

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment Communications and the Arts
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

14th August 2008

Inquiry into Solar Rebate and Feed-in Tariffs

Dear Committee Members,

I am a member of BREAZE, a Ballarat based not-for-profit group dedicated to the implementation of renewable energy systems leading to zero emissions and a sustainable future.

I cannot speak highly enough of the commitment of these young Australians to their, and their children's future.

Through this group I have quickly appreciated the power of using on the ground groups to quickly mobilise the population and gain their support to implement change, change which the population is more than ready for, and Australia needs.

PROGRAMS INITIATED BY BREAZE

The installation of solar power sources and solar heating.

The community has shown to date a commitment to support these projects in a very encouraging manner. BREAZE Membership has reached over 1000 in its short history. This number does not include extended family of members and so the actual number immediately supporting BREAZE is closer to 3000.

This community support to implement renewable energy sources is reflected in the many public inquiries as a result of state-wide radio broadcasting, from all over Victoria.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE - OVER FOR ENERGY TYPES

The community is eager to embrace new technology with support from the Federal Government and this rapidly increasing interest can provide the broad base required for the gradual change over to sustainable use of the Earth's resources which is essential for the future wellbeing of the Earth and its people.

The economics of large numbers of feed-in units to the power grid becomes the economy of scale so important in today's efficient markets and as the technology improves over the next 50 years, by 2050 zero emissions can be a genuine target.

The use of large power generation plants is a technology which is not in the interests of a sustainable future for the planet.

Complete and sustainable micro units for habitation by families, businesses and larger industrial complexes is the future for Australia. The population has the will, all that is required is for the Government to meet that will half way.

The feed-in tariff, working so very successfully in Germany is an example to use for Australia's future.

THE URGENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FEED-IN TARIFFS

Unfortunately science can not give us all the answers for what the future holds in store for us.

One example, the melting of the polar ice caps and the direct and indirect consequences are unpredictable.

The movement of the gulf stream and the changes in ocean temperature so important in the climate of Australia will inevitably be affected by arctic and antarctic waters which are warning.

The seriousness of the rise in sea level and the consequent mass movement of population alone, is a problem which is not fully understood nor planned for as yet.

The slow implementation of changes to how the earth's resources are used and the changes that can occur when the results sneak up on us slowly, is shown in the example of salination of many areas on the planet. The changes that have occurred and will occur, take hundreds of years to manifest.

Nothing will challenge us more in the future as the change in the temperature of the earth's oceans. Current thinking is that the full cycle of the gulf stream around the oceans is over 1000 years. This unfortunately would mean that the changes we are seeing happening over the last 20 years are nothing to what will happen to our future generations.

Many Australian citizens are taking the longer view, that we can be accountable for our own actions, our carbon footprint, our legacy that we leave for our children, grandchildren and beyond.

Not to harness the Australian population as Germany has done, for the greater good of Australia and the Planet, verges on negligence.

We have the power in our hands now to make the difference. The nation as a whole wants to be involved. Never in the history of Australia has this been more so than right now.

CAP ON REBATES

To restrict the implementation of subsidies to \$100,000 income levels is tragic for the missed opportunity of investing in our people and our country.

Equating rebates for childcare with providing sustainable energy for the nation is not acceptable.

NO CAP FEED_IN TARIFF

The feed-in tariff has the mechanism that can make the installation of solar power and solar hot water a reality for the lowest income family.

The Federal Government could support the installations in the low income households, owner's who cannot afford the installations even with the rebate, and then the feed-in tariff could be the means to pay the "loan" off. This could begin with all properties owned by the various governments for public housing.

The feed-in tariff is the incentive to create the widest base in the shortest time for increasing renewable energy use.

NATIONAL APPROACH

Each state is currently looking at feed-in tariffs but the system needs a nationally cohesive approach so that there is a clear commitment to providing a sound and long term agreement with the states.

A National approach is necessary for the success of such a change.

The commonwealth Government needs to have agreements with other nations to ensure that knowledge is used to maximise the benefits to Australia and other Countries.

CONCLUSION

I sincerely ask the committee to recommend that:

- 1 The Commonwealth implement as soon as possible a lasting and ongoing National Policy for feed-in Tariffs.
- 2 Flexibility for change with review periods, eg. 5, 10, 15 years as technology changes to provide more efficient systems for households, business and industry.
- 3 No caps on any household, business or industry, instead using the feed-in tariff as the means to pay back "loans" over time, investing in the energy grid, and providing a new growth area in jobs, and strengthening Australia's economy.

Yours sincerely,
Judith Bailey