

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

To whom it may concern

I hope you will accept this late submission as I have had the flu.

I wish to make a submission to the above committee concerning the Save Our Solar Bill 2008 (No 2).

In particular I want to address three issues. The first is the means testing of the solar rebate which has to all intents and purposes discouraged the people who would have immediately taken advantage of it. It is apparent that the people who have recommended this income threshold do not know how difficult it is to find up to \$20,000 to install solar panels and solar hot water heating before requesting the rebate. For a family living on \$100,000 a year this is one fifth of their income and almost impossible to do unless you are really committed to addressing global warming to the extent you would sell the family car or take out a bank loan to do it. The message that this means tested threshold sends to the general public is that the government really doesn't want to do it, otherwise for people below \$100,000 per year the government would have installed the systems and then allowed families to pay back the amount over the rebate out of the spare energy which would go into the national grid. For people earning over \$100,000 a year perhaps a rebate would work, or perhaps they could be given the choice of paying back the loan over time or receiving a rebate.

The second issue is that of the message this sends to the solar industry as a result of this action. We are living in desperate times and need to encourage any form of clean renewable energy to replace the dirty carbon emitting industries which are presently putting Australia high, if not at the top, of the list of carbon emitting nations per capita. In Tasmania we saw the effect on wind power investment from Denmark when support for wind energy was suddenly withdrawn. The company which had invested money in plant and training and the local community shut down - at a time when Tasmania had a chance to become a leader in the production, building and maintenance of wind turbines. This affected not only the local and state economies but also confidence in Tasmania's ability to attract and keep renewable industries. The solar industry represents a chance not only to retrain people from other energy sectors but also to boost research and manufacturing capabilities. We are expecting the solar industry to sit on its hands while the coal, oil and gas industries continue to pollute and produce carbon despite the fact they have known at least for ten years that their products were about to be superseded. We have already lost solar industry opportunities to other countries - China and the US come to mind - and it seems incredible that we are saying to the solar industry, just hang on a bit longer while the rest of the world streaks ahead.

Third, the message this sends to the rest of the world is that Australia is not really committed to addressing the challenges of global warming. Despite scientists saying that we are in a far worse position than had been predicted by the IPCC, and that we

must begin to reduce carbon emissions by 2015 at the latest, Australia is still being bullied by people who Jim Hansen considers to be committing crimes against humanity. I fail to see the difference between what the old energy institutions are doing now and genocide, not just of one country, but of all the world. This is a time for leadership - that means taking people along with you despite their resistance - and not for negotiation. It is a time for being resolute and not giving into corporate blackmail.

I urge you to remove the threshold for the solar installation rebate or to instead provide solar installations for everyone which can then be repaid from the extra grid energy created. Either action will make it more equitable and accessible for all who can afford it, send the right message to solar industries, create jobs and let the world know that Australia is going to do something and not just talk about it.

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