

Eco-Loan Plan Unveiled By Rudd

Federal Opposition leader Kevin Rudd has launched a \$300 million initiative to boost energy efficiency and help households make the switch to green power. Labor will provide families with low-interest loans of up to \$10,000 to make their homes more energy efficient and to save water as part of its *Solar, Green Energy and Water Renovations Plan* launched on the final day of Labor's national conference.

Rudd says the loans could be used to fit homes with solar panels, roof insulation, solar hot water heaters and other energy efficiency measures. Around 200,000 households with a combined income of less than \$250,000 per annum will be eligible for the loans.

The Opposition predicts its package could generate up to \$2 billion worth of green investment and benefit small business, tradespeople in particular. It says the initiative also has the potential to cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 15 million tonnes over the scheme's lifetime from January 2009 until 2012-13.

Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull has criticised the plan as requiring "an army of bureaucrats" to administer and "a mountain of paperwork" for householders.

Housing lobby groups have greeted the plan cautiously, saying they would rather see an extension of existing rebate schemes instead.

Building advice service Archicentre has questioned the timeframe, saying there are already long waiting lists for sustainable products.

"Any effort of any government to reduce the consumption of energy and its effect on greenhouse gases we would always support," says Archicentre's Angus Kell.

"But if everybody took this up all in one go you'd have a shortage of just about everything. The scheme needs to include a plan about how to deliver products."

The Property Council of Australia said Labor's scheme was "too complicated". Executive Director Catherine Carter says the package provides "nothing new" because similar incentives already exist at Federal, State and local level.

[Source esaa news]