

NSW solar bonus scheme details announced

New South Wales Climate Change Minister Carmel Tebbutt and Energy Minister Ian Macdonald have announced details of a new solar bonus scheme to operate across the state. Tebbutt and Macdonald say the scheme will support people in NSW who produce renewable energy through roof-top solar panels and feed it back into the grid. "This is a significant boost for renewable energy in NSW and has the potential to generate an additional 500 green jobs. Our scheme is designed to be the most generous to operate anywhere in Australia, apart from the ACT," says Tebbutt. "We expect the scheme to reward customers with around \$900 annually – meaning an average solar panel system could be paid back within 12 years," she says. Tebbutt says the government has delivered "a balanced outcome that will support the uptake of solar panels, without unduly burdening all electricity consumers". The NSW scheme is a net scheme that will operate for 20 years and pay eligible systems 60 cents per kilowatt hour for the renewable energy they feed back into the grid – around four times greater than the average price of electricity. The arrangement will be reviewed in 2012 to ensure it is operating effectively. The scheme will include systems up to 10 kilowatts in size, which will capture households, small businesses, some community organisations and some schools. It will initially apply to roof-top solar panels, but the government says it will consider the inclusion of micro wind turbines and community solar farms. "The NSW Government has a comprehensive renewable energy plan that includes the solar bonus scheme, significant funding for new renewable energy projects and wind renewable energy precincts." Macdonald says it is vital the NSW Government got the balance right when developing its solar bonus scheme. "Solar bonus schemes such as this are paid for by all electricity customers. It is important to shield vulnerable individuals and families who are not in a position to install solar panels from a significant increase in their electricity bills," he says. "A net system was chosen because it encourages people to better manage their power use and use energy more efficiently – this is because you get paid for energy you produce but don't use. Macdonald says it will also provide a greater degree of harmonisation with schemes in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia.

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