total, and many of those premises producing less power than they use and have the potential to significantly increase their electricity output if there were incentives in place to do so.

There are some that oppose small scale private solar grid feed on the basis that other consumers are having to pay for it. The reason customers are being hit with increased electricity rates is that the traditional electricity generators and retailers believe they have to continue to grow their businesses. However, we point out that the whole purpose of harnessing solar and other clean renewable energy, is to ultimately move away from the use of fossil fuel and shut down those industries altogether.

If the State Government had had the best interests of future generations in mind, it would have long since moved to change its business model to expanded into renewable energy production. Instead, the Federal Government introduced a carbon tax to encourage private enterprise to undertake that responsibility. The State Government meanwhile, has spent billions of dollars upgrading the state's existing coal fired electricity generators and distribution network so that these assets can be sold off.

With wind powered generation beginning to bite into profits, the State Government's response has been to try to 'noble' the industry by imposing increased restrictions and red tape, despite currently attempting to introduce changes to planning laws, boasting that they will **remove** red tape.

However, in view of the now critical need to reduce CO² emissions to combat climate change, we believe it is imperative that governments, federal and state, accept that of fossil fuel power generation is a doomed industry, and provide support for the development and installation of non-polluting technology.

We also believe the maintenance of an equitable feed-in tariff is essential to ensure householders and businesses alike are not financially disadvantaged. This tariff should be a set percentage above the price normally paid by the consumer, possibly aligned with a mandated price for **non polluting** renewable energy.

Currently, home owners, particularly working families who spend much of their time away from their homes when solar power is generated, are being seriously disadvantaged, because they receive minimal payments (the best price currently available on the north coast of NSW is 8c/kWh) for their surplus electricity which is on-sold by the retailer for 32c to 38c/kWh. Yet at night, when those families return home and use the the grid electricity, they are charged the higher rate. These families are being ripped-off.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that the surplus clean, renewable electricity, generated during daylight hours, and fed into the grid, should attract nothing less than the retail price.

We thank the Government for this opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely
John Edwards
Honorary Secretary.