

Senate Committee Submission

Inquiry: Save Our Solar Bill 2008 (No 2)

Secretary

Senate Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts.

Dear Committee Members

I am the Co-ordinator of the Samford Solar Neighbourhood, acting in a voluntary capacity on behalf of the not-for-profit Pine Rivers Climate Action Network, in liaison with solar panel provider Beyond Building Energy.

The proposed change to the Solar panel Rebate is very ill advised and in need of immediate change.

What would have been the largest Solar Neighbourhood in Australia is fast becoming a big embarrassment for the federal government as it proposes to go ahead with its means test for the rebate on household solar panels.

Over two hundred and fifty households in Samford Valley just outside Brisbane had signed up prior to the budget with a supplier of government approved solar panels so that they could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the same time as they contribute renewable energy to the grid and reduce their own electricity bills.

The proposed means testing of the \$8,000 rebate will affect a considerable number of people who have already paid a deposit and signed a contract for provision of the 1kwh rooftop panels.

While the notion of a means test is arguable at best on an item that is supposed to be a priority with the government's climate agenda it most certainly shouldn't apply retrospectively to people who have already committed to the purchase of solar panels.

This is patently unfair and un-Australian.

If a means test has to be applied it should not take effect until January 2009 at the earliest and should apply at a \$200,000 threshold rather than the \$100,000 proposed for solar panel rebates.

Given that higher income earners are slightly higher emitters than lower income earners it would seem a better idea to continue the rebate for all comers as previously and for those over \$200,000 annual income the rebate continue on at least a dollar for dollar basis for a minimum 2kwh installation. This way the cost is shared more equitably, emissions are reduced more quickly and the national climate change agenda would gather credibility.

I would like the opportunity to meet with the Committee at some stage during its public consultation phase.

Yours sincerely

Howard Nielsen

Solar Neighbourhood Co-ordinator
Pine Rivers Climate Action Network
31 July 2008