

GREEN ENERGY ACTION MEDIA ARCHIVE: 2005-15

YOUR ENERGY

Australians must build more renewable, clean energy and use much less polluting fossil fuels. It's our core action to combat climate change and pollution. TEC has been the campaign leader on embedding energy efficiency into our businesses and homes and supporting local green power - saving money and making sustainable lifestyles more achievable. We take the battle to the big energy utilities and governments.

What we do

Our focus is on:

- encouraging people and businesses to use less energy and be more efficient
 - increasing the amount of green energy generation
 - using less energy at peak times when it is more expensive
 - fixing the National Electricity Market so it does not stand in the way of efficiency and green power.
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TEC is currently campaigning for:

- New rules requiring your energy supplier to do more on energy conservation and tell you how much dirty power they are buying
 - Local renewable energy grids that can compete with big power companies
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TEC has successfully opposed unnecessary mega powerlines to deliver fossil power where energy efficiency and renewables were better alternatives; saved thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases with efficiency standards for energy and water use in homes; assessed and ranked green power and carbon offset schemes; and convinced governments and parliament to mandate energy saving targets on electricity utilities.

Actions you can take

- Support our energy efficiency rule package
 - Ask your state energy minister to make electricity and gas companies tell you what power sources they use (fossil fuels, renewables, native forest timber)
 - Support local businesses that are promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, and ask your council what it is doing.
 - Join a community group that is working on renewable energy projects in your area.
 - Challenge any new network projects in your area – or talk to us about whether they are really needed.
 - Check out how green your electricity retailer is on our new guide - and switch to better suppliers.
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Our Reports

What price solar - government tariffs and retailer export prices (2014)

Green Buzz in the Power Lines



Slide Pack:

1. Why Price Rises?
2. TEC goals
3. Solutions and you

More information on the problem; our work; and reports

Our media releases

TEC's energy advocacy work is funded by the National Electricity Consumer Advocacy Panel.

Contact: Mark Byrne , Energy Market Advocate

There are no articles in this category. If subcategories display on this page, they may contain articles.

Latest News

MAJOR WIN FOR AUSTRALIAN SOLAR HOUSEHOLDS: COURT REJECTS 'SOLAR TAX'



Created on Wednesday, 23 December 2015 12:54

Published on Wednesday, 23 December 2015 12:54

In a decision with national ramifications, the Federal Court today ruled in favour of South Australia's solar households, supporting the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) earlier decision to stop SA Power Networks (SAPN) gouging solar rooftop owners and disadvantaging a renewable energy future.

Justice Mansfield dismissed the appeal from SAPN against the AER's earlier decision to disallow the introduction of a new, higher tariff on solar owners. With support from Solar Citizens, the Total Environment Centre intervened in the case on the side of the AER.

Mark Byrne, energy market advocate at TEC, explained that "The AER's case was based on the argument that SAPN had not proven that solar households used energy very differently to others. But this leaves open the possibility that if this could be proven, it's ok to discriminate. TEC argued that any tariff which identifies owning solar as the reason to put a household on a different tariff is prohibited by the electricity rules."

"In his oral judgement today, Justice Mansfield accepted the AER's argument. We will have to wait and see the written judgement next month to know whether he also accepted TEC's broader argument."

"If SAPN's appeal had been successful, solar households would have been charged an average of \$100 extra per year. "This is a huge impost, given that one in four SA households has installed solar power."

"This Federal Court decision is broader than just SA. If SAPN had been successful, it is highly likely that other networks would have gone down the same road. This decision places all electricity networks across Australia on notice that they cannot unfairly charge solar households more to cover the cost of their poor planning for an electricity network changing from fossil fuels to greener energy and lower consumption."

"The problem SAPN claimed to be trying to solve – lower revenue from solar households because they use a similar amount of energy during evening peaks but less overall compared to other households – will gradually disappear as networks introduce more cost reflective tariffs."

"These will give all consumers incentives to use less power during the peaks. Cost reflective tariffs will also correct the huge cross-subsidy from airconditioners, which have been the main driver of higher investments and bills over the past decade. But SAPN was only planning to slug solar owners."

"Our next big challenge is to stop networks ramping up their fixed daily charges to make up for lower revenues from solar households. Fixed charges are now up to \$500 per year even before you flick a switch. That is regressive, hurting consumers who don't use much energy and giving little incentive to save energy."

Latest News

VALUING LOCAL ENERGY IN AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE GRID



Created on Thursday, 10 December 2015 15:08

“Essentially it will recognise the benefits to networks and consumers of energy generated locally from renewable sources and trigeneration plants rather than from big fossil fuel plants hundreds of kilometres away,” explained Mark Byrne, energy market advocate at the Total Environment Centre.

“It should ensure the network continues to be utilised as we shift to a decentralised energy system. Eventually it will result in a smaller grid that will cost consumers less.”

“It would require networks to value energy that is generated and consumed in the same local area – that is, the avoided use of the expensive high voltage and transmission networks.”

“This will improve the financial viability of a range of decentralised energy projects involving local councils, shopping centres, office buildings, apartments, precinct scale co/trigeneration, community energy and aggregated small scale solar and storage.”

“Other options to capture the value of local energy generation are what is called virtual net metering or peer to peer trading. We considered them but in the end went for a generator credit because it is far easier to credit all local generators than to require a contractual relationship between a local generator and particular consumers.”

“There are a number of ways that the value of local generation can be passed through to consumers where they are related through ownership or energy supply contracts. There is a separate research process underway that will explore whether this would be made easier a second change to the electricity rules.”

“We expect the rule change process to be relatively long and involved, but we are calling for early expressions of in-principle support.”

“I am glad to say that since background work started on this reform more than two years ago, the position of networks has shifted from suspicion to cautious enthusiasm. They now recognise the inevitability of change and the benefits that engaging in the reform process could bring.”

For more information about the rule change, go to [here](#)

Latest News

CONSUMER STING IN THE TAIL OF TRANSGRID SALE



Created on Thursday, 26 November 2015 13:31

The “bonanza” obtained for the sale of electricity transmission network TransGrid will come back to haunt NSW consumers for decades to come.

According to the Total Environment Centre the new owners can more than recover their bonanza payment because Australia’s system of energy regulation means that consumers pay much more than they should.

“The companies that bought TransGrid paid more than one and a half times the value of TransGrid’s assets, because they know that the energy regulator will allow them to earn dividends in excess of the value of the assets over the average thirty year lifespan of those assets - poles, wires and substations. And guess who will be paying for those dividends to the new owners’ shareholders? Everyone in NSW who pays electricity bills,” said TEC’s energy market advocate Mark Byrne.

Energy market analyst and consumer advocate Hugh Grant explains why the new owners are prepared to pay a premium of 60% above TransGrid’s theoretical book value: “In my view, this sale price provides compelling evidence of the weaknesses in the current regulatory framework. If it was working effectively, TransGrid would have traded at around its regulated value of \$6.2 billion.”

“The new owners have obviously worked out that they will realise returns on their equity investment well above the regulator’s theoretical returns. In my view, they will achieve this due to a combination of the regulator providing very generous cost of capital allowances (WACCs), and incorrectly applying those excessive WACCs to an artificially inflated asset base.”

“We can expect the same problem to arise with the imminent sale of Endeavour Energy and Ausgrid, according to Mark Byrne. “According to research commissioned for TEC last year, this overvaluation of networks has allowed the NSW networks to pocket over \$10 billion extra in revenue between 2000 and 2013 - the same amount the government is now claiming as a revenue bonanza.”

“But the bigger question is what will happen in future as more people install batteries as well as solar energy. With demand likely to continue to decrease, because networks are set a guaranteed revenue stream for five years there are only two options. One is that those consumers still reliant on the grid for all their energy will face a new round of price increases. The other is that governments and regulators will finally bite the bullet and look at how to write down the value of networks

in view of their increasingly stranded assets.”

Latest News

How to save \$15bill



Created on Monday, 20 April 2015 16:09

Total Environment Centre today released a major report which for the first time details the extent of electricity network gold plating across the national grid.

"Over the past five years electricity networks have spent \$45 billion to build up their assets at the same time that demand from consumers has been going down," said Mark Byrne, TEC's energy market advocate.

"We asked Carbon Market Economics to estimate the likely extent of gold plating across the national electricity market. CME calculated that if the networks in NSW, Queensland and Tasmania had incurred capital expenditure at the same rate per connection as their more efficient counterparts in Victoria and South Australia, asset values would have been \$14.7 billion lower in 2013 than they actually were."*

"As things stand, consumers will have to pay for these poles, wires and substations for the next thirty years on average, keeping retail prices high. That is, unless we change the rules to make the regulator revalue network assets to reflect their lower real world values."

"The need for this regulatory reform becomes increasingly urgent as the solar revolution is joined by a battery revolution from this year. This will result in a 'death spiral' for the networks as many solar and battery consumers use less and less grid energy. Consumers left dependent on grid energy will face more skyrocketing prices unless network assets can be progressively revalued," argued Mr Byrne.

TEC is currently applying for a grant to initiate a rule change that would require the regulator to revalue assets as part of its five yearly network revenue determinations.

Mr Byrne noted that "Finding ways to ensure network assets are not overvalued is a major recommendation of today's interim report by the Senate inquiry into networks. Action should be taken quickly."

Latest News

Visionary Electricity Policy needed for NSW Election



Created on Tuesday, 10 March 2015 11:34

The NSW Election should be about more than electricity privatisation, a key environment group said today, on releasing an energy policy that attacks prices and pollution.

"If we change the rules that the energy market is subject to, implement energy efficiency that helps consumers and adopt effective renewables programs, then we can have real constraints on price rises and achieve a cleaner energy supply," said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of Total Environment Centre.

"The policy we are releasing today targets renewables, energy efficiency, local supply and smart grids – all of which will give consumers greater control over the bills they pay and invest in a green energy future. Governments need the courage to tackle the dirty energy industry that to date has been advocating policies that are intended to disadvantage consumer control and cheap and easy accessible renewables."

"In the past this industry has also been able to convince governments and the energy market regulator to adopt weak energy efficiency requirements – intended to bolster demand and protect profits. They are also lobbying to stop the Australian Energy Regulator's draft ruling that the NSW networks lower prices, Mr Angel said.

"We are calling on all parties in the NSW Election to commit to a comprehensive energy efficiency and renewables policy. We have seen a few morsels but need more."

Latest News

ELECTRICITY NETWORKS UNDER PRICES SPOTLIGHT



Created on Friday, 20 February 2015 13:32

Australia's energy rule-maker has started work on Total Environment Centre's proposal to reduce future power prices.

The Australian Energy Market Commission has just released a consultation paper on the TEC Rule Change that aims to give networks incentives to reduce peak demand instead of building more expensive infrastructure.

According to TEC energy market advocate Mark Byrne, "Building new infrastructure to meet projected increases in peak demand on hot summer evenings and cold winter evenings is a major driver of higher prices. But peak demand as well as overall consumption have actually fallen in most places over the past five years."

"However the networks are trying to ignore this and the cheaper alternative of demand management."

Demand management is not new: electric hot water systems and pool pumps that only reheat during the overnight off-peak period have been around for decades. Other initiatives include networks being able to switch air conditioners off for short periods; rebates for energy efficient air conditioners; and sending price signals to consumers about impending peak price events.

"To date these approaches have received little attention because the energy market rules don't make them part of their mainstream business," explained Mark Byrne. "The opportunities could lead to savings of \$4-12 billion over the next ten years, and bill reductions of between 10-20% for consumers."

TEC's rule change will see the networks to set a target for demand management and then get a financial benefit if they exceed their target.

"It's an 'all carrot, no stick' approach," explained Mark Byrne. "Networks won't be penalised if they don't set targets or don't meet them, but then they won't reap the rewards either. So we are expecting little opposition to this reform. It's a win-win for consumers and networks."

The AEMC is accepting submissions on its consultation paper until 19 March. TEC encourages consumers and other stakeholders to get involved.

Latest News

POWERING DOWN FOR A CHEAPER, GREENER FUTURE



Created on Monday, 16 February 2015 10:18

In its submission to the Australian Energy Regulator on its draft determination on the 2015-19 revenue proposals by the NSW networks Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Essential Energy, TEC congratulated the AER for forcing the networks to take a reality check.

According to TEC energy market advocate Mark Byrne, "The NSW networks went on a \$17 billion spending spree over the last five years, leading to bill increases for NSW consumers of around 70 per cent. If the AER sticks to its guns in its final determination, and if the networks aren't able to overturn the AER's decision in the Australian Competition Tribunal, it will lead to average reductions in NSW consumers' bills of \$159-346 next year."

"Building new infrastructure to meet projected increases in peak demand on hot summer evenings and cold winter evenings is a major driver of higher prices. But peak demand as well as overall consumption have actually fallen in most places over the past five years. Networks have ignored this and gone ahead and spent most of the money anyway."

"Future demand is likely to drop even further, so instead of asking for more money for these projects networks are putting out the begging bowl for more money to replace existing assets, and for their ongoing operating expenditure. But the AER is onto them and has cut these allowances."

"At the same time, TEC thinks there are areas where the AER could do better. Apart from reducing the amount networks can claim for their interest they pay on the money they borrow, the biggest thing the AER can do to keep prices down is to encourage networks to reduce peak demand. Unfortunately, the AER has sent repeated signals to networks that it isn't seriously interested in their demand management plans," said Mark Byrne.

"TEC is also concerned that networks are not showing evidence of planning for a future when decentralised energy is the norm and much less energy is running through the networks. Their revenue proposals for 2015-19 show they are trying to prop up their existing business model, which is based on their privileged position as monopolies with guaranteed revenues."

"They should be planning on how to be part of the emerging energy market in which they are in competition with solar and battery storage, as well as sophisticated energy management systems controlled by consumers themselves. Instead the networks are trying to exploit their privileged position for as long as they can, for instance by increasing daily fixed charges to make up for lower revenues from energy sales. In the long run this strategy will only motivate more consumers to leave the grid as soon as it becomes affordable to do so."

Latest News

Green Electricity Guide ranks electricity companies, empowers consumers to switch



Created on Monday, 18 August 2014 10:12

Mark Byrne, Energy Market Advocate for the Total Environment Centre said, "The guide follows in the tradition of Total Environment Centre's earlier Green Electricity Watch rankings, which compared GreenPower products. This new guide is more ambitious, and is the only independent guide to the environmental performance of electricity retailers in Australia. It shows a big divide between the old companies which dominate the energy market and rely on burning coal and gas for electricity generation, and a new breed of forward-looking companies which are providing cleaner energy at a comparable price.

"Identifying a genuinely green electricity provider is no longer like trying to find a needle in a haystack. This guide will help consumers to flick the switch to a greener power company, send a message to the other providers to do the right thing by the environment and hopefully change the face of the electricity sector in Australia.

"But there is more we could know about retailers' environmental performance, so TEC is calling for regulators to require retailers to disclose the emissions intensity of the total fuel mix - in other words, how much carbon pollution they are causing from all the energy they sell to customers, not just from the power stations they own."

Senior Greenpeace Campaigner Reece Turner said, "For the first time Australians can access an independent Green Electricity Guide which cuts through the mire of deals and shines a light on whether power companies are really as green as they claim."

Twenty electricity retailers servicing Australian households are assessed against seven transparent criteria (see below), employing publicly available information and a survey which nearly all companies returned.

"Consumers rank energy providers up there with snake oil sellers and used car salesman. Power companies have earned a poor reputation for their foot in the door, hard sell tactics where confusing information rules the day."¹

What power companies are on offer varies widely between states. Origin Energy, EnergyAustralia and AGL currently provide electricity to over three quarters of Australian households and attract a 'red' ranking in the guide. The highest ranked retailer nationally – Powershop - is currently only available in Victoria, although it has plans to expand. Diamond, Aurora, Momentum and Red all attract a 'green' ranking in the national table. (Visit the Guide to find a state by state explanation and ranking.)

"Thankfully the days are gone where you were stuck with one power company. There's now a new breed of retailers investing in renewables, eager to snare customers with an appetite for a renewable energy future.

"The biggest greenwashers by far are the top three energy retailers - EnergyAustralia, AGL and Origin Energy, which provide electricity to over three quarters of Australian households.

"The Dirty Three like to tout their green credentials but the guide shows their investments in renewables are relatively small and behind the scenes they are actively working to undermine Australia's Renewable Energy Target."

Latest News

Low solar prices could hasten energy market death spiral



Created on Tuesday, 05 August 2014 17:19

New data from the Total Environment Centre (TEC) reveals that there is little effective competition in the market for the energy exported from rooftop solar systems. TEC argues that this strategy could backfire on retailers and hasten the energy market death spiral.

TEC's report shows for the first time all the current* government feed-in tariffs and solar export prices offered by electricity retailers in all states and territories for residential customers.

"The results are not pretty," said Mark Byrne, TEC's Energy Market Advocate. "There is no competition at all for residential customers over two-thirds of Australia: in WA, the NT, Tasmania and most of Queensland. Even where competition does exist, most retailers only offer what state governments mandate them to offer. Where there is no minimum price for exported energy, only a handful of retailers offer more than a token amount."

