Dear Committee Members,

I am writing this with regard to the recently introduced means test applied to the Solar Rebate Program that has been available as a Government funded program for the last few years. I would like to make the following comments regarding:

1. The Means Test overall
2. Changes to the funding programs that have been applied over the last few years
3. General Power generation and how Solar can help
4. Future of Power Generation

First I would like to address the introduction of a means test as it applies to something as important as power in a modern society. Without power in a modern society we are all cast back to a stone-age like life-style. Every year power consumption increases by way of increased product use and increased population count. To address these simple facts requires a more modern and realistic approach to cater for current and future needs. How anyone can justify a means test to such a fundamental necessity is beyond comprehension. If people are willing to invest in alternate and more efficient (albeit initially more costly) power generation technologies then who is justified in discriminating between them based on their income?

Second, I performed extensive research into Solar power installations in 2003/2004 and at that time, the Government was prepared to subsidise an installation on a dollars per watt basis. If people were prepared to invest larger amounts of their own money then the Government was willing to meet them on an "equal/percentage" basis. This is the most sensible way of encouraging extended, wide-spread adoption of such technologies because as more people realise the longer term benefits of using such technologies, the more willing they are to invest more of their income . In 2006/2007 when I re-visited this subject, I was shocked to see a hard limit had been imposed by way of a maximum dollar/Watt available via the Government rebate. The bottom line here is that the relatively small wattage permitted as part of the rebate allowed for offset much of any benefit of an installation.

Third, the Government should be looking towards much heavier encouragement for all people to adopt such technologies for several reasons. Of course, a dollar incentive is always good for many reasons. However, some ideas for what should be adopted include:

a. Installation of grid-connected systems on all new housing and building constructions
b. Rebates for new installations on existing dwellings
c. Rebates for expansion of existing installations
d. Rebates on investment properties
e. Removal of limitations placed on those wanting to disconnect from the grid
f. Removal of limitations placed on those who could connect to the grid but choose not to
g. The above are just a few examples

Some reasons for the above include but are not limited to reduced demands on the national/state grid infrastructure, less stress on same and lower maintenance costs overall. Of course with the increasing number of grid-connected installations less demands are placed on traditional power generation facilities. Considering most people are working during daylight hours, this allows most excess Solar power to be supplied to the grid – even if people also install battery banks because once they are charged, any excess is available to the grid. This also benefits Industry as the main power consumer during business hours.

Finally, as a summary; we all need to start adopting and implementing alternate, natural resources where-ever we can. Wide-spread adoption of technologies like Solar (PV) will yield larger investments in research and development and will ultimately reduce costs which will on-flow to increased adoption. I have made very few comments in this message however, I trust a few salient points have been raised. I would like to provide more detailed information and analysis along with references however at this time I feel the above is sufficient.

In closing I have also observed the demand for PV panels has increased in other countries over the last year or so and this has lead to somewhat of a shortage and a higher cost. This can be reversed by more wide-spread, affordable adoption. Interestingly, Australia is currently a world leader in new PV technologies but what long term benefit is this to Australians if we can't afford it?

Sincerely,

Harry Eleftheriou