

**Submission to the Federal Senate Inquiry into “Save Our Solar (Solar Rebate Protection) Bill 2008 [No. 2]” from Darebin Council**



The Darebin community is very concerned about Climate Change as demonstrated in a recent survey of Darebin residents with more than 550 responses. The survey indicated that knowledge and financial costs were key barriers to households taking further action to reduce greenhouse emissions. The most popular actions requested from Council to support community greenhouse reductions include further provision of education and incentives for taking action.

We request that the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts and Federal Government Environment and Climate Change Ministers consider the following issues in reviewing the solar panel rebate and recently introduced means test:

- We acknowledge that investment in larger scale renewables supported through the purchase of GreenPower are more cost effective in terms of returning greenhouse reductions. Darebin is active in promoting the uptake of GreenPower through our Community Power program. We believe more information about the relative effectiveness of GreenPower versus small scale renewable installations should be made more broadly available to the public. Support of small scale renewables can however have other benefits including education and supporting development of the solar industry.
- Currently for most households, solar panel installation paybacks (even with the \$8000 rebate) are long, if achieved at all during the average home occupation and installing solar represents personal investment in lowering greenhouse emissions,
- That incentives to install solar panels be revised to require that minimum energy efficiency works at the household have been undertaken (for example: insulation, energy efficient appliances etc.) Government should reinforce that energy efficiency be considered as the first step in lowering personal emissions and education and incentive schemes to promote energy efficiency should be a high government priority.
- That the operation of feed in tariffs should be considered in conjunction with rebates and that national consistency/agreement on these would be the best case for the industry and householders.
- That rigorous analysis be undertaken by the Federal Government on solar panel uptake, usage, costs and benefits (including economic, environmental and social considerations) and be made available to States, Local Governments and the community to inform their decisions regarding incentives and systems.
- That Government investment in the small scale solar industry can provide good employment prospects and economic benefits for Australia and will achieve much more than environmental benefits.