On the other hand, TEC singled out two small retailers for praise. "Hats off to Click Energy for offering around 10 cents to solar customers in the three most populous states, and to Horizon Power for offering up to 50 cents in some isolated towns in Western Australia, reflecting the higher cost of supply in those places."

"But on the national scale, this isn't good enough. We need a fair and stable price for those who invest in solar power and enthusiastic participation by the big players. We also need to ensure the real economic value of solar power is reflected in the price being paid to PV system owners. Solar exported from households avoids the high cost of building more poles and wires and the line losses of having transport electricity over long distances. And solar helps to reduce demand in peak periods, driving down the wholesale cost of electricity."

"Not offering solar households the real value of their exported energy will potentially drive more consumers to reduce their dependence on the grid, accelerating the energy market death spiral," said Mark Byrne. "New solar customers will design their systems to export little or no power. But everyone is better off with grid-connected solar systems: retailers, customers, and the planet."

To protect existing solar customers and help grow the solar sector in Australia, TEC recommends a fair and stable price for valuable solar energy output and regulatory reform to prevent tariff structures (such as higher fixed daily charges and higher time of use tariffs) that discriminate against solar owners.

* Current July 2014 and after the abolition of the carbon price.

Methodology: We used the Australian Energy Regulator's Energy Made Easy website, where retailers enter their own data in NSW, SA, ACT and Tasmania; and state government and retailer websites in other jurisdictions. We used a standard customer profile with varying postcodes to access relevant offers, based on a single tariff type, estimated usage for a 3-person household, and no additional GreenPower purchases. Residential offers only. Does not include offers available only to customers who buy solar systems from that retailer.

Latest News

DEMAND PEAKS FOR LOWER BILLS & EMISSIONS



Created on Wednesday, 27 November 2013 15:04

Published on Wednesday, 27 November 2013 15:04

"We want more incentives for electricity networks to invest in alternatives to building poles and wires, and particularly in peak power, which is only required for short periods of the year. Under the present rules, networks make most of their money by building new lines and substations, from which they can earn a return for up to forty years," said TEC energy market advocate Mark Byrne,

"We are proposing a new system that would change this perverse incentive," Mark Byrne said. "Networks will avoid having to build a lot of new infrastructure if they invest in shifting some demand away from peak periods and encouraging energy efficiency and local generation."

"It's as simple as paying industrial and commercial customers to turn off their freezers; or asking householders to delay their dishwashing and laundry for an hour or two during peaks; subsidising small battery units with rooftop solar systems, so they can produce power later in the day; even subsidising building energy efficiency retrofits. These are the sorts of innovative solutions this scheme will stimulate," said Byrne.

"Networks would also get to keep some of the financial value of their investments, with the rest being passed on to consumers in the form of lower bills. It's a win-win-win for networks, consumers and the environment.

"As we are coming to the end of a period of very high investment in the power grid, and peak and overall consumption are both flat or declining, this reform should be in place for the next round of network revenue setting, to ensure that the future for electricity prices is very different to the recent past."

NOTE: TEC has submitted a rule change request to the Australian Energy Market Commission for a change to Clause 6.6.3 of the National Electricity Rules, Demand Management Incentive Scheme. This request builds on a report undertaken for TEC by the Institute for Sustainable Futures with funding from the Consumer Advocacy Panel. The AEMC will conduct consultations around the rule change request over the next year before it is formalised.

Latest News

\$250m powerline dropped: Power to the People of Tenterfield



Created on Monday, 28 October 2013 15:13

This \$250 million project would have brought mostly coal- and gas-fired power from Queensland to the NSW north coast via the Bonshaw interconnector, Tenterfield and Lismore. Its cancellation follows on TransGrid's announcement earlier this year that it was abandoning its equally controversial Mid North coast project.

"This is a win for everyone," said TEC energy market advocate Mark Byrne, who has been advocating for the project to be abandoned ever since it was first announced in 2008.

"It's a huge win for the farmers of the Dumaresq Valley, whose lives and livelihoods have been on hold while they fought this unnecessary waste of public money."

"It's a win for the people of the Far North Coast, who have shown, by their massive uptake of rooftop solar systems, that they are more than capable of meeting their own energy needs."

"It's a win for every electricity consumer in NSW, with households and businesses now being saved a slug of around \$80 in their bills to pay for this line."

"It's a win for the environment, with the project being abandoned on the back of lower electricity demand and greenhouse emissions, and with endangered ecological communities in the Dumaresq Valley being saved from clearing."

"It's even a win for TransGrid, which is showing that the old corporate culture of 'build, baby, build' is being replaced with a greater concern with alternatives to new infrastructure. These include peak demand management, energy efficiency and local renewable energy generation. It also shows they are starting to listen to local communities."

Latest News

"DEAD KOALA" ELECTRICITY RETURNS TO NSW



Created on Friday, 30 August 2013 15:47

All NSW energy retailers and providers should renegotiate or cancel any deals that rely on the burning of native forest materials to generate electricity, said Total Environment Centre (TEC) today.

"Burning forests to generate power in NSW was banned in 2002 after attempts to introduce it were met with widespread consumer rejection," said Jeff Angel, TEC Executive Director.

Under pressure from logging interests, however, the O'Farrell Government has proposed amendments to the regulation.

"This will grow the state's greenhouse gas emissions, increase the threats to our rare and endangered species and put a toxic cocktail of chemicals into the air," said Mr Angel.

When burning forests for power was first mooted ten years ago it quickly became known as 'dead koala electricity'. Many power companies consequently refused to purchase or support it as an energy source.

"This is nothing but an attempt by the unsustainable and unprofitable native forest logging industry to replace wood chipping with an equally abhorrent activity. Power providers should take note - consumers are even more aware of where their power is sourced than they were ten years ago," said Mr Angel.

"The proposed amendments will increase land clearing in New South Wales, and allow logging of native forests for burning in areas approved for the logging of woodchips (with its intensive logging regime), as well as vegetation on private land that has been approved for clearing and offcuts and waste from logging operations."

The Government claims that under the amendment only vegetation that has passed environmental approvals will be used.

"But the current protections are inadequate and there are moves afoot to further weaken laws such as the Threatened Species and Native Vegetation Acts," Mr Angel warned.

Latest News

HOW TO SAVE \$227M IN POWER GRID



Created on Monday, 29 April 2013 15:40

Total Environment Centre today called on TransGrid and the NSW Government to cancel the unnecessary \$227 million Bonshaw-Tenterfield-Lismore transmission line proposal.

“This project is unnecessary, environmentally controversial and expensive,” explained TEC energy market advocate Mark Byrne. “It is time to put this white elephant out of its misery.”

On 21 April Energy Minister Chris Hartcher announced that the NSW Government had identified over \$2.5 billion in unnecessary capital expenditure and operating costs in the four state-owned electricity networks.

One of these was TransGrid’s Stroud-Taree project, which has been the subject of vociferous local opposition and a critical report by an independent expert. Last Friday, TransGrid announced that it was abandoning work on that project.

“Why is the more costly but equally unnecessary Bonshaw-Tenterfield-Lismore project still on TransGrid’s books?” asked Mark Byrne. “A similar pattern of flat or even decreasing energy demand in the Far North Coast in recent years has rendered this project unviable.”

“There has been massive uptake of solar PV systems on the North Coast. There is much more potential for renewable energy, energy efficiency and demand management that constitute a much more viable long term option for the North Coast.”

“This is better for the community, the environment and the local economy than pumping more fossil fuelled electricity from the coal seam gas fields of Southeast Queensland over the border and down to the coast via this proposed line.”

“TransGrid and the Government seem unwilling to apply the same public interest standard to this project further north, which has received far less media scrutiny but intense criticism from the Australian Energy Regulator as well as affected landowners and the Institute for Sustainable Futures.”

Manning Alliance spokesperson Bruce Robertson, who led the fight against the Stroud-Taree project, will be one of the speakers at this year’s North Coast Energy Forum, which will be held in Lismore on 31 May. The Forum will gather industry, community groups and politicians from all levels of government to consider how to create a more sustainable energy system for the NSW North Coast.

Latest News

CONSUMERS DEMAND POWER COMES CLEAN



Created on Wednesday, 30 January 2013 16:58

A groundbreaking new report is a major step towards answering consumers' increasingly urgent need to know - How clean is my power? - said TEC today.

The Electricity Retailer Disclosure Study was commissioned by the Total Environment Centre and prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Futures at UTS.

"We commissioned it in response to escalating enquiries from the general public about how to switch from 'dirty' or unsuitable, retailers," said TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel. "Clearly they need advice as to which companies are greener alternatives and various NGOs have begun work on this."

Mr Angel said that a critical part of the move to a clean energy economy, relates to how and where the retailers get their electricity from, about which there is very little available in the public domain. There's GreenPower as an offset product but this accounts for only about 2 per cent of national electricity sales." Mr Angel suggested.

The ISF report compiles the publicly accessible data relating to issues such as: the fuel mix of generation assets (in the case of gentailers, or retailers which also own or control power stations), CSG investments, support for the RET and carbon price, and commitment to corporate sustainability initiatives and reporting.

"The report highlights the need for more publicly available information in an easy to understand form," said TEC energy campaigner Mark Byrne. "The data in the report had to be dredged from multiple sources."

"We call on governments and regulators to ensure that retailers publish data every year on the fuel mix and emissions intensity of their sales volume," Mr Byrne said. "This could take time, so we'll be working with other environment and consumer groups to take the ISF research to the next stage."

"This is likely to involve a survey and ranking of retailers similar to the successful Green Electricity Watch, which TEC ran from 2003-2007," Mr Byrne said.

"Green Electricity Watch resulted in significant improvements in the GreenPower products retailers were offering to the public. We anticipate a similar useful service for consumers when NGOs complete their work."

Latest News

THREE ELECTRICITY REFORMS FOR COAG



Created on Friday, 07 December 2012 08:02

Amid all the talk of electricity market reforms, there are three power reforms that must emerge from today's COAG meeting, according to TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel.

"TEC has been pointing out solutions to network gold plating and the advantages of smart meters for years, so we are pleased to see the Prime Minister will introduce reforms along these lines that will help to constrain retail prices. However we urge all parties to avoid posturing about green schemes and the blame game and take some big steps."

"Substantial reforms should include

- The planned National Energy Savings Initiative. This has been years in the making and would reap cheap and easy rewards for consumers, but seems to have been dropped by the government.
- A target for networks to reduce peak demand, which is responsible for a quarter of all new costs.
- A new national energy consumer body. Consumer groups have been working all year on the business plan for Energy Consumers Australia.

"Political argy-bargy around the separation of the AER from the ACCC and the privatisation of state-owned networks in NSW and Queensland are a sideline. Ownership is less relevant than effective regulation, which has been missing for a decade."

Mr Angel called on the governments to get serious about listening to consumers in reforming the national electricity market. "After all, they are the ones in whose interests these reforms are supposed to be happening and we can achieve social and environmental goals at the same time."

Latest News

PM's energy reforms on the right track



Created on Sunday, 02 December 2012 16:01

The Total Environment Centre today congratulated Prime Minister Gillard for proposing substantial reforms to the National Electricity Market (NEM), including expanded powers and resources for the Australian Energy Regulator; and upgrading the role of consumers to scrutinise the revenue claims of network businesses.

TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel said: “there is much work to be done to ensure ‘the long term interest of consumers’ – the national electricity objective – is protected and enhanced. So far the National Electricity Market has failed to achieve the triple bottom line of social, environment and economic benefit.”

“TEC which has been working on the NEM for over 8 years, has also been calling for a significant enhancement of the consumer voice - through building on existing consumer advocacy arrangements by creation of a Consumer Challenge Panel to directly interact with utilities; and Energy Consumers Australia to give high level views on NEM rule changes. It appears the forthcoming COAG meeting has opened up this agenda.”

“It will be vital to continue to support the essential work that existing consumer groups do in each state and on specialised issues. Without this, the work of the new bodies will be seriously hamstrung, and much expertise will be lost.”

“Importantly there should be implementation of the government’s plan for a National Energy Savings Initiative and expanding the national electricity objective to include social and environmental criteria, so that the NEM does not just serve narrow economic interests.”

Latest News

THE NETWORK STRIKES BACK



Created on Thursday, 15 November 2012 11:49

Total Environment Centre today warned that the electricity market is the new battleground for legal action against the public interest. *

Bruce Robertson is a cattle farmer on the NSW north coast who is leading the fight against TransGrid's proposed \$160 Million Stroud-Taree transmission line proposal. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported last week, Robertson has been threatened with legal action by Grid Australia, the peak body for transmission networks in the NEM and Western Australia.

"It is one thing to defend an organisation's reputation through the media and the political process, quite another to sool lawyers onto anyone who disagrees with you," said Jeff Angel, Executive Director, Total Environment Centre.

Mr Angel said Grid Australia's manoeuvre "looks like a SLAPP suit – that is, strategic litigation against public participation – like the infamous, failed 'Gunns 20' case against Bob Brown and others."

"Even if this is not intended as a SLAPP suit," said Mark Byrne, TEC's Energy Market Advocate, "it shows how sensitive the networks have become to repeated accusations of over-investment."

"TEC has been highlighting and challenging network gold plating for years, with little interest shown by the powers-that-be until this year, thanks to belated concern over rising prices. TransGrid's Stroud-Taree proposal is not the only questionable proposition currently on its books."

Mr Byrne said that the NSW Government "could put an end to this farce by instructing TransGrid, which seems to be the force behind Grid Australia, to retract the threat of legal action. It should also hold an independent inquiry into all alleged cases of transmission and distribution network gold-plating, and investigate how they can be avoided in future."

"Either way, this reinforces the need for the Australian Energy Market Operator to become the transmission network planner, not just for Victoria but for the entire NEM, instead of leaving it to individual companies with a vested interest in building more poles and wires."

*On Saturday, 10.11.12 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Bruce Robertson of the Manning Alliance has no financial stake in the project, since his property is outside the revised corridor for the line, but is clearly incensed by the issues it raises for the regulation of the market, not to mention the impacts poor regulation are having on consumers as well as affected landowners. Grid Australia (whose Chairman, Peter McIntyre, is also the Managing Director of TransGrid) appears to be offended over statements Robertson made in the media in October accusing it of "fabrications" in its evidence to the Senate inquiry into electricity prices.

Latest News

NSW RENEWABLES PLAN A GOOD MOVE



Created on Friday, 07 September 2012 14:54

Total Environment Centre today congratulated the NSW Government for its renewed commitment to renewable energy, contrasting its approach to other conservative state governments.

TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel was responding to the release today of the long-awaited NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan. “The plan gives grunt to the election commitment of 20 per cent of NSW’s energy coming from renewable sources by 2020. It is based on sound evidence and has been developed with industry input. It is especially pleasing to see the government’s commitment to building on the success of the NSW Energy Savings Scheme and to support and expand the highly successful Renewable Energy Precinct Program, including support for community renewable energy projects.”

“This is a more positive approach than the Coalition governments in Victoria and Queensland, which have abandoned targets and support for renewables. No doubt the NSW government is aware that with a legislated national 20 per cent renewables target by 2020, the less that gets built and generated north and south of the border, the more investment and jobs will come to NSW.”

“TEC will also hold the government to account on its promise to improve standards for energy efficiency in buildings and appliances, given the inadequate standards like BASIX now in place.”

“But let’s not forget that today’s plan does come on the back of the removal of the solar feed-in tariff and the proposal for some of the world’s most restrictive wind farm planning rules, so they have some work to do in restoring the public’s faith in their green energy credentials.”

“We also note that the plan fails to deliver a fair price – or any mandated price at all – for small-scale solar PV. Home owners will continue to get ripped off by retailers who fail to offer them any price at all for their exported power, or less than the IPART benchmarked price. Although it has just reduced its feed-in tariff to eight cents per kWh, even Victoria is better in this respect.”

“While the plan flags better integration of renewables with the new planning system, more could be done to support small-scale renewables, such as guaranteeing a minimum number of hours of solar access so that new developments are prevented from overshadowing.”

The draft plan is open for public submissions until 26 October, and TEC encourages people to respond by going to www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/renewableenergy.

Latest News

ENERGY MARKET REFORM: ALL CHOICE, NO OBLIGATIONS



Created on Thursday, 06 September 2012 17:46

Total Environment Centre (TEC) today congratulated the Australian Energy Market Commission on recommending the most wide-ranging suite of reforms on energy efficiency to the electricity industry in a decade. However, it warned that the changes should be made quickly and a national energy efficiency target scheme was also needed.

TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel said that “The AEMC has clearly listened to the voices of advocacy groups like TEC, as well as industry insiders, and is finally stepping up to make sure the regulatory system is better able to encourage demand side participation – that is, energy efficiency, demand management and local generation. These are usually the cheapest ways to meet demand, as well as the cleanest.”

“However the reform process in the National Electricity Market is too slow and energy ministers need to act quickly as well as keep a target scheme for retailers and distributors on the agenda.”

Among the headline reforms in the AEMC’s Power of Choice draft report are a shift to more cost-reflective pricing – that is, time of use rather than flat tariffs; allowing third parties to enter the market to sell demand reductions at peak times; allowing split metering, so consumers could, for instance sell their solar or electric vehicle power to someone other than their usual retailer; and greater incentives for networks to reduce peak and overall demand instead of building more poles and wires.

