

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Committee
Department of the Senate
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WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, THE INVENTIONS & THE SKILL... WHY NOT SMOOTH OUT THE POLITICS & GO FOR IT !!!

I have a strong view regarding the solar rebate & related issues. I bring my skills as a qualified solar installer with related design skills, being a member of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. I have twenty years of Architectural practice experience & relatively recent solar installation working knowledge. I began working with solar power for both altruistic & practical reasons. I feel that the right emphasis & guarantees of stable or predictable future funding arrangements could equip our industry to plan & meet likely growing demand for our services & expertise.

Let's face it, we have a few hundred installers with a massive potential to change literally millions of houses nationally.

MY CURRENT THOUGHTS.

Step 1) FAST track funding for low income assistance loans to cover the residual cost of modest grid feed power systems (cost beyond \$8000 rebate) to pensioners & health care card holders (plus other special needs groups). This is a massive & significant potential market & includes many of the elders of our community who already otherwise often live an exemplary low environmental impact lifestyle. Often growing food, using public transport & saving water for example. A considered scheme of this nature, if linked through similar D.H.S. or private low interest loan schemes could achieve environmental benefits, then neutralise or reduce power costs over time & relieve government costs over time. A potential all round win.

Step 2) Prompt implementation of a mandatory indexed buy back rate for domestic & community solar power generation - AT LEAST 60c/KWH - guaranteed in perpetuity will stimulate demand. This could have capped capacity limits which set clear thresholds between eligible small producers & larger concerns.. A further incentive of retailers buying back up to the full amount of generation, connection cost & other incidental charges of domestic systems might also be implemented, to completely neutralise costs for customers with adequate solar capacity.

Step 3) Reversal of the means test would encourage ALL customers without discrimination to install solar power with a further positive funding bias for those most in need (as per point 1). This might allow the best examples to exist over the maximum possible population & provide only positive environmental goals without disincentives.

Step 4) Provide long term reliable & growing pathways for retaining our existing industry of installers, rather than attrition & migration out through increasing regulation without necessarily providing all pathways for smooth transition & industry growth. This can be done with fully funded periodic ongoing installer training, so that more experienced industry people can continue to set the best example & remain relevant & ready to bring on board new industry entrants.

In my view the measures above could genuinely help to boost industry & maximise working domestic examples of solar power. It might just take us from a hand full of doers to a nation of doers.

A final anecdote;

We recently lost one of our best potential solar installation clients directly due to the means testing changes. The client had planned to install a system roughly three times the rebatable size. He was enthusiastically looking forward to matching his whole house energy demand with the planned system of around 3.5KW & we had negotiated our quotation to do the work. He was keen for his home to become an example in his area where few grid connected systems exist. As soon as the means test announcement was made he cancelled on principal. The rebate, though only a small part of the cost in his case was an important aspect of his choice to participate in making a positive contribution to his own energy requirements. I do share & deeply sympathise with his disillusionment, but look forward to the potential for a more robust & predictable future industry support.

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