

NEWS RELEASE FROM
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(HASTINGS BRANCH)



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COMMUNITY ENERGY GROUP CRITICAL OF SOLAR DECISION

The announcement last week by NSW Energy Minister Chris Hartcher of changes to the Solar Bonus scheme has brought a sharp reaction from local energy group Climate Change Australia – Hastings Branch.

Renewable energy spokesperson for the group Stuart Watson, said last Friday will go down as 'black Friday' in the history of renewable energy in Australia.

"The Port Macquarie Hastings area has one of the highest take-up rates of solar roof top power and hot water systems in the state. This has created millions of dollars of investment and hundreds of jobs, as well as training at local TAFE colleges", Mr Watson said.

"Across NSW, there are 5000 jobs in the rooftop solar industry. The retrospective cancelling of the legislated feed-in-tariff contracts has now put these at risk", he said.

"120 000 customers have made investments in these units from their own funds, based on a seven year gross feed-in-tariff which pays above the standard kilowatt hour (kWh) rate. They have now been cheated by the state government".

"The benefits of solar roof top power are that a kWh of energy produced this way saves three to four times the amount of energy being burnt and wasted in a remote coal-fired power station. This more than compensates for the 1% increase in power bills attributed to the scheme", Mr Watson said.

"This announcement closely follows the axing of the state's solar hot water incentive and a reduction in the Federal government's Solar Credits scheme", he said.

"This policy chaos is very bad for the local solar industry and we are seeking a meeting with state MP Leslie Williams to see what she has to say. We were under the impression that she supports renewable energy but after this decision by her government it is not clear".

The Solar Energy Industry Association and Australian Solar Energy Society are organising a rally at Circular Quay this Wednesday to lobby for a long term feed-in-tariff and to discuss possible legal challenges to the retrospective changes. Details at - www.SEIA.org.au

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For further information please contact Stuart Watson on 0448 875 254.