“These are all things we have been calling for, for years,” said Jeff Angel. “But it remains to be seen whether the AEMC and ultimately energy ministers can and will actually quickly deliver on these reforms, which could take considerable time and energy to work through.”

And there are downsides, as TEC energy market advocate Mark Byrne explains. “The report is in line with the prevailing neoliberal economic ideology, so it is all about economic efficiency, information and incentivising businesses, rather than introducing targets and obligations.”

“The AEMC would like to put the kybosh on the National Energy Savings Initiative, for instance, by arguing that there is no clear scheme design option that could not be gamed and push prices up. It is also debatable whether their proposals for encouraging networks to do more demand management will be sufficient to prevent future gold plating.”

“But overall, it’s a significant step forward for an organisation that is often accused of back-peddling on serious reform,” said Mr Byrne.

TEC is calling on consumers and community groups to get involved by making submissions to the AEMC by 10 October: go to www.aemc.gov.au and look for “Power of choice” or www.tec.org.au

Latest News

How it works slide Pack



Created on Wednesday, 05 September 2012 13:28

How It Works from **totalEC**

Energy Future Options from **totalEC**

Your Energy from **totalEC**

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Latest News

ELECTRICITY PRICES A PLAGUE ON BOTH THEIR HOUSES



Created on Wednesday, 08 August 2012 10:58

Total Environment Centre today called on state and federal governments to shed less heat and more light over skyrocketing electricity prices.

“We congratulate Prime Minister Gillard for getting involved in the debate over electricity prices,” said TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel. “She is right to pinpoint network gold plating as the primary cause of price rises over recent years. The goldplating is unnecessary but the National Electricity Market is governed by all state and federal governments and they all share in the blame for the situation. ”

“And NSW Energy Minister Hartcher was being disingenuous when he tries to pin the blame back on the carbon tax – only a small component of prices. What Mr Hartcher won’t tell you is that, according to Budget Papers, the NSW Government is expected to rake in \$1.46 billion in dividends and tax-equivalent payments from the state-owned transmission network this year and \$1.37 billion next year. They have a direct role in requiring dividends which then drive prices – just like the privately owned utilities.”

“On the other hand, what Prime Minister Gillard isn’t telling us is that the National Electricity Market (NEM) has been run since 1998 under a COAG agreement that is overseen by her very own Minister for Energy, Martin Ferguson, as the head of the Standing Committee on Energy and Resources.”

“So if there has been a failure to act, it has been COAG’s failure to drive reform to keep network price increases in check and give energy efficiency a central role. We can only hope that at last, the Federal Government is serious about wholesale reform of the NEM, including giving the Australian Energy Regulator greater powers to rein in network spending. To date it has had one hand tied behind its back because of the NEM rules.”

Latest News

Time's up for energy waste and power industry profiteering



Created on Friday, 29 June 2012 13:01

As energy demand and future peak power projections drop, Total Environment Centre today called on Australia's energy industry regulators to increase scrutiny of proposals to build more poles and wires – the biggest driver in rising prices.

This follows the release by the Australian Energy Market Operator today of the 2012 National Electricity Forecasting Report, which predicts overall demand in the National Electricity Market to fall for the third year running.

According to TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel, "These figures will come as a surprise to no-one except perhaps the power utilities and AEMO itself, which until today have doggedly kept predicting increasing demand in spite of evidence to the contrary. There's a big environmental and power bill dividend in reducing demand."

"The really interesting figures, though, are about peak demand, which is driving about half of the current \$45 billion in new network infrastructure. While AEMO didn't publish data for the whole NEM, it now estimates peak summer demand in NSW, for example, will now grow by only 1.2 per cent over the next decade, instead of 2 per cent as forecast only last year."

"Contrast this to the heroic demand projections in some of the network's project proposals, like TransGrid's projection of 5 per cent per year for peak summer demand in its Dumaresq-Lismore transmission line proposal."

"There is a disconnect here that cries out for greater government intervention to keep prices down. The trouble is that the Australian Energy Regulator lacks the resources or the mandate to properly assess proposals like this one from TransGrid."

"We are calling on governments in the NEM to reign in the networks, and for the Standing Committee on Energy and Resources to properly mandate and resource the AER to oversee these massive new and unnecessary infrastructure investments."

Latest News

Electricity prices - it's not just the carbon tax



Created on Thursday, 14 June 2012 11:08

Total Environment Centre today challenged politicians and the media to lift their game in reporting on the reasons for rapidly rising electricity prices in NSW.

“The carbon tax may be a hot issues but it’s deceptive to pretend that if it wasn’t there, prices will stop rising. The carbon price is fixed for three years, so will not lead to any further electricity price rises – and there is the compensation. Approved network spending will keep driving prices up over the next two years at least – and much of it is questionable,” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of TEC.

“A significant influence is the networks' willingness to build more poles and wires to serve peak demand for a few days a year; demand projections that show growth but are wrong; and that they make their money by building and maintaining Big Stuff.”

“The NSW government is not innocent either. They are happy to use the state-owned networks as cash cows, siphoning over \$500 million per year from them in dividends.”

“If the government was seriously concerned about rising prices it could cut back its dividend payments and direct the state-owned networks to do more to save energy.”

Latest News

NSW GOVERNMENT UPS THE ANTE IN ITS ANTI GREEN CAMPAIGN



Created on Thursday, 12 April 2012 14:52

The Total Environment Centre has today challenged the NSW Government to come clean over how it benefits from raising power prices and end the misinformation in its response to IPART's announcement of price rises for NSW electricity consumers in 2012-13.

According to TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel, "While NSW Energy Minister Hartcher has used the announcement of an average 16 per cent price rise to campaign for the end to the Renewable Energy Target, there are some things he - and IPART - aren't telling us."

"One is that dividend gouging by the state government is a major reason why the state-owned networks have been asking for big revenue increases in recent years. The three distribution and one transmission businesses pay annual dividends of between 44 and 80 per cent of after tax profit to the government. This amounts to over \$500 million dollars a year."

"Half the price increases for next financial year will go to the networks. Is the government also planning to cut its take of the cake to help households and businesses? Probably not, because we suspect it is fattening up the networks in readiness for selling them off - and consumers are paying the price."

"The IPART announcement also fails to mention that about 90 per cent of consumers will be at largely compensated for the price rises through tax cuts from 1 July."

"As for the Renewable Energy Target, a carbon price of \$23 per tonne is not high enough on its own to drive the transformation of Australia's energy sector. The RET and other green schemes are complementary measures that will also be required to create a low carbon economy."

"Without them, it is likely that most investment would still be in coal and gas-fired generation, which would entrench NSW as a dirty, backward-looking economy out of step with the global shift to a low carbon future."

"The announcements by IPART and Mr Hartcher also fail to mention the other advantages of the RET and other green schemes for NSW, which create more jobs, and healthier ones, than those they replace, as well as reducing our dependence on electricity pumped from interstate."

"Finally, these announcements fail to consider how much electricity price increases in NSW could be reduced if we invested in energy efficiency and peak demand management instead of just building more poles and wires. When a \$1500 air conditioner costs about \$7000 in additional network upgrade costs, there is clearly a case for working harder to reduce peak demand rather than blame green schemes."

"Mr Hartcher needs to think of the state's future instead of sticking his head in the coal."

Latest News

War on green energy schemes condemned



Created on Thursday, 12 April 2012 10:15

The NSW government should cease its political war on the carbon price and renewable energy schemes if it wants to salvage any credibility in the power price debate, Total Environment Centre said today.

“The release this morning by IPART of its proposed electricity price trend will again be leveraged by those who are opposed to climate change policies to advance their political campaign against the federal government and low carbon policies. But the stark reality is that even if these schemes did not exist there would still be steep and unnecessary rises in power prices,” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of the Centre.

“IPART has made it very clear that network costs are the main cause in future price increases and that the electricity companies are effectively rorting the national market rules to make exorbitant profits. The NSW government should be focusing on this problem if it wants to deliver sustainably lower power bills – but its recent announcement about merging network businesses will have little impact.”

“The statements that will emanate from the NSW government today are consistent with a strategy to achieve to a climate policy-free zone. This is evident in its failure to commit to reinstating the state’s effective greenhouse gas abatement scheme (GGAS) if its legal challenge or Tony Abbott succeed in terminating the carbon price.”

“GGAS worked. It reduced and stabilised per capita greenhouse emissions in a least cost way funding energy efficiency and renewables. However the suspicion remains that the NSW and other conservative governments that are ditching their climate change policies are really aiming for a climate policy-free zone,” said Mr Angel.

“The NSW government did come to power promising a 20% renewable energy target – which could be a climate change policy - but it’s hard to see it being other than empty platitudes in the current political situation of minimal solar feed-in tariffs and crippling wind power policies.”

Latest News

CARBON TAX MISUSED



Created on Thursday, 29 March 2012 14:41

Total Environment Centre (TEC) is today lodging a formal complaint to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) about a blatant attempt to blame rising electricity prices on the carbon tax, for commercial gain.

The complaint, which is being lodged on TEC's behalf by lawyers from the Environmental Defender's Office (NSW), concerns an advertising campaign by Energy Watch (<http://www.energywatch.com.au>).

"Energy Watch has billboards, a website and television ads which show an aggressive looking 'Carbon Tax Collector' taking money from people", explains TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel.

"These ads give the impression that the Commonwealth Government's Clean Energy Future package involves a 'carbon tax' levied directly on consumers; that the carbon price will contribute to, and may be the biggest cause of, rising energy prices; and that substantive savings are to be made by consumers if they invest in solar technology before the carbon price is implemented.

"We regard each of these claims as misleading and deceptive. There is no carbon tax levied directly on consumers, and about 90 per cent of householders will be compensated for the price levied on the 500 biggest carbon polluters in Australia. Studies by NSW and national regulators have shown that the carbon price will make up less than one-tenth of future electricity price rises. And while we wholeheartedly agree that solar power is a good idea, you don't have to install it before the carbon price comes in, for it to make financial sense."

TEC is calling on the ACCC to commence an investigation of Energy Watch's conduct in relation to these matters. "We note that the ACCC instituted proceedings against Energy Watch last year for making false or misleading representations in relation to other claims," said Mr. Angel.

"There is a bigger issue here. TEC is concerned about the constant ill-informed attempts to blame the carbon price for higher prices. Giving it a 'bad rap' will further weaken public support at a time when it could help transform Australia's energy sector, by making it competitive in a carbon-constrained world."

Latest News

NSW government, NEM and Newspoll on energy costs and efficiency



Created on Tuesday, 20 March 2012 14:02

“While people are wrong about the major influence of the carbon price, they are right about the behavior of electricity suppliers – it’s the main driver. It’s a reflection of the fundamental problem with the way the National Electricity Market (NEM) is structured. The companies profit from building more poles and wires and selling more electricity, not from helping consumers to save energy and money,” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of Total Environment Centre.

In justifying his decision to amalgamate the State’s three electricity distribution businesses, NSW Energy Minister Chris Hartcher was reported on Sunday as saying that “the changes would significantly reduce the ability of the three businesses to “gold-plate” their networks through unnecessary investment.”

“But unless the NSW government changes the NEM, amalgamating the networks will not stop this practice.”

“We have evidence that it is widespread. Queensland transmission company Powerlink attempted to triple its revenue for the next five years even though demand on its network is expected to fall.”

“There is much more that the state and federal governments should be doing to rein in costs and improve the environmental performance of the network. Paying networks and retailers to help consumers save rather than consumer electricity should be the number one priority in a carbon constrained world.”

“The National Electricity Market is looking increasingly like a club designed by big energy companies to guarantee their revenues — and to delay for as long as possible the critical transformation of Australia’s energy economy from fossil fuels to renewables and energy efficiency initiatives.”

"Whether the Government intends to keep these businesses in public hands or is ‘fattening them up’ for sale, its commitment to fundamental reform may be compromised by the dividends it receives from the networks, which currently amount to nearly a billion dollars a year."

NEWSPOLL QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

Over the weekend 27 to 29 January 2012, Newspoll asked 702 adults across the 5 main capital cities the following electricity-related questions:

Q1. Thinking now about electricity prices. In the next few years, do you think that electricity prices will...? (Increase and decrease questions rotated)

- 1 Increase a lot
- 2 Increase a little
- 3 Stay the same
- 4 Decrease a little
- 5 Decrease a lot

R1. Almost all respondents (96%) think electricity prices will increase in the next few years, with the majority of them (78%) thinking they will increase a lot.

Q2. And for each of the following please say if you think it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason for prices increasing in the next few years.

- A Implementing the Federal Government's carbon tax
- B Implementing Renewable Energy Targets set by the Federal Government
- C Updating and building infrastructure, such as power stations, poles and wires
- D Energy suppliers increasing prices to increase their profits

R2. All the given reasons for the increase in prices were commonly chosen by the respondents. "Energy suppliers increasing their profits" was most commonly selected as the major reason why electricity prices are increasing (64%), followed by "implementing the Federal Government's carbon tax" (59% saying major reason).

Q3. Thinking about how much electricity is used in your household nowadays. By how much do you think your household could reduce its electricity use, if at all, by being more efficient? Would you say...?

- 1 You don't think your household could reduce its electricity use by being more efficient
- 2 You could reduce it a little
- 3 You could reduce it a fair amount
- 4 Or, do you think your household could reduce its electricity use a lot by being more efficient

R3. 4 in 5 respondents (80%) say they could reduce their household electricity use by being more efficient. However most of these people (56%) say they think they could only reduce it by a little. The over 60s is the age group most likely to say they don't think they can reduce their household electricity use (37% of whom don't think they can do anything), and females were also more likely to say this than males (24% vs males 12%).

Q4. And which of the following do you think should be responsible for developing ways to increase efficiency of household electricity usage? You can choose as many as you think apply.

- 1 State and federal governments through legislation
- 2 The electricity suppliers
- 3 Householders who use the electricity

R4. Respondents believe the responsibility of increasing efficiency of household electricity usage should be among governments (65%), suppliers (71%) and in particular, householders (80%). On average respondents choose between 2 and 3 of the 3 possible answers showing there is a strong belief the responsibility needs to be a shared effort.

Latest News

First report card on Australia's electricity system



Created on Monday, 20 February 2012 11:26

What piece of infrastructure is costing Australia consumers 50 per cent more over five years than the National Broadband Network, but receives a fraction of the public attention?

[summary]

[full report 3.2mb, 2012]

It's the National Electricity Market (NEM) established in 1998. And the first report card has just been completed examining 12 criteria and international and national benchmarks.

According to the Total Environment Centre (TEC), which commissioned the assessment, "it's time for the NEM to be about more than just 'keeping the lights on' at infinite cost, and being a cash cow for big energy companies.

The Report Card produced by the Institute of Sustainable Futures ranks the performance of the NEM against the National Electricity Objective, which is to promote "the long term interests of consumers of electricity".

"We assess what are these long term interests and use national and international benchmarks to rank performance, finding among 12 criteria:

- Reliability – B
- Security – C
- Price - C
- Environmental Performance – F
- Efficiency – D
- Protection of vulnerable consumers - C

"The worst ranking the Report Card gives the NEM is for its environmental performance", says Jeff Angel, TEC Executive Director. "This is no surprise, since the National Electricity Rules pay networks and retailers to encourage households and businesses to consume more electricity, rather than to save it, so there is no incentive to reduce greenhouse emissions. Nor is this main driver of price rises adequately constrained."

"TEC has been advocating for eight years for changes to the Rules to encourage more energy conservation and efficiency and demand management. The current federal government has finally got the energy efficiency message, with a range of new grant programs just announced and the likelihood of a National Energy Savings Initiative being implemented later this year."

"But we still need the NEM Objective to complement national climate change policy by recognising environmental and social outcomes. We also urgently need changes to the Rules to incentivise energy companies and consumers to save energy."

"It's time for Australia's electricity market to reflect the massive shift that is happening in energy markets around the world, with the transition to clean energy generation and energy efficiency measures at its core", said Jeff Angel.

The Report Card was launched at a Green Capital lunch in Sydney, with speakers including lead author Chris Dunstan and responses from John Pierce, Chairman of the Australian Energy Market Commission, and Michelle Groves, Chief Executive Officer at the Australian Energy Regulator.

Latest News

Powerlink's poles of gold



Created on Tuesday, 17 January 2012 11:38

Powerlink, Queensland's monopoly transmission line builder and operator, currently seeking exorbitant price rises, has come in for another round of criticism from experts in the national electricity market (NEM) and should be sent back to the drawing board, Total Environment Centre said today.

Last year, Powerlink asked the Australian Energy Regulator to approve a revenue increase for 2013-2017 equivalent to three times the amount it earned during the previous regulatory period. Independent consultants engaged by the AER found that the amount of energy delivered by Powerlink is likely to actually decrease between 2013 and 2017; and the price rise was unwarranted.

"In its draft determination released in December, the AER reduces Powerlink's proposed revenue from a price rise by 23 per cent. But this is not nearly enough. There's more to do to get a greener and consumer friendly outcome," said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of the Centre which has been involved in reviewing NEM decisions for the last 8 years.

Late last year the AER launched a public inquiry into Powerlink's proposal. Many submissions to the inquiry criticised Powerlink of "gold plating" its network — building more infrastructure than is necessary to meet its reliability and safety requirements in order to increase its revenue. It was also accused of "creative accounting" and "rotting the system".

"Powerlink's original revenue proposal was an ambit claim of ridiculous proportions. The AER's draft determination will still result in an increase of Powerlink's average annual revenue of around 40 per cent, and an increase in prices of around 10 per cent per annum. This increase must be passed on to consumers, resulting in higher bills. The Powerlink component of higher bills is likely to outstrip the contribution of the federal government's carbon price," Mr Angel said.

"We are calling on the AER to get much tougher on Powerlink. Demand on the national electricity grid has plateaued in recent years, with more emphasis on energy efficiency measures like home insulation and better appliances. This also has significant environmental outcomes and is cheaper all round."

"Even if demand were increasing, there are other ways to meet it than building expensive new power lines, such as offering consumers incentives to reduce their demand at peak times."

"Unfortunately Powerlink's behaviour is not unusual in the electricity market. There is evidence that Powerlink's equivalents in other states, like TransGrid in NSW, also inflate demand projections and infrastructure needs in order to increase their income. This inevitably means higher prices for consumers," said Mr Angel.

Latest News

Carbon price makes up only 8% of skyrocketing electricity costs



Created on Monday, 12 December 2011 15:48

Conclusive evidence from the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC), which has released its projections for electricity prices, shows the carbon price has little bearing when compared to soaring transmission and distribution costs.

“It’s been estimated that these costs will be passed on to consumers who will be paying 37% more than they were in July 2011, by June 2014. The electricity companies will pocket the substantial profit associated with increased infrastructure and increased demand, while criticism rises about excessive capital expenditure. This is being driven by electricity market rules that encourage unnecessary ‘gold plating,’” said Jeff Angel Executive Director of the Total Environment Centre.

The AEMC is an independent body responsible for developing Australia’s electricity markets. It has assessed how electricity prices would increase both with, and without a carbon price. It has calculated that the carbon price will add \$0.015 per kilowatt-hour to the price of electricity. In practical terms, this means that the carbon price will add a mere 8% to electricity prices.

“A large portion of the increase has been caused by rising transmission and distribution costs, the ‘poles and wires’ of the electricity system. The costs involved in locally distributing electricity account for 33% of the increase in prices to consumers over this period.

“It is now widely accepted that the regulated electricity network businesses are building excessive levels of new infrastructure and making excessive levels of profits, at the expense of consumers and the environment,” said Mr Angel .

“Meanwhile, spending on demand management and energy efficiency programs remains miniscule, even though such programs could defer some of this costly investment”

“Other countries spend much more money on demand management programs to reduce electricity usage,” said Mr Angel. “This pre-empts billions of dollars worth of infrastructure expenditure. In Australia we continue to largely ignore this important option for meeting our electricity demand and reducing costs.”

The AEMC estimates that only 2.5% of the price increase is due to such programs. Similarly, payments for rooftop solar panels only accounts for 2.8% of the increase, while the Small-Scale Renewable Energy Scheme, a branch of Australia’s Renewable Energy Target program, will fractionally reduce electricity prices.

The AEMC is considering ways to improve the use of demand management and energy efficiency options, though this process is in its early stages and any rule changes will not be implemented for some time.

The AEMC is also investigating changes to the National Electricity Rules to restrain increasing network costs. Unfortunately current increases in expenditure are ‘locked in’ for the next few years.

Latest News

Aussies wake up to energy efficiency



Created on Tuesday, 16 August 2011 17:48

Energy distributors need to catch up with Australians who are rapidly taking climate change on board and voluntarily practicing energy efficiency, said Total Environment Centre (TEC) today, after the release of figures by Ausgrid, the company that builds and manages the electricity network for most of New South Wales.

“While people across Australia have seen big increases in their bills, and are wide awake to the reality of climate change, and they are saving energy – electricity distributors who are responsible for a big part of the price rises need to get out there and help more people to adjust with energy efficiency.”

Demand for electricity has plateaued across the Ausgrid network for the first time since the 1950s. It is expected that the Australian Energy Market Operator will announce a fall in demand for electricity of about 5 to 6 per cent in the next decade.

“We could do even better. Residential customers have cut their electricity use by 2 per cent each year for the past four years. This historic behavioural change shows Australians have grasped the need for discipline faster than the National Energy Market,” Mr Angel said.

“Unfortunately many power companies are still using the excuse of rising demand to justify massive increases in unnecessary infrastructure. The more infrastructure they build, the more money is diverted from demand management, energy efficiency and renewable electricity generation, all of which would save money for consumers as well as the environment.”

“The Federal Government needs to stop these network companies from gaming the system and support consumers and the environment through increased demand management and energy efficiency.”

Latest News

Energy regulator confirms network 'gold plating' is the main cause of rising electricity bills



Created on Wednesday, 22 June 2011 13:28

It's now time to change the rules on electricity pricing, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today after the Chairman of the Australian Energy Regulator, Andrew Reeves, confirmed TEC's long-held position that rising electricity prices are due to "gold-plating" – overinvestment in infrastructure by electricity network companies.

"Total Environment Centre's research has shown that the current National Energy Market regulations provide perverse incentives for transmission and distribution network service providers to game the system, overinvesting in electricity network infrastructure," said Jeff Angel, TEC Executive Director. In statements made to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Mr Reeves has admitted AER is essentially powerless to prevent this reckless spending.

Total Environment Centre, Professor Ross Garnaut, the Australian Industry Group, the Prime Minister's Task Force on Energy Efficiency, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales and the AER have all independently confirmed overinvestment as the primary reason for rising electricity prices.

"It's time to fix the National Electricity Market," said Mr. Angel. "There is no longer any doubt: electricity prices are going up because transmission and distribution companies are spending too much of their customers' money on poles, wires and substations and not enough on demand-side initiatives like demand management and energy efficiency."

"The only people who disagree with this is the Federal Minister for Energy, Martin Ferguson; and the utilities which are reaping financial gains."

"Energy efficiency and demand management are more efficient than network infrastructure at meeting peak and rising demand and are a remedy to rising electricity prices in both the short and long term" said Mr. Angel.

"Not only that, demand-side participation lowers the use of fossil fuels and facilitates the transition to an energy system based on renewable technologies. Total Environment Centre, industry groups, research institutions and bureaucrats are all in agreement on the benefits of demand-side initiatives. The task now is to work out how to increase the rate of demand-side participation."

"Minister Ferguson has claimed, the regulatory framework for Australia's energy sector is leading-edge."

"TEC disputes this idea completely. How can a market where monopoly companies control their revenues at the expense of electricity consumers and the environment without any redress from government possibly be called leading-edge?" Mr Angel said.

Latest News

Solar tariff should feed in to long term plan



Created on Tuesday, 07 June 2011 16:15

The O'Farrell government's decision to keep the current solar bonus arrangements should now set the foundation for a long term plan for solar in New South Wales, Total Environment Centre said today.

"As a participant in the first Solar Summit we warned against a sudden policy change and supported a long term plan. It's now clear that some of the information given by officials to the Summit about the costs of the feed-in scheme were exaggerated and we congratulate the Premier on seeking external advice," said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of Total Environment Centre.

"There's been a long running agenda in the bureaucracy in particular Treasury to run down environmental industry support programs that may seem expensive at first but hold great benefits for the future. They need to extend their horizons so that we can plan for a clean energy future."

"Now that this current episode has ended we should urgently get on with the second promised Solar Summit and put a solid plan in place," Mr Angel said.

Latest News

Don't dump the solar industry with Solar Bonus Scheme



Created on Saturday, 07 May 2011 07:45

The NSW Solar Bonus Scheme is not a major cause of power price rises, the NSW Solar Summit was told yesterday - and any changes should be treated with great caution, said Total Environment Centre (which attended the Summit) today.

"It was clear that dismantling of the feed-in tariff under the scheme won't stop power prices rising rapidly and that more stop-start programs will severely harm the solar panel industry, which should be an important part of our power supply. Just because solar is the new kid on the block does not mean we should ignore the real causes which include absurd levels of spending to service peak power demand and weak energy efficiency policies," said Jeff Angel, Director of the Centre.

"While we support the NSW government's summit approach and intention to develop a long term plan over the next 2 months, we oppose knee-jerk reactions. Rather any changes should merge with the longer term plan. If you withdraw one level of support you want to know that the industry is also maturing and there are longer term drivers in place to keep it growing. There's evidence this can occur but the Summit did not examine them in any detail."

"I would encourage the government to be cognisant of this and not rely on the short term thinking of Treasury officials who have irresponsibly driven up power prices through directions to electricity utilities and raided the Climate Change Fund to pay for the solar bonus scheme, when all the community is benefiting from the surge of private investment in solar energy through reduced carbon costs and infrastructure expenditures."

"If we took this penny pinching attitude to every new emerging industry and withdrew support when (often) vested interests criticised it, then we would still be in the dark ages. You have to give a new industry the chance to mature and become mainstream and solar can certainly become that," Mr Angel said.

Latest News

LOWER ELECTRICITY BILLS AS AUSTRALIAN ENERGY MARKET COMMISSION EDGES TOWARDS REFORM



Created on Saturday, 02 April 2011 08:44

The National Energy Market could act to help people with their rising electricity bills and provide low carbon power, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today, at the Australian Energy Market Commission's inaugural Strategic Priorities for Energy Market Development event.

Executive Director Jeff Angel represented Total Environment Centre at the forum and provided a voice for electricity consumers and the environment.

"The National Energy Market should serve the 'long term interests of consumers', providing reliable and low cost electricity in an efficient manner. Unfortunately its social operating licence is fracturing," said Mr Angel.

Electricity prices are predicted to increase by at least 100% from 2008 levels by 2015.

"Electricity is no longer cheap, yet billions of dollars are spent to ameliorate peak demand, something that occurs for a only a few hours each year, by increasing investment in infrastructure augmentation. There are serious questions about whether the national energy market has lost its social licence to operate," Mr Angel said.

"TEC has consistently argued that excessive investment in poles and wires has been the main driver of electricity price rises, a fact which has been confirmed in several reports from eminent authorities like the Australian Industry Group."

The Garnaut Climate Change Review also confirmed this to be the case when it released its 8th Update Paper *Transforming the electricity sector* last Tuesday.

"The top ten percent of network load (GW) occurs for less than a 24 hours a year across the NEM. The regulatory structure of the NEM discourages cheaper and more reliable demand-side solutions like demand management and energy efficiency, while rewarding supply-side solutions like network augmentation and centralised supply," Mr Angel said.

"If the NEM is to regain its social licence to operate, it will need to undergo serious regulatory change.

"The Garnaut Review and the Prime Minister's Task Force on Energy Efficiency have both recommended changes to the NEM to address perverse incentives and ensure optimum levels of demand-side participation."

"The timing is right to reform to the National Energy Market. TEC congratulates the AEMC for holding this event and initiating change towards a National Energy Market which truly serves the needs of consumers and the environment."

Latest News

THE TRUTH ABOUT NSW ENERGY PRICE HIKES



Created on Monday, 21 March 2011 15:15

With the real cause of NSW energy price hikes revealed in the leaked Duffy/Parry Report, real action can now be taken, said Total Environment Centre (TEC) today.

The report's authors found the Government caused massive price rises when Treasury allowed power companies to enter into an agreement in 2009. Under the deal the companies could spend what they wanted on infrastructure, outside IPART rules, in the period up until the Australian Energy Regulator took over pricing controls in 2009.

"This further exacerbated the already overblown capital budgets and minimised the cheapest approach - energy efficiency," said Jeff Angel, Director of TEC.

"The defenders of this approach talk about 'keeping the lights on' to silence critics, but it's the refuge of those who can't develop efficient energy supplies. Energy efficiency is cheap and reliable as overseas examples (eg California) have shown. A key motivation to date has been that the more the utilities spend on infrastructure, the more money they make, which sends dividends to Treasury."

At the same time The Business Council of Australia has announced that it does not support either setting an aspirational national energy efficiency target, or introducing a mandatory national energy savings scheme.

"The BCA is locking its members into spiraling energy costs - surely not an intelligent position," said Mr Angel. "Energy costs for businesses across the state are rising too, and will continue to do so."

"It's been estimated that prices will go up to 43 per cent for the next three years, after 43 per cent rises in the past three years," said Mr Angel.

"Clearly energy efficiency targets should be urgently introduced across the board."

Latest News

Summer Black-outs, Higher Prices Ahead for Victorians



Created on Thursday, 23 December 2010 09:12

Total Environment Centre (TEC) today criticised Victorian electricity distribution companies, the Australian Energy Market Commission, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and the Australian Energy Market Operator for failing to learn from last year's black-outs.

The 'Statement by Victorian Electricity Distribution Businesses on their Preparation for Meeting the 2010-11 Summer Peak Demand Information Paper', released Tuesday, shows that electricity distribution companies are making the same mistake by building expensive infrastructure to try to catch-up with peak demand, rather than implementing smart energy reductions to reduce the likelihood of black-outs and save consumers on their bills.

"Meeting the summer peak demand with a reserve of smart energy reductions is cheaper, quicker and more reliable than playing catch-up with runaway demand on the hottest days of the year," said Jeff Angel, TEC Executive Director.

"The distributors make no mention of demand side options, or any smart technologies to reduce peak demand. They only mention the many different expensive technologies they have built to increase their capacity, and the procedures they will implement when they fall over. Planning ahead using smart energy reductions like demand management and energy efficiency will always be a lot better than load shedding, but is ignored."

During last year's Victorian bushfires, at least 300MW of capacity was ignored because the National Electricity rules don't cater for using demand response for reserve capacity. Demand response involves the contracting of large energy users to shift the time at which they use electricity to non-peak times, saving money and reducing strain on the grid.

The top 15% of Victoria's electricity load is used less than 1% of the year, meaning hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on extra poles and wires, substations, and emergency procedures for just a few hours of electricity use on the hottest days of the year. Victorian Distributors plan to spend \$3.8 billion dollars over the next 5 years to maintain and expand the electricity network, but will spend almost nothing on demand-side options that would increase reliability.

"The distribution companies take it as a given that summer peak demand will always increase, and that they need to build expensive infrastructure to deal with it. But this summer peak demand could be avoided more cheaply and with less carbon emissions if the energy companies helped consumers to use energy more efficiently."

"If we increased energy efficiency, demand management and distributed generation, we would be cooler and richer without needing to burn large amounts of money and coal and crucially, they also make the supply of electricity more secure and reliable, and reduce the electricity bills for households and businesses."

Latest News

Urgent Inquiry Needed into Victorian Electricity Prices



Created on Tuesday, 09 November 2010 12:41

Victorian families deserve a better deal from the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) which has locked-in higher electricity prices and ignored the environmental and economic benefits of energy efficiency, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today.

TEC has called on Premier Brumby to urgently hold an independent inquiry into the biggest cause of unnecessary price rises triggered by poor regulation of electricity companies.

“The root causes of the systemic over-building of the grid at the expense of power and carbon prices must be uncovered and rectified,” said Executive Director of TEC, Jeff Angel. “Consumers are paying four times the cost of inefficiently meeting increasing demand when ‘poles and wires’ are built instead of pursuing energy efficiency, yet the AER has decided to allow only 0.6% of power company budgets to be spent across Victoria on smart solutions.”

Two weeks ago the AER released its Final Decision on the next five years of spending by Victorian distributors, which will be paid for by Victorian electricity consumers. They have been allowed to spend over \$2.5 billion on making the electricity network bigger, and a further \$1.2 billion on upgrading the already oversized grid, but only \$22 million on energy efficiency.

“The AER are proud of the fact that they rejected distribution companies’ demands for a 70% increase in capital expenditure, but they still allowed a 45% increase on what was spent over the past five years. They claim this will only result in a slight increase in electricity bills, but electricity prices are already unnecessarily hurting consumers for the wrong reasons. The extra spending will only increase the carbon debt Victorians will owe later. If the AER had forced the power companies to invest in efficiency, they would have saved billions of dollars and helped to prevent future spiraling prices for consumers.”

“The real culprits are the Energy Ministers and the flawed National Energy Market Rules which they refuse to change,” said Mr Angel.

Under the National Electricity Rules, transmission and distribution companies make money by selling more and more electricity, not less. This is at odds with other countries like the US. In California energy companies are compelled to implement energy efficiency before forcing consumers to pay for otherwise unnecessary infrastructure. This also works against Federal and State Government energy savings policies.

“Just as Premier Keneally has done in NSW, John Brumby should now call for an independent inquiry into network electricity price rises in Victoria. An inquiry will reveal the flaws in the Rules and the overriding policy mistakes being made, and show the government how best to change them.”

Latest News

SOLAR SCHEME CLIPPED BUT NOT ECLIPSED



Created on Wednesday, 27 October 2010 15:25

Today's decision by the Kenneally government to keep the gross feed-in tariff for solar power instead of buckling to the fossil fuel industry and climate change deniers who want to get rid of it, is to be commended but the reduction to a low 20c/kwh and 300MW limit will need further review, said Total Environment Centre (TEC) today.

The community's great appetite for renewables and clean energy benefits the environment and reduces future carbon costs on all consumers. It should be encouraged.

"Today's action, however, will not curb the massive power price hikes coming down the line which are largely due to frivolous over-investment in the network system," said Mr Angel. "The national electricity market has tailored the system to meet peak power demands, and rewards power companies for spending more, and serving greater and greater demand.

"The best and cheapest answer to this out of control situation is energy efficiency," he added.

"We strongly urge the NSW government to introduce energy savings targets on the distributors (poles and wires) and direct them to work where there is a constraint in the system and thus create excess capacity in the existing system.

"It's been proven to work in other countries and we are far behind in the efficiency stakes," Mr. Angel said.

Latest News

NEW ERA AHEAD FOR SMART, CLEAN ENERGY AND BILLIONS IN SAVINGS



Created on Friday, 08 October 2010 17:09

Total Environment Centre has today welcomed the Prime Minister's Report on Energy Efficiency and has called for the proposed mandatory energy savings on electricity companies to begin by 2012 at the latest. TEC also welcomed the major changes recommended for the energy market and energy policy.

"The missing link in the Federal Government's climate policy has just been found," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "Spiraling energy prices and greenhouse emissions must be reigned in and Australian families must be protected from the coming carbon shocks. The far reaching recommendations will protect Australia's economy and its environment, saving billions of dollars."

The Report calls for a 30% energy intensity improvement by 2020 and mandatory energy savings targets on electricity companies and other improvements.

"Total energy consumption must be reduced not just energy intensity, to break the unhealthy link of energy consumption rising with economic growth – which is simply a projection of inefficient energy use. We need to achieve zero demand growth of our total energy consumption and then start to reduce overall demand by creating 'invisible power stations' with new spare capacity."

The Report also identified the National Electricity Market, energy market policy and regulation as key barriers, and called for major reform of the energy market, including a new Ministerial Council and Australian Energy Commission

"This is a call, loud and clear, for a new era in Australian energy policy echoing demands by TEC and other environment and industry groups. Energy efficiency is being blocked by current Energy Ministers, in particular, Martin Ferguson. The call for a new Ministerial Council, a new Australian Energy Commission, better regulation and a re-working of the National Electricity Law paves the way for a grid that is clean, smart and efficient."

"Energy policy needs to serve the interests of all Australians, not just polluting power companies."

Latest News

BILLIONS WASTED ON ENERGY GRID



Created on Tuesday, 21 September 2010 15:34

The key to lower electricity prices is energy efficiency and demand management, not building more expensive poles and wires, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today in response to fresh alarm about price hikes.

“Electricity prices are going up because the Federal and State governments are intent on building a bigger electricity network,” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of TEC. “Yet ten percent of the electricity grid is only used for 1% of the year – when there is unusually high demand.”

“Politicians see that Australians are using more and more energy each year, but instead of trying to make our energy use more efficient, they simply make the electricity network bigger and help big polluting generators make more money.

“Peak demand, not baseload, is driving expensive and inefficient network expansion simply to service spikes that occur very infrequently. Demand management can avoid or defer the need for this infrastructure, saving consumers money and reducing pollution,” Mr. Angel said.

Federal Resources and Energy Minister Martin Ferguson plans to spend \$100 Billion dollars over the next decade, partly to maintain but mostly to expand the energy system.

“We are wasting over a billion dollars a year on expanding the grid. If we spend this money on energy efficiency and demand management instead it will keep energy prices lower and save jobs, money, and the environment. Demand management is a proven way to avoid or defer the need for infrastructure expansion, saving consumers money and reducing pollution.”

TEC’s new report Demand Management and Energy Policy Development: A Case Study of NSW clearly illustrates the cost-effectiveness of demand management using the industry’s own data. Reducing demand is at least half the cost of building new infrastructure, the report shows.

“Of the \$42 billion plus electricity network investment scheduled to date that Australians will pay for over the next five years, almost a third could be avoided by energy efficiency, cogeneration, distributed generation and reducing peak demand,” said Mr. Angel.

Other reports show that energy efficiency can save \$100 for every tonne of CO2 reduced by industry and \$90 for every tonne reduced in buildings.[1] Energy efficiency could cut emissions by over 50 million tonnes a year by 2020.

Latest News

BIG GREEN BONUS FROM SOLAR SCHEME



Created on Wednesday, 25 August 2010 12:21

TEC today congratulated the NSW Government, householders, and the solar industry on the outstanding success of the Solar Bonus Scheme which has triggered a rush of consumers to install roof top solar power.

“The tariff which is both generous and effective, has so far paid 30,000 householders 60 cents per kilowatt hour to sell their energy back to the grid, which is four times what it costs to buy energy,” said Mr. Jeff Angel, executive director of TEC. “This has meant that householders are able to pay off their investments in record time. It’s a win-win for all.”

The present tariff has been limited to households and now that the total of 50 megawatts installed, the review triggered by the legislation can be broad ranging.

Mr. Angel said the next step is to allow bigger industries, including commercial renewable energy projects, to access the feed-in tariff, and also raise the cap. This would lead to greenhouse gas savings and significant job creation.

“The popularity of the scheme shows that Australians are hungry for clean energy,” said Mr. Angel. “This demonstrates that both federal and state governments have been given a mandate to increase our renewable energy targets. It also protects us all from carbon price impacts as it helps change the carbon mix of generation.”

Latest News

LATEST ELECTION ENERGY DEBATE



Created on Thursday, 19 August 2010 11:59

TEC's dynamic Senior Campaigner Jane Castle was on the Radio National breakfast panel with Fran Kelly yesterday morning debating energy issues pertinent to the looming federal election. To watch and listen click on these links: Part 1 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaSS-FQC0o8> Part 2 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLz7xG-S3gU>

Latest News

Federal climate policy: cheap and green if efficiency lessons learned



Created on Monday, 12 July 2010 12:53

Reducing peak demand pressure on electricity networks and an ambitious energy efficiency target are essential for any energy efficiency program the Commonwealth Government proposes, if it is serious about protecting consumers from rising energy costs and tackling climate change, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today on release of a new report into efficiency lessons.

TEC's new report *Demand Management and Energy Policy Development: A Case Study of NSW* clearly illustrates the cost-effectiveness of demand management using the industry's own data. Reducing demand is at least half the cost of building new infrastructure, the report shows.

"Of the \$42 billion plus electricity network investment scheduled that Australians will pay for over the next five years, almost a third could be avoided by energy efficiency, cogeneration, distributed generation and reducing peak demand," said TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel.

"With cabinet considering energy efficiency programs tomorrow, it is crucial that they include demand management in any scheme," said TEC Executive Director Jeff Angel. "Peak demand is driving expensive and inefficient network expansion simply to service spikes that occur very infrequently. Demand management can avoid or defer the need for this infrastructure, saving consumers money and reducing pollution."

"The Government must commit to ending overall growth in demand by at least 2015 and then reducing it up to and beyond 2020. This will require an energy intensity improvement target of 50% by 2020, as the economy and population continue to grow. An ambitious energy efficiency target is achievable if supported by an emissions trading scheme."

The government is expected to announce a national energy efficiency scheme this week, and TEC is calling for a 50% energy intensity improvement target from 2010 levels by 2010 and the inclusion of annual peak demand reduction targets, mandated for distribution networks. To ensure cost-effective reductions, peak demand reduction would be targeted to areas flagged for expensive expansion.

"For too long Australia's energy ministers have let the National Electricity Market run rampant, creating the rising energy demand and spiraling energy sector emissions the country now faces. Prime Minister Julia Gillard must establish some climate change credibility and step in."

Latest News

ENERGY BLOWOUT REWARDS BIG SPENDERS



Created on Monday, 07 June 2010 10:24

The cost of living for Victorian families will skyrocket unnecessarily due to last Friday's approval by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) of a massive spending spree by the state's five electricity distribution companies. The determination, released late on Friday, approves \$3.4 billion being spent on building more expensive, polluting energy infrastructure in Victoria, locking out bill-reducing energy savings, Total Environment Centre (TEC) and Environment Victoria said today.

TEC Senior Campaigner Jane Castle said: "This is a slap in the face for Victorian families by energy ministers Peter Batchelor and Martin Ferguson who are rewarding energy companies for ignoring bill-reducing energy efficiency. The AER must send Victoria's distribution efficiency businesses back to the drawing board, and have them propose real demand management and energy efficiency programs."

Victoria's five electricity distribution companies, Jemena, SP AusNet, Citipower, Powercor and United Energy, have had over \$3.4 billion of capital investment approved in the AER's Victorian Draft distribution determination for 2011-2015, released last Friday. The companies, however, propose to spend less than 2% of this amount on energy saving measures, despite their being many times more cost-effective than building more 'poles and wires'. The \$3.4 billion investment program will be covered by rising electricity bills.

"Energy ministers and regulators are presiding over an energy policy disaster. This is an expensive and irresponsible addiction to infrastructure. Electricity market laws must be radically reformed so that retailers and networks are rewarded for delivering energy savings, not higher bills and more greenhouse pollution," said Castle. "The Prime Minister's Task Group on Energy Efficiency has a real opportunity to step in and recommend a complete overhaul of the National Electricity Market, something long overdue."

Environment Victoria Campaigns Director, Mark Wakeham, said: "Instead of approving expensive investment in new infrastructure that will drive up household electricity bills, the regulator should be requiring that distributors get serious about reducing demand for electricity through energy efficiency and load shifting. For example businesses could be paid to reduce their energy use and both businesses and consumers would be better off and greenhouse pollution would be lower."

The Victorian determination puts total network capital expenditure in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, ACT and Tasmania at over \$40 billion over the next five years - on par with the National Broadband Rollout, but with virtually no public consultation.

Latest News

DIRTY SECRET POWER BUSINESS



Created on Wednesday, 19 May 2010 16:02

“The pressure is on for Kevin Rudd to stand up to International Power and other cynical, self-interested polluters,” said TEC director Jeff Angel.

According to the WWF the International Power company’s 45 year old Hazelwood brown coal power station is spewing out an astonishing 1.58 Mega tonnes of carbon per terawatt hours, or about 18 million big hot air balloons of carbon pollution each year, and is the most polluting of the major coal-fired power stations in the OECD.

In a confidential submission which has appeared on the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency website, International Power says it will not accept any policy that requires the National Electricity Market (NEM) to support energy efficiency because it has “the potential to destroy the value of existing investments in the generation sector.”

“The NEM has now been exposed as one of the key obstacles to energy efficiency in Australia – it’s all about energy waste so big companies can make more profits,” said Mr. Angel.

“If Australia is to make the urgently needed move to a new, green economy, then energy efficiency must be promoted to centre-stage and fully supported by business and industry. Otherwise Australia has little chance of meeting its reduction commitment and its economic and environmental prosperity will be severely compromised.”

“Energy efficiency could save Australia \$1 billion a year,” said Mr. Angel. “But International Power is trying to take this out of the pockets of average Australians by ensuring the NEM continues to support more energy consumption.”

Latest News

Energy efficiency can deliver while Rudd flounders on climate



Created on Thursday, 06 May 2010 12:16

Energy efficiency is Australia's greatest opportunity to immediately reduce greenhouse gas pollution while saving money and improving national productivity, said Total Environment Centre (TEC) today, in response to the Prime Minister's Task Group on Energy Efficiency Issues Paper.

"The shelving of the emissions trading scheme now leaves energy efficiency as the only viable option for climate change action until Australia gets an economy-wide carbon price," said TEC director Jeff Angel.

"Kevin Rudd faces real political strife, with electorate trust at a serious low. Clearly Australians want to see climate change addressed immediately, and it is energy efficiency alone that can achieve the reductions we need in the next three years."

The International Energy Agency estimates 65 per cent of global emission cuts by 2020 will come from energy efficiency. Even without the climate benefits, over a billion dollars in savings per year can be saved in Australia through energy efficiency, based on the Commonwealth Energy Efficiency Opportunity program figures and recent research by McKinsey & Company. This would also help offset the energy price rises being driven by the massive and inefficient network infrastructure expansion that governments have approved.

TEC's submission to the Task Group points the way for a timely and orderly transition to a low-carbon economy, and outlines key energy efficiency actions areas:

- Set a mandatory national energy efficiency goal of zero new demand growth by 2020 with an annual 1.5% reduction to 2030 and beyond
- Establish a National Energy Savings Scheme, based on the NSW model, expanded to include a peak demand management mandate on distribution networks
- Align energy policy goals with climate policy goals by merging these two portfolios
- Fix the National Electricity Market to remove barriers to energy efficiency and demand management
- Accelerate the national roll-out of smart meters and fix network and retail regulation to ensure these are utilised to their full potential
- Build energy efficiency trade skills and workforce capabilities through national training programs
- Create strong incentives and regulatory drivers for energy efficiency in industry, commercial buildings and households
- Mandate stringent vehicle fuel efficiency standards and provide incentives for sustainable transport
- Recognise the contribution from recycling and materials resource efficiency
- Require best-practice energy efficiency in government operations

Latest News

CLIMATE CHANGE CREDIBILITY GAP WIDENS



Created on Tuesday, 27 April 2010 13:17

Total Environment Centre warned the Rudd Government to beware the credibility vacuum it has created by dropping the Emissions Trading Scheme, today.

“Leadership on climate change was a key election promise which has now been sacrificed to political expediency,” said TEC director Jeff Angel.

Mr. Angel said that Prime Minister Rudd must act fast to embrace a nation wide drive for energy efficiency as the only viable alternative to an ETS for greenhouse gas savings, in the next three years.

“The results of an Auspoll released today indicate that the electorate’s trust in Rudd’s ability to manage climate change has dropped to 36%. Clearly Australians want to see climate change addressed immediately, not at some nebulous point in the future.

“Each year a billion dollars in savings could be received by Australia’s 8.3 million households and business if concrete action on energy efficiency is adopted. This would also help offset the energy price rises being driven by the massive and inefficient network infrastructure expansion that governments have approved.”

The Energy Efficiency Roundtable launched by TEC in March has gained increasing support from energy advocates in the business world, with the numbers signing on for its recent ‘communiqué’ tripling in just two weeks.

Latest News

Call for \$1 billion a year energy savings



Created on Monday, 19 April 2010 00:00

Leading energy efficiency advocates have called for Australia to immediately adopt a national target to save at least \$1 billion every year through energy efficiency, by 2012.

Key industry and NGO organisations including the Energy Efficiency Council (EEC), Australian Alliance to Save Energy (A2SE), and Total Environment Centre (TEC) say this would just be the start of a massive energy-saving opportunity.

“We are calling on all political leaders in all jurisdictions to support this commonsense, evidence-based and attainable target to achieve the huge potential for driving energy efficiency in this country,” said Mark Lister, Interim CEO of A2SE.

“Transforming Australia from an energy efficiency laggard into a world leader will boost the economy. Energy efficiency can improve Australia’s global competitiveness, protect existing jobs and improve energy security while slashing emissions,” said Rob Murray-Leach, CEO of the EEC.

“This is the life-raft that will rescue Australia from the current climate policy void. Energy efficiency is the cheapest way to cut carbon emissions. It will make our economy more resilient to both energy price rises and carbon costs,” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of TEC.

Recent reports show that energy efficiency can save \$100 for every tonne of CO2 reduced by industry and \$90 for every tonne reduced in buildings. Energy efficiency could cut emissions by over 50 million tonnes a year by 2020.

“With the right policies, additional savings can be identified through to 2020 and beyond, allowing the gains to keep rising as we unlock energy efficiency potential across the economy. Half a billion dollars in savings could be delivered by Australia’s 8.3 million households if they each saved about \$60 off their electricity bills, which is less than 10% of average home consumption. This will help offset the price rises being driven by massive and inefficient network infrastructure expansion that will continue to cost energy users dearly,” said Mark Lister.

“Even larger savings are possible in industry and commercial buildings, saving the economy several billion each year. Just 200 companies recently found ways to cut their energy use that would also save them \$736 million and cut Australia’s greenhouse gasses by 1.1 per cent. Imagine if we did that across the whole economy,” said Rob Murray-Leach.

“Energy efficiency is the best opportunity that Australia has to start cutting greenhouse gas pollution quickly and cheaply in the next two decades. We are seeking bipartisan political support for making energy efficiency core to any comprehensive strategy for enhancing Australia’s economic productivity and environmental well-being,” said Jeff Angel.

Today’s call follows the 4th March roundtable and yesterday’s Communiqué from Australia’s key energy efficiency advocates drawn from the business, research and community sectors.

Latest News

Energy Efficiency Roundtable Communique



Created on Wednesday, 28 April 2010 00:00

Forty-four business and community organisations have released a communique to begin a campaign showing:

- Energy efficiency saves money
- Energy efficiency is vital to a timely and orderly transition to a low-carbon economy
- Energy efficiency has reached a tipping point of policy development
- Key action areas

Latest News

IPART REPRIMANDED



Created on Thursday, 08 April 2010 16:55

The Independent Pricing And Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has been condemned for its role in determining electricity prices, with big hikes predicted for the next three years to 2013. The tribunal was called to account by Total Environment Centre today for failing to support or even mention the need for energy efficiency measures, while confirming that electricity prices will rise substantially (by 20% to 42% annually in NSW), even without a CPRS.

“IPART seems to accept the need for big spends on infrastructure to the tune of \$40 billion without looking at alternatives, in particular without asking if energy efficiency measures would mitigate the need to spend so much,” said Mr. Jeff Angel, director of TEC.

“The NSW government should bring IPART and the electricity retailers and distributors into line with modern thinking about energy supply and efficiency. Our recent survey of business shows that savings of 20-40% by 2020 could be made.”

Mr. Angel pointed out that justifying the need for the expenditure as “the only way to improve network reliability and supply security” actually reveals to what extent “IPART has become a mouthpiece for the power industry that supports profligate consumption of electricity rather than efficiency”

Mr Angel further criticised IPART for “surrendering any capacity for broader policy analysis. IPART is happy to talk about federal government compensation for the impacts of the government's CPRS on prices, but seems incapable of applying the same reasoning to the big price hikes sought by the industry.”

The Federal Government is providing direct cash assistance to 92 per cent of households to assist with the CPRS component of any price rise. This household assistance package – worth \$49 billion over ten years – will ensure families are supported as Australia takes action on climate change.

“IPART should insist the retailers adopt energy efficiency so consumers can actively avoid the increased costs - but instead it says nothing.”

Latest News

IPART MUST GET WITH THE PROGRAM



Created on Thursday, 08 April 2010 16:48

In the wake of reports of impending energy poverty today, Total Environment Centre (TEC) has condemned The Independent Pricing And Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for abandoning government policy to moderate energy prices for consumers and business, and forecasting a 60% price rise instead.

“IPART should advocate energy efficiency as the first strategy, not act as the mouthpiece for the electricity industry by supporting price rises.”

“Also the ongoing contention that the CPRS will cause consumer hardship is just wrong,” Mr Angel said.

“It is actually the pre-existing culture of the electricity industry, which is focused on sales not saving, which is negatively impacting on Australian households and businesses.”

Trials continue to demonstrate the extraordinary potential to reduce peaks along with average energy use. Integral Energy’s Western Sydney Pricing Trial over 2 years achieved significant reductions, saving \$3 million in electricity bills.

Latest News

IPART FAILS TO CURB POWER PRICE HIKES



Created on Thursday, 18 March 2010 18:20

The Independent Pricing And Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has been condemned for its role in determining electricity prices, with big hikes predicted for the next three years to 2013.

Mr. Angel pointed out that justifying the need for the expenditure as “the only way to improve network reliability and supply security” actually reveals to what extent “IPART has become a mouthpiece for the power industry that supports profligate consumption of electricity rather than efficiency”

Mr Angel further criticised IPART for “surrendering any capacity for broader policy analysis. IPART is happy to talk about federal government compensation for the impacts of the government's CPRS on prices, but seems incapable of applying the same reasoning to the big price hikes sought by the industry.”

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“IPART should insist the retailers adopt energy efficiency so consumers can actively avoid the increased costs - but instead it says nothing.”

Latest News

PEOPLE POWER FOR ENERGY REFORM



Created on Monday, 15 March 2010 11:02

Fuel Poverty is unnecessary in Australia, said Total Environment Centre (TEC) today, yet with energy costs rising faster than any other living expense, the difference between the haves and the have nots will soon be up in lights.

“Successive governments have failed to address the waste and inefficiency of our power-generation network over recent decades,” said TEC director, Jeff Angel. “The result is a National Energy Market bent on encouraging consumers to use more electricity, requiring more infrastructure, rather than introducing smart measures to reform the existing system and make it more efficient.”

Mr Angel urged consumers to take the matter into their own hands by practicing energy efficiency at home and in the workplace.

“We can’t wait for government to put smart meters into houses, and provide proper support to an alternative renewable energy industry and energy conservation,” he said.

“While pressuring government to institute these measures we can all make a difference by making sure energy isn’t drained away by power outlets left on standby when not in use. We can reduce both emissions and our power bills through energy efficiency.”

With world Earth Hour looming on March 27th, Mr Angel urged business to show community leadership by reducing unnecessary practices such as excessive office lighting after hours and computer back-up overnight.

“We should also support our local councils in their efforts to have Energy Australia adopt lower-cost, more energy-efficient street lighting,” added Mr Angel. “This is one of the biggest drains on the public purse, and a cost which could be lessened considerably if smarter lighting was put in place.”

Latest News

Victoria Must Invest In Green Jobs Now



Created on Wednesday, 24 February 2010 18:07

Leading Environment Groups launched a campaign today on the steps of Parliament House in Melbourne, calling for all Victorian political parties to commit to a Green Jobs package before the 2010 state election.

Led by Friends of the Earth, Total Environment Centre, and Boomerang Alliance, the groups have endorsed the research undertaken by Environment Victoria and Australian Conservation Foundation, and demanded action across 5 key green industries. They believe a comprehensive green jobs package could potentially deliver over 20,000 new Victorian jobs in green industries within the next 5 years, including:

- Energy and Water efficiency - 6,900 new green jobs by 2014
- Public Transport - 6,650 new green jobs by 2014
- Renewable Energy - 4,000 green jobs NOW
- Recycling - 3,100 new green jobs by 2014
- Solar Water Heating - 1,500 new green jobs by 2020

Friends of the Earth campaigner Cam Walker said today that “simple initiatives can deliver big results for a moderate investment. Certainly we need to crack down on dodgy operators, but new green industries are a unique opportunity to create jobs while also protecting the planet.

“Container Deposit legislation will create up to 1,200 new jobs in the first year and provide a \$200million injection into the Victorian Recycling industry.”

Total Environment Centre Director, Jeff Angel, agreed: “With 97% of the community and most local councils around Australia supporting a deposit system, it’s hard to understand the Brumby Government’s resistance

“The logic is pretty simple – a container deposit system will deliver 300+ recycling collection centres at no cost to the government and provide a \$200million a year boost to underpin the industry. A \$15-\$20 increase in the landfill levy will deter the big wasters and develop a fund to incentivise new recycling facilities without causing undue stress on individual households.”

Given that Australia has just come through the worst financial crisis in the past 5 years, it’s astonishing that as yet, the state government has not taken major action on green jobs, said Mr Angel.

“There are over 20,000 new green jobs ready to be rolled out with the right policy triggers, and if Victoria doesn’t act fast, most of them will be exported to South Australia or NSW.”

Mr Walker concluded that “industry has consistently come to us and outlined over a billion dollars in new private investment that is ready to go. Great opportunities exist. But governments need to provide both a carrot for the solution, and a stick against the pollution.”

Latest News

NO CPRS - SO WHY ARE POWER BILLS GOING UP SO MUCH?



Created on Tuesday, 15 December 2009 16:11

New South Wales electricity companies intend to charge consumers over \$16 billion in the next 5 years, ignoring major energy savings that could reduce bills and greenhouse emissions, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), which flagged prices rises up to 62% today, has pointed to network expansion and the Federal Government's proposed emissions trading scheme as the cause. Yet with the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme at least three years away, it is clear that price increases by the state's electricity network businesses are the main cause.

"New South Wales electricity companies have launched an unprecedented 'expand and pollute' mission for which consumers and the environment will pay dearly," said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC. "The best way to deal with rising electricity demand is to harness the quick, cost-effective energy savings that are on offer. Regulators must send the businesses back to the drawing board."

Over \$16 billion is proposed to be spent on capital investment by the NSW electricity distribution and transmission companies, Country Energy, Energy Australia, Integral Energy and TransGrid. The companies, however, only propose to spend a bare minimum on energy saving measures, despite these being four times cheaper than building more 'poles and wires'. Energy Australia for example is proposing to spend less than 0.5% of their budget on energy efficiency and demand management.

"It's ironic that as Copenhagen gets into full swing, the New South Wales networks are planning for more pollution, more carbon costs and global warming risks for New South Wales families," said Ms Castle.

The NSW proposals put total network spending in NSW, Victoria, QLD, SA, ACT and Tasmania at over \$40 billion for the next 5 years.

"Energy ministers and regulators are on trial. They must require monopoly electricity companies to deliver savings and reduced emissions that will cut energy bills. This is an expensive and irresponsible addiction to infrastructure. More steel in the ground means hotter, more dangerous summers for the people of New South Wales. A complete overhaul of the energy market is long overdue."

Latest News

Vic power bills and CO2 emissions to soar



Created on Friday, 11 December 2009 10:17

Victorian electricity companies have today released their plan to charge consumers over \$5 billion on a polluting spending spree in the next 5 years, ignoring major energy savings that could reduce bills and greenhouse emissions, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today.

“Victorian electricity companies have learned nothing from the disastrous blackouts that occurred earlier this year,” said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC. “The best way to deal with surging demand on hot days is to harness the quick, cost-effective energy savings that are on offer. Regulators must send the businesses back to the drawing board.”

\$5.4 billion is proposed to be spent on capital investment by the five Victorian electricity distribution companies, Jemena, SP AusNet, Citipower, Powercor and United Energy. The companies, however, only propose to spend \$21 million on energy saving measures, despite them being 4 times more cost-effective than building more ‘poles and wires’. This is a mere 0.4% of total spending on hardware.

“It’s ironic that as Copenhagen gets underway, the Victorian networks are planning for more pollution, more carbon costs and global warming risks for Victorian families,” said Ms Castle.

The Victorian proposals put total network spending in NSW, Victoria, QLD, SA, ACT and Tasmania at over \$40 billion for the next 5 years. The capacity of the National Electricity Market regulators to obtain energy savings will be tested once again.

“It’s time for energy ministers and regulators to wake up to this expensive, irresponsible addiction to infrastructure. More steel in the ground means hotter, more dangerous summers for Victorians. A complete overhaul of the energy market is long overdue.”

The Australian Energy Regulator is hosting a public forum on these proposals in Melbourne on 17 December 2009:

<http://www.aer.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/732540>

Latest News

Energy regulator approves higher electricity bills not efficiency



Created on Tuesday, 08 December 2009 09:39

After a two year inquiry into how to increase energy efficiency from its current low levels, the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) has recommended doing more of the same.

“It’s a scandal that after two years of talk and bountiful evidence that efficiency is at abysmally low levels, the top regulator says let’s do it again. Their minimalist recommendations mean we will have more of the same: build, generate and pollute with electricity consumers and the environment footing the bill”, said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at Total Environment Centre (TEC) on the release of the AEMC’s report, Demand-Side Participation in the National Electricity Market.

The AEMC proposes to continue this review until next March, but TEC is calling on the Federal Government to terminate the process immediately and replace it with an independent inquiry to recommend effective reforms to encourage energy savings in the National Electricity Market (NEM).

“This report is worse than useless as it has distracted us from real action to reduce cost and reduce emissions. The AEMC has shown it is clearly out of its depth when it comes to energy savings. Energy Ministers must step in to fix the national electricity Rules before the current investment cycle lock us into even more expensive greenhouse polluting power stations and power lines,” said Ms Castle.

The AEMC report concluded that, “the NEM framework does not materially bias against the use of DSP. We have found that overall the costs and opportunities to participate provided by the framework are appropriate.”

“The AEMC drew this conclusion without measuring energy savings by electricity companies. Bizarrely, the Review does not even estimate the amount or the cost effectiveness of initiatives to reduce consumption and peak demand.”

“The national energy regulator has recently approved NSW poles and wires to spend the equivalent to \$2400 for every person in NSW, but energy savings expenditure of only 70 cents per person over five years. The QLD draft decision is even worse with over \$3000 per person being proposed. The AEMC might consider this socially efficient, but consumers and voters receiving ever increasing power bills and carbon costs will disagree.”

“The AEMC is keen on smart grids as a ‘solution’ but it will take many years to roll this out. In the meantime we will be saddled with more polluting infrastructure because the NEM stops energy efficiency. It’s a victory of ideology over commonsense and evidence.”

The AEMC’s Final Report suggests:

- Existing, low levels of energy conservation are ‘socially efficient’
- Market incentives should remain in place (that rewarded utilities for selling more electricity)
- The high connection charges should continue to apply to embedded generation (often renewable)
- Substantial reserve capacity on offer by the demand-side should continue to be shut out (despite the benefits of reduced costs, enhanced security and reliability, and reduced carbon pollution)

Latest News

ENERGY MINISTERS APPROVE SPIRALLING POWER BILLS AND EMISSIONS



Created on Friday, 04 December 2009 17:38

The refusal to tackle Australia's largest source of greenhouse emissions continues, with Martin Ferguson and the state and territory energy ministers failing to initiate serious reform of the heavily polluting energy market, at today's Ministerial Council on Energy (MCE) meeting in Hobart, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said.

"Australians have been dealt a double-blow to their future this week with energy ministers locking in spiralling emissions and bills in the wake of the ETS collapse," said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC. "The head in the sand approach to Australia's largest source of greenhouse emissions is simply negligent."

Ministers today considered several major reviews conducted by the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) but took no action on transitioning Australia's out-of-date, polluting system to a smart grid. The meeting's communiqué has approved a business-as-usual approach to building more inefficient, carbon intensive infrastructure and accepts inefficient growth in energy demand as inevitable.

"It's as if climate sceptics are running the energy market. Saving energy is four times more cost-effective than building new infrastructure but energy ministers are making consumers pay for more polluting power stations and power lines instead."

"The token decision to improve the connection arrangements for renewable generation does nothing to address the fundamental flaws of an energy market that has a built-in bias against renewables. Ministers are merely tinkering at the edges of the Renewable Energy Target that will go ahead with or without them."

"If the MCE is serious about addressing demand side participation in the energy market, it must reject the AEMC view that the current, negligible levels of participation are optimal, and direct it to revise its Demand-Side Participation Review to ensure it addresses the gross under-utilisation of energy savings."

"We're pleased that the MCE has taken up TEC's recommendation to send the AEMC back to the drawing board to reassess the ridiculous proposal to exempt over \$12 billion of network spending from efficiency scrutiny. However, the underlying problems of the energy market remain unaddressed."

"Ministers are wringing their hands over price rises that have occurred due to their negligence. They must overcome their paralysis and take action to rein in irresponsible, inefficient network spending."

"We are still desperately lacking an environmental or energy savings objective in the National Electricity Law, that would actually recognise environmental sustainability and a safe climate are in the 'long-term interests of consumers'. Such an objective would finally allow regulators to give environmental issues like climate change due concern, after being neglected for so long."

Latest News

Energy ministers to feed emissions spiral in CPRS void?



Created on Friday, 04 December 2009 09:41

On the eve of a historic Ministerial Council on Energy (MCE) meeting this Friday in Hobart, Total Environment Centre (TEC) today called on federal minister, Martin Ferguson and his state and territory colleagues in charge of the polluting power sector to be part of the solution to the policy void left by the routed emissions trading scheme.

“The gaping hole left by the implosion of the emissions trading scheme makes reform of the heavily polluting energy sector more urgent than ever.” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of TEC. “It’s a golden opportunity for energy ministers to become part of the solution and deal themselves back into the climate debate. Without major overhaul, Australia has little hope of meeting its greenhouse emissions reduction target of at least 5% by 2020, as energy sector emissions are projected to double by that time.”

“The National Electricity Market overseen by the energy ministers has been a disaster for climate change. Martin Ferguson and his MCE colleagues are driving the expansion of expensive, polluting infrastructure and blocking the emergence of a cost-efficient, smart grid,” said Angel. “The business-as-usual approach is just the same as if there were climate sceptics running the show.”

It is expected that several major reviews conducted by the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) will be considered on Friday.

TEC has written to energy ministers calling on them to reject the findings of the AEMC reviews, such as exempting over \$12 billion of network spending from efficiency scrutiny. The MCE has also been asked to commission a comprehensive review of how energy markets can modernise into a smart grid that supports energy efficiency, demand management and distributed generation.

“Efficiency measures could off-set the cost of greenhouse emissions reductions, but not if energy ministers are standing in the way.”

“When Australia’s primary energy policy body says that the current, negligible levels of demand-side participation are ‘socially efficient’, we’re in deep trouble.”

“The shackles that restrain regulators from considering environmental issues must also be removed, through a new or reinterpreted objective in the National Electricity Law that would actually recognise environmental sustainability and a safe climate are in the ‘long-term interests of consumers’.”

Latest News

Energy ministers to blame for price rises



Created on Wednesday, 02 December 2009 11:21

Total Environment Centre (TEC) today slammed energy ministers for unnecessary electricity price rises of 50-60% caused by the deliberate lock-out of massive efficiency savings. The now uncertain future of the Federal Government's emissions trading scheme makes reform of the energy market more urgent to off-set future costs of acting on climate change.

"Energy ministers are locking in ever-spiraling carbon costs the longer they resist reforming the energy market," said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC. "Giving the green light to expensive, polluting infrastructure instead of bill-reducing efficiency will only make reducing emissions harder and more costly."

Price rises of 50-60% have been flagged by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and the Australian Energy Regulator. But the key component of these costs is the unprecedented expansion of electricity networks (the 'poles and wires') which only adds to the future costs of reducing greenhouse emissions. A record \$30 billion spending has been approved for NSW, QLD and SA alone over the next 5 years.

"Sooner or later Australia will have to pay for its greenhouse pollution, but these costs could be dramatically reduced if the full potential of energy savings was harnessed. It's irresponsible of Martin Ferguson and his state colleagues to continue to support a system that rams carbon intensive energy down the throats of unwitting consumers."

"With the emissions trading scheme in doubt, the spotlight is now on the root of Australia's greenhouse problem – a supply-heavy energy system and the lock out of huge energy efficiency savings."

"This Friday energy ministers have a chance to deal themselves back into the solution by transforming the energy market from polluting dinosaur to a clean, smart, bill-reducing national grid."

The quarterly meeting of the Ministerial Council on Energy will take place in Hobart this Friday.

Latest News

NSW GREEN ENERGY LEAP TRIPPED BY RUDD'S CPRS



Created on Tuesday, 10 November 2009 12:35

Today's decision by Premier Rees to adopt a generous gross feed-in tariff for solar power demonstrates a serious commitment to the green energy state, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said.

The Federal Government CPRS however, means the greenhouse gas savings of voluntary greenhouse reductions – like the roof-top solar - won't be added on top of the CPRS target.

“The Rees government's early Christmas, green gift to NSW shows what can be done when politicians get serious about climate change,” said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC.

“Unfortunately the Rudd Government is saying ‘don't bother’ with its failure to ensure that roof-top solar and other voluntary action will reduce Australia's total emissions and thus improve the CPRS target. Kevin Rudd needs to get with the nation's surging enthusiasm to reduce emissions by ensuring additional reductions like this count.”

The new NSW policy ensures that electricity retailers must pay a generous amount for all of the electricity generated by roof-top solar, not just the leftovers. It reduces the time in which the panels are paid off to between 8 and 10 years.

“The Federal Government will continue to work at cross-purposes to the rest of Australia until it removes the barrier to voluntary action,” said Castle. Until then, anything that goes beyond what the emissions trading scheme would already trigger will merely allow big polluters to pollute more, more cheaply.

“This policy breakthrough also highlights the need to roll-out smart meters which are designed to measure the gross generation from roof-top panels. Unless the mandatory smart meters have the capacity to measure gross generation from the start, households will be slammed with yet another unnecessary cost for doing the right thing.”

The Ministerial Council on Energy has agreed to a staged roll-out of smart meters but the meters are only required to measure the roof-top solar electricity left over after household use. This conflicts with ACT and NSW policies that measure the total amount generated from roof-top solar.

“Unless this is fixed it will force households to fork around \$100 - \$200 dollars extra to buy a new meter or get the old one transfigured,” Castle said.

Latest News

FOSSIL ENERGY MARKET BLOCKS CLIMATE ACTION



Created on Friday, 09 October 2009 12:00

Australia's highly inefficient and polluting energy system will continue to block climate change policies, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today, in the wake of the Australian Energy Market Commission's (AEMC's) final report on the Review of Energy Market Frameworks in Light of Climate Change Policies.

The report, just released, shows that Australia's Energy Ministers are failing to deliver on their mandate to foster environmental benefits for Australia, by not reforming the Energy Market.

"The Review has been a tepid tick-box exercise when what's needed is a complete transformation of the energy market which is the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia," said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC. "Martin Ferguson and his state colleagues must be called to account for the failure of greenhouse emissions reductions in the electricity sector."

In August 2008 the Ministerial Council on Energy requested that the AEMC conduct the Review, but it has been hindered from the start by the narrow terms of reference and the lack of an environmental objective in the National Electricity Law.

"The Energy ministers are actively maintaining a status quo that restricts renewable energy, discourages energy efficiency, promotes poor investments and traps Australia in fossil fuel dependence," Ms Castle said. "They are obstructing the development of energy solutions which would bolster the economy, create jobs and protect us from rising carbon costs."

Castle said that the AEMC Report doesn't address the fact that the energy sector emissions will double by 2020, despite a national emissions reduction target of 5 to 25%.

"Energy producers and distributors are currently rewarded for selling more electricity. That needs to be transformed into an incentive to boost energy efficiency and better manage demand. COAG must step over the Energy Ministers and initiate an overhaul of the energy market," said Castle.

Total Environment Centre has released *The Role of The NEM In Responding To Climate Change Policies*, a report by MMA Consulting that counters the AEMC's conclusions.

Latest News

CONSUMERS ROBBED OF GREEN POWER



Created on Wednesday, 07 October 2009 14:20

A campaign to fix a serious flaw in the federal government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme was launched by a coalition of environment, consumer and energy groups today.

The groups voiced serious concern about the scheme which currently does not recognise the emissions reductions individuals achieve by taking actions such as buying Greenpower or installing solar hot water systems.

The Total Environment Centre, CHOICE, WWF Australia, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Alternative Technology Association, the Moreland Energy Foundation and Environment Victoria are calling on the federal government to amend the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) to allow households, businesses and state and local government to take their own voluntary action above and beyond the federal government's efforts.

"Australians want to play their part in reducing their carbon emissions," said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of the Total Environment Centre. "So far the CPRS debate has been dominated by polluting industries seeking compensation and the major parties are bending backwards to help. With major party negotiations to start soon they should focus on ensuring verifiable voluntary action taken by Australians will not simply subsidise the big polluters to continue polluting."

"The current CPRS legislation excludes the majority of consumers and the majority of measurable consumer actions from making a meaningful contribution. It disempowers consumers from taking action on climate change and reduces their engagement with the issue," said Gordon Renouf, Director of Campaigns and Policy, CHOICE.

"The CPRS will be an important part of Australia's response to climate change, providing a clear price signal that will drive a shift to a clean economy", said Paul Toni, leader of WWF Australia's Climate Change program. "But those who take voluntary action – no matter who they are – must be confident that their action will have a direct – and additional – benefit to the environment."

"The recognition of voluntary action by individuals, households, businesses and state and local governments under the CPRS will build upon significant momentum and send a strong message that the Government is looking to engage all Australians in the climate change challenge", said Ian Porter, CEO of the Alternative Technology Association.

This coalition of groups is launching a campaign today to convince the federal government to make these changes.

Further information:

<http://yourclimateaction.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/mmvac-statement.pdf>

<http://yourclimateaction.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/briefing.pdf>

Latest News

SKEPTICS KEEP STOKING COAL



Created on Friday, 02 October 2009 14:42

Total Environment Centre (TEC) today slammed the NSW Government for keeping the door open for more polluting coal-fired power. The exhibition today of the environmental assessment for two new 2000 MW power stations at Muswellbrook and Lithgow leaves the door open for polluting coal despite energy efficiency and renewable energy capable of securing NSW's energy supply beyond 2020.

"The so-called 'technology neutral' approach is reckless and irresponsible," said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC. "It's a mask for pushing another couple of coal-fired power stations. The NSW Government's energy policy is being torn apart by rogue sceptic elements. The Premier must immediately rule out any new coal-fired power."

"NSW has one of the strongest energy efficiency schemes in Australia. The Energy Savings Scheme's targeted reduction of 4% of energy demand by 2014, planned cogeneration and new wind power triggered by the Renewable Energy Target means that there is no need for more dirty base-load power."

A recent report by the Institute for Sustainable Futures showed that NSW may have surplus electricity generation of more than 12,000 GWh by 2019/20 with the right mix of energy efficiency, renewable energy and cogeneration.

"The Premier must take strong action to keep up the momentum for the transition to smart, clean power instead of gifting rising energy consumption to the coal industry as a cash-cow."

Latest News

PROFLIGATE ENERGY MARKET NURTURES POLLUTERS



Created on Tuesday, 29 September 2009 14:13

Last Updated on Sunday, 17 February 2013 06:40

Climate change policies for renewable energy, smart power and energy efficiency will continue to be hindered by energy market regulators, Total Environment Centre (TEC) said today, after a disappointing final report on our electricity networks from the Australian Energy Market Commission(AEMC) was released yesterday.

“The head in the sand approach continues to dominate Australia’s largest source of greenhouse emissions,” said Tee Lim, Environmental and Energy Market Campaigner at TEC. “Stymied by the pollute-as-usual directives from federal and state energy ministers, the AEMC has bowed to energy utilities that want to keep smart energy solutions out in the cold while they keep building poles and wires.”

The AEMC approach will maintain the veneer of ‘technology neutrality’, while favouring polluting infrastructure (more poles and wires) and discouraging clean energy efficiency proponents. The report recommends trivial expanded planning and reporting requirements, but with few specific guidelines as to what must be included, and no enforcement or oversight by regulators of demand management and energy efficiency approaches.

“The recommended increased threshold from \$1 million to \$5 million for testing the suitability of new infrastructure investments means that billions of dollars of investments will now escape under the radar with little scrutiny - up to 40% of them. Energy consumers should be very concerned: almost half of the average electricity bill is for poles and wires. But with little regulatory oversight consumers can’t be confident that checks and balances are in place,” Mr Lim said.

“The weak Demand Side Engagement Strategy is a poor response to the embarrassing lack of demand management in the energy market. It’s like getting the fox to guard the hen house: more infrastructure, higher bills, more pollution and more revenue for energy companies.”

Latest News

ELECTRIC COWBOYS BLOCK ENERGY REFORM



Created on Tuesday, 28 July 2009 21:37

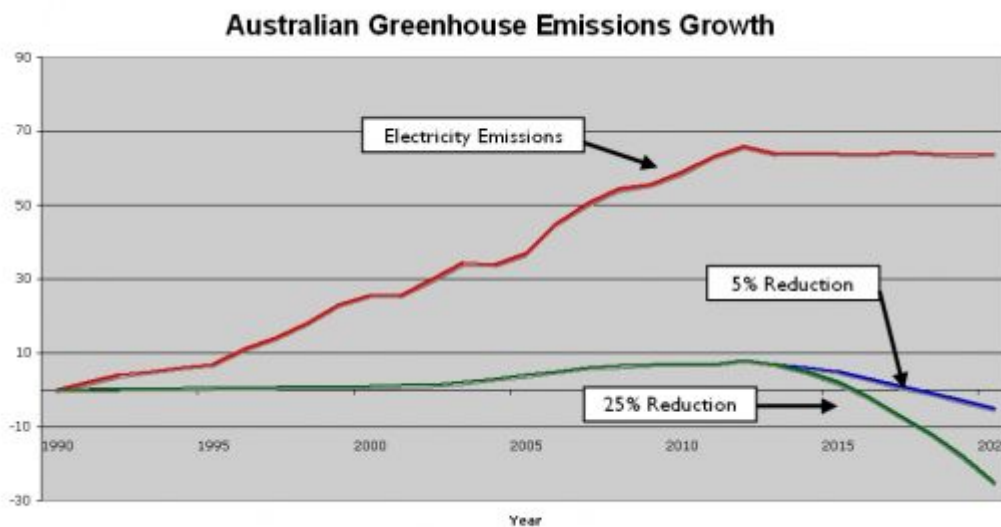
A dramatic change of ministerial powers must take place, and COAG must ensure the Ministerial Council on Energy (MCE) and the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) refer all decisions about the energy market to the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) and the Ministry for Climate Change and Water.

The call from TEC follows the release of a new report by respected energy consultants, McLennan Magasanik Associates (MMA).

“Martin Ferguson and his state colleagues are wrecking Australia’s climate change policies by bolstering a system that blocks energy efficiency and renewable energy. They must be pulled into line,” said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC.

Emissions from Australia’s energy sector are projected to grow by 64% to 106% by 2020. This is compared to a national reduction target of 5% to 25%. The report shows that even with emissions trading, other market failures block the entry of renewable and low emission generators; there are stark conflicts between the objectives of the National Electricity Market (NEM) and climate change policy goals; environmental impacts are not being effectively integrated into energy sector decision making.

Briefing Paper



Source: Australian Government Department of Climate Change, *Stationary Energy Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2007, 2008*

Latest News

ENERGY MINISTERS PUT BRAKE ON CLIMATE ACTION



Created on Monday, 27 July 2009 20:41

“Most of the country has its foot to the floor trying to reduce greenhouse emissions but energy ministers have slammed on the brakes,” said Jane Castle, Senior Campaigner at TEC. ‘It’s not surprising greenhouse pollution from the energy sector is skyrocketing: energy ministers are rewarding polluting energy, and blocking efficiency and clean alternatives.”

“Martin Ferguson and his state colleagues must be held accountable for working against the efforts of everyone else. The Ministerial Council on Energy (MCE) is the last refuge of dirty energy. It needs a wake-up call: the market must be overhauled to promote efficiency and renewable energy.”

Emissions from Australia’s energy sector are projected to grow by between 64% and 106% by 2020. This is compared to a national reduction target of between 5 and 25%. Energy ministers include: Martin Ferguson (Federal); Ian MacDonald (NSW); Patrick Conlon (SA); Peter Batchelor (Vic); and Stephen Robertson (QLD).

The report by McLennan Magasanik Associates (MMA). Role of the NEM in responding to climate change policies shows that:

- efficient and clean development is being frustrated by the energy market
- even with emissions trading, other market failures present barriers to the entry of renewable and low emission generators
- there are stark conflicts between the objectives of the National Electricity Market (NEM) and climate change policies
- the lack of an environmental objective for the NEM has constrained opportunities for demand reduction and energy efficiency
- energy ministers have not fully exploited their role to provide national leadership so that broader convergence issues and environmental impacts are effectively integrated into energy sector decision making

“The MCE claims on its website that it delivers environmental benefits for Australians. This is pure fiction. The lack of an environmental objective for the energy market prevents regulators from doing anything about reducing greenhouse emissions and makes them work perversely against climate policies.”

REPORT

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Latest News

ENERGY BILL NEEDS NEW RUNNING SHOES



Created on Wednesday, 10 June 2009 01:22

“The NSW Government is taking a bold step towards future-proofing the state,” said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. “There are, however, some concerns that the plug can be pulled too easily.”

The Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill places a requirement on NSW electricity retailers to purchase or implement energy savings to achieve an overall reduction on total energy sales of 4% by 2014. It allows the Minister to reduce the target for ‘harmonisation’ with other schemes or if retailers are paying the penalty instead of saving energy. It also provides exemptions for electricity intensive trade exposed industry.

“Energy efficiency is a winner for consumers because it reduces electricity bills while delivering the same or better services. It’s also a winner for the environment because it’s the fastest, most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse emissions. Australia has been lagging behind other countries on efficiency, but this will help us catch up,” said Mr Angel.

“While the Scheme is a step in the right direction, NSW’s energy policy is a mess: the Energy Minister is allowing Government-owned electricity networks to spend \$17 billion on expanding their polluting infrastructure over the next 5 years. This will raise electricity bills, increase emissions and counter the energy savings achieved by the Energy Savings Scheme. We need to make sure that energy efficiency is the first and enduring choice.”

Latest News

POSITIVE NSW ENERGY TARGET



Created on Friday, 27 February 2009 23:18

TEC has been campaigning for a workable scheme for several years as an essential, substantial, and quick acting policy for climate change which will also cushion consumers against rises in power prices.

“There is concern in some quarters about the plethora of state schemes, and certainly the ideal is one national approach on energy efficiency,” said TEC director Jeff Angel. “But we now have good early action in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

“This is a much more constructive move than waiting years for national action, or trusting to a weak Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).”

Mr Angel said that the issue of ‘additionality’ must still be addressed by the Rudd government so that energy efficiency adds to the national CO2 savings target.

“There will be big financial savings, a jobs boost and quick CO2 gains for NSW now that the foundations for achievable energy efficiency have been laid out.”

Latest News

NEGA-WATTS NOT MEGA-WATTS



Created on Friday, 06 February 2009 00:07

“It’s a one-off hand-out that will do nothing to change the energy industry’s core motivation: to sell more electricity,” said TEC’s senior campaigner, Jane Castle.

“Kevin Rudd needs to go the root of the problem, not just tinker on the edges. He needs to crack the clique of bureaucrats, energy industry players and regulators that currently sets Australia’s energy industry policy, pull Federal Energy Minister, Martin Ferguson, and his state counterparts into line, and reform the mess at the very centre of Australia’s climate change crisis.”

With more scorching temperatures predicted for the coming weekend, black-outs similar to those which have incapacitated Victoria and South Australia could cripple other states.

“The vast, untapped potential of energy efficiency is the only real cure for black-outs, rising energy bills, and ballooning greenhouse emissions,” said Castle.

“The recent call by the Energy Networks Association for an extra \$50 billion is blatant gold-plating’. More ‘poles and wires’ in the ground equals more revenue earned for these companies. This money comes out of the pockets of the same electricity consumers who are suffering black-outs in the current heat waves.”

Energy efficient strategies include advanced control systems for lighting and air-conditioning, efficient motors and refrigeration, smart meters, reduced stand-by power settings, fuel switching (such as solar water heating) and many other smart technologies.

“Australia’s electricity consumption has rocketed up by 70% since 1980,” Castle pointed out. “Over the same period, California has kept electricity consumption virtually static with a simple carrot and stick equation: when targets for energy efficiency are met, the companies are rewarded, when they don’t, they are penalised.”

The McKinsey Report has confirmed that Australia could reduce its greenhouse emissions in 2020 by 20% at zero net cost to the economy simply by implementing energy efficiency.

Latest News

BLACK DAYS FOR ENERGY CONSUMERS



Created on Thursday, 05 February 2009 03:34

The Federal Government's announcement of \$3.8 billion of spending yesterday on insulation and solar hot water is dabbling, not problem solving. It's a one-off hand out that will be overshadowed by the energy industry's core motivation: to sell more electricity.

The vast, untapped potential of energy efficiency is the only real cure for black-outs, escalating energy bills and ballooning greenhouse emissions. Real energy efficiency does not rely on altruism. It does not require people to reduce their standard of living. COAG has calculated that Australians could reduce energy consumption by a whopping 70% while maintaining or improving services. The McKinsey Report has confirmed that Australia could reduce its greenhouse emissions in 2020 by 20% at zero net cost to the economy simply by implementing energy efficiency. This would be four times better than Kevin Rudd's sickly 5% cuts.

Energy efficiency generates 'nega-watts' not megawatts. It includes advanced control systems for lighting and air-conditioning, efficient motors and refrigeration, smart meters, reduced stand-by power settings, fuel switching (such as solar water heating) and many other smart technologies.

So why are we still installing inefficient air conditioners and building new houses without insulation? Why are we facing rising power bills and black-outs? Because the energy industry is running the show. Electricity companies have a vested interest in selling more electricity because that's how they make money. The recent call by the Energy Networks Association for an extra \$50 billion is a perfect example of this. It's called 'gold-plating'. The formula is simple: the more 'poles and wires' in the ground, the more revenue these companies can earn. It is money that comes out of the pockets of the same electricity consumers who are suffering black-outs in the middle of these current heat waves.

Australia's electricity consumption has rocketed up by 70% since 1980. Over the same period, California has kept electricity consumption virtually static. How did they do it? Better regulation, which is exactly what Kevin Rudd has just called for. Simple carrot and stick: when targets for energy efficiency are met, the companies are rewarded, when they don't, they are penalised.

The only way to fix the grid with better regulations is to crack open the clique that currently sets Australia's energy industry policy. This tight-knit group of bureaucrats, energy industry players and regulators uses a lot of oxygen defending the free-market mythologies that have recently been so thoroughly discredited. Kevin Rudd needs to go the core of the problem, not just tinker on the edges. He needs to pull Federal Energy Minister, Martin Ferguson, and his state counterparts, into line and reform the mess at the very centre of Australia's climate change crisis.

Latest News

REGULATOR FIDDLES WHILE CONSUMERS BURN



Created on Saturday, 31 January 2009 01:43

Late yesterday, after a year of deliberation, the AEMC knocked back proposals which would have required electricity companies to help consumers reduce bills.

"While tens of thousands of consumers in Victoria and South Australia swelter through power blackouts, the AEMC has failed to ensure these events won't recur," said Jane Castle, TEC's Senior Campaigner, one of the authors of the Rule Change Package.

Ms Castle said the failure to encourage energy savings will hurt consumers and the environment.

"Regulators plan to approve a \$17 billion spending spree in NSW alone by networks bent on expanding the grid. To pay for this, Energy Australia's customers in Sydney and Newcastle are facing increases in network prices of over 70%."

"Demand Management would reduce the risk of blackouts, creating a sustainable, supply aimed at the entire electricity grid, instead of simply meeting increasing demand," said TEC's Director, Jeff Angel.

TEC's Rule Change Package presented a strategy to make power companies prioritise energy efficiency over building more polluting infrastructure.

"But the AEMC has rejected numerous proposals to help consumers save power, even as it agreed to a number of minor improvements," said Ms Castle. "For example, the AEMC even rejected proposals requiring networks to report on energy saving measures that they have undertaken.

"The AEMC is hiding behind a maze of reviews, reports, rules and bureaucracy while power demand, prices, and greenhouse emissions spiral. As the Regulator has failed to protect consumers, it is now up to Governments to step in."

"Energy Minister, Martin Ferguson, and state energy ministers must terminate their insane attachment to coal-fired power which is the key driver of Australia's greenhouse emissions," said Mr Angel. "The logic is perverse and destructive."

TEC is the first community group to attempt a Rule change to Australia's energy market.

Briefing paper
Rules Change Package on AEMC site

Latest News

AUSTRALIAN ENERGY TRANSFORMATION OR TOAST?



Created on Thursday, 29 January 2009 23:07

The long-awaited draft decision on TEC's carefully researched proposals for urgent energy reform, represents a first-time acknowledgment of the serious problems facing Australia's highly inefficient electricity grid.

"The market is supposed to be regulated for efficiency, but instead rewards companies for selling more electricity, not less, which increases our greenhouse emissions," said TEC senior campaigner, Ms Jane Castle, one of the authors of the TEC Rule Change package.

TEC suggests that the energy industry's addiction to expanding its inefficient assets is driving the price of electricity sky high and working against climate policies such as the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

"We are all paying for this polluting waste," said Castle. "Unless the AEMC requires electricity businesses to invest in energy efficiency and demand-management, prices will continue to rise, along with greenhouse emissions."

Any individual can propose changes to the Rules which govern the AEMC. TEC is the first community group to do so.

stay tuned for TEC's analysis of the AEMC's response to the Rules Change Package

for a copy of the Rule Change briefing paper:

Latest News

NSW SET TO LEAD THE WAY ON ROOF-TOP SOLAR



Created on Monday, 19 January 2009 23:13

“Australians need incentives to use and develop renewable energy technologies which are solar, thermal and ocean based,” said TEC’s Senior Campaigner, Jane Castle.

“But right now, there are more barriers than incentives,” she added. “NSW has the manufacturing capacity and the population to support a leadership position in solar energy for example, which would compensate for the weak Federal government Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

“The recent Rudd government decision to remove the Solar Homes and Communities Plan (SHCP) rebate by July 2009 means the up-front capital costs for installation of roof-top solar will increase by around \$8,000.”

“Solar credits” will replace the SHCP under the expanded Renewable Energy Target (RET).

“But they will actually reduce the amount of renewable energy installed within the grid,” said Ms Castle. “Nor will they adequately compensate owners of small-scale renewables for the loss of revenue.”

ATA and TEC maintain that the benefits of small scale renewables extend well beyond greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

The ATA’s Energy Advocate, Damien Moyse, said that small-scale, roof-top solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity, for example, “reduces infrastructure costs and improves supply reliability, while creating more jobs than the mainstream energy industry. Under the current framework, however, the small scale renewable generators are hampered by inconsistent and complex technical requirements, which also incur extra expenses.”

“TEC and the ATA applaud the NSW government’s feed-in tariff initiative,” said Ms Castle. “But it must be drafted to guarantee an attractive return for owners embracing energy technologies that are on the brink of commercialisation.”

TEC and the ATA also called on the federal government to ensure that all voluntary actions to reduce greenhouse emissions, such as installing roof-top solar, will reduce Australia’s emissions beyond the currently weak target.

“Otherwise we are merely reducing the burden of the heavy polluters,” said Mr Moyse.

copy of submission

Latest News

Delays for the NSW Government Energy Efficiency Scheme Condemned



Created on Saturday, 29 November 2008 03:53

The scheme and its targets were meant to be begin operating in January 2009, but a new start date of the 1st July 2009 was announced today by the Deputy Premier.

“This is a very disappointing delay to a very important part of the NSW Government energy efficiency and climate change plan,” said Jeff Angel, Director of TEC.

“It translates into a six month loss of potential benefits, and is effectively slowing down action on climate change.”

“The job of getting energy retailers to change their attitudes to energy efficiency is already such a huge task, extra delays and interferences are definitely not needed.”

The legislation for the new energy efficiency targets are a key plank in the Government’s greenhouse strategy and are vital to help prepare households and businesses for the introduction of the Commonwealth’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

“We are cautioning the State Government, there must be no turning back from this. Any more delays, interferences or un-ambitious targets will severely weaken the potential of the scheme and the government’s environmental credentials. They already have enough political problems without wrecking what should be a good news story. See it through properly and no more delays,” urged Mr. Angel.

Latest News

QLD and SA Consumers Sold Out on Efficiency, Greenhouse Emissions



Created on Wednesday, 22 October 2008 00:07

“The Regulator is giving the green light for more expensive, polluting infrastructure that will result in higher electricity bills and more greenhouse pollution for the Queenslanders and South Australians,” said Jane Castle, TEC Campaigner. “All the economic and climate change data is telling us energy efficiency must now be front and centre of electricity planning, not a timid afterthought.”

In its ‘Final Decision on the Demand Management Incentive Scheme for QLD and SA’, released last Friday, the AER has agreed to miniscule incentives for energy efficiency. Despite demand management and energy efficiency being almost 4 times more cost-effective than more ‘poles and wires’, the incentives fall short of requiring energy companies to implement them, and do little to counter massive incentives for inefficient expansion.

“The AER should earmark a minimum spending level for energy efficiency and demand management of 5% of network revenue on a ‘use it or lose it’ basis, and targets should be set for each network business. The AER must stop endorsing colossal spending on more inefficient poles and wires and display some will to regulate for efficiency. To start with poor quality regulation does not auger well. Energy businesses should be radically reformed so they are energy service providers, not greenhouse pollution drivers.”

The other change that the AER has proposed is to allow electricity businesses to spend a small amount on so-called ‘learn by doing’ activities. For SA, this equates to \$600,000 per year – a third of the level of the previous regulatory period and likely to be a fraction of the billions to be spent on new infrastructure. The sums for Queensland utilities are equally inappropriate.

“Electricity regulation is severely out of synch with what people need and want; with help, households can reduce their consumption by 70%. The current system is fuelling climate change when it could be helping avert it. A massive overhaul is required, not tinkering around the edges.”

Latest News

Light Bulb Phase-Out: Robbing Peter to Pay Paul



Created on Tuesday, 14 October 2008 00:28

“Dumping toxic mercury in landfills as a result of phasing out inefficient light bulbs is like robbing Peter to pay Paul. You just end up replacing one environmental problem with another. Peter Garrett and the other Environment Ministers need to act decisively to avoid another toxic bungle,” said Helen Kerley, Waste Minimisation Officer at TEC.

“The phase out of incandescent lighting is an important policy for reducing greenhouse emissions, but without recycling we’ll be creating hundreds of tonnes of one of the most toxic substances known. CFLs should be a top priority at the next Environment Protection and Heritage Council meeting in November.”

In its submission to the Regulatory Impact Statement on the Phase-out of Incandescent Light Bulbs, which closed on Friday, TEC called for responsibility to be placed on the manufacturers and importers of CFLs to ensure that they don’t damage environmental and human health.

“CFLs contain anywhere between 1–5mg of mercury which, when disposed of in landfill, often breaks down into the toxic methyl mercury. This vapor is even more toxic and is easily distributed via the wind and can find its way into local environmental systems, including waterways.”

“Australia already has 71 million fluorescent tubes in use, almost all of which go to landfill when replaced. And an extra 23 million CFLs have been handed out as part of the NSW Government Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme. This alone has the potential to contribute 115, 000 grams of mercury to landfill.”

“An extended producer responsibility scheme will provide a viable disposal pathway for this increased CFL use. If implemented, this approach can avoid problems associated with curbside recycling contamination, disposal to landfill and infrequent council hazardous waste collections.”

Latest News

Solar Panels Threatened by Tariff Rip-off



Created on Wednesday, 01 October 2008 21:44

COAG should support gross feed-in tariffs nationwide that pay for the full benefits of roof-top solar, rather than just the excess power after on-site consumption, the groups say.

“Only getting paid for the leftovers will discourage consumers from going solar and retard the industry,” said Jane Castle, TEC Energy Campaigner.

“Solar panels do much more than produce zero emissions electricity. They reduce congestion on transmission lines, minimise electricity losses along power lines and displace high-cost peak generation like gas. As these benefits aren’t compensated elsewhere, a gross feed-in tariff brings back equity.”

Brad Shone, ATA's Energy Policy Manager, says the ACT is leading the nation by aligning itself with almost 50 other schemes around the world.

“Householders should be rewarded for the entire output of their solar panels. The Rudd Government’s solar means test combined with a net tariff will together cripple the role of solar in Australia’s energy future. Without a gross tariff, Australia will be missing out on economies of scale and market leadership,” says Mr Shone.

ATA and TEC argue that the net feed-in tariffs, adopted by Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, are sub-standard because they only pay for electricity left over after on-site usage.

Mr Shone says under ACT’s gross tariff, households will be able to pay-back the up-front costs of solar panels in around 10 years.

“By comparison, in the states with net tariffs, pay-back will take over 20 years for an average system. Net tariffs also favour larger systems and disadvantage people who spend time at home during the day like parents, senior citizens and people who work from home.”

“Solar is being treated like a boutique optional extra when it should be driving a clean, efficient energy future for Australia,” says Mr. Shone.

For interviews:

Brad Shone - ATA (Melbourne): (03) 9631 5406 / 0432 251 456

Jane Castle - TEC (Sydney): (02) 9261 3437 / 0432 287 554

Latest News

Electricity Industry Carbon Rip-off in the Wings



Created on Thursday, 07 August 2008 22:53

“TEC has obtained a document showing that the electricity industry are seeking to pass on the full carbon cost to business consumers in contracts for future supply, even though they expect to get free permits and compensation under an emissions trading scheme,” said Jeff Angel, Director of the Centre.

“A large amount of cash is going to be given to the coal fired sector under the Rudd government’s Green Paper, yet there will be no discount to consumers. It’s really a double rip-off of consumers and the environment - and cash transfer to coal, because coal power shouldn’t be getting the subsidy in the first place.”

“With the industry pushing for an end to price controls on residential prices, it’s only a matter of time before households will also be affected.”

TEC has obtained a document by the Australian Financial Markets Association (AFMA) Electricity Committee which contains a carbon clause for the industry that uses ‘average carbon intensity’ and the ‘daily spot price for Australian emissions trading permits’ to make ‘carbon adjustment’ to prices charged.

“Electricity generators and retailers are insisting this clause is inserted in customer contracts,” Mr Angel said.

“There’s a simple way out of this – don’t give the coal fired generators any subsidies.”

Latest News

The \$8 Billion Electricity Swindle - Energy Australia Wants To Rob Consumers, Worsen Climate Change

Created on Wednesday, 30 July 2008 20:08

“This mammoth spending spree is nothing short of a massive expansion attempt at the expense of consumers and the environment,” said Jane Castle. “The AER must find the backbone to reject the rapacious greed of this dinosaur monopoly currently owned by the NSW government.”

“Energy Australia wants Sydney households to pay over a hundred dollars a year extra for the privilege of squandering energy savings. It’s about selling more power, and is not efficient either economically or environmentally.”

EA owns and operates the ‘poles and wires’ that deliver electricity across Sydney. The AER will determine how much it can charge consumers in 2009-2014, because it is a monopoly. As a monopoly, it must have its spending approved every five years. EA has proposed to spend \$8.6 billion on hardware and only around \$23 million on demand management.

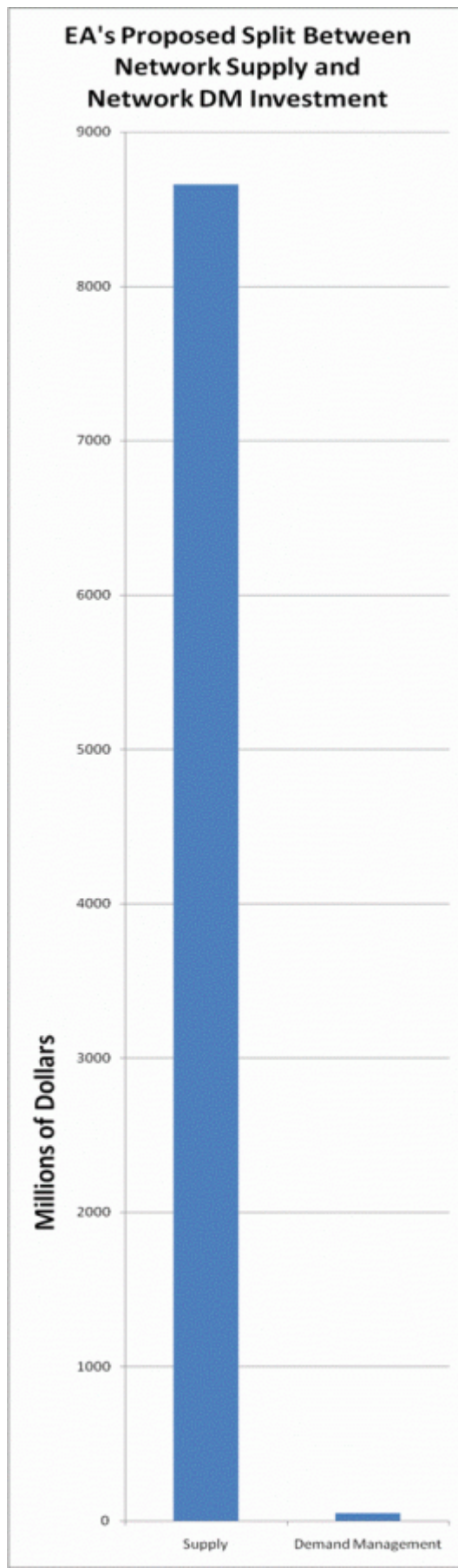
“EA say they’re ‘on it’ in their PR. The question is what hallucinogen are they on?” asked Ms Castle. “EA, and its NSW Government owners, should be sent back to the drawing board.”

“Electricity regulation is severely out of synch with what people want, and conflicts with NSW Government rhetoric on energy efficiency. A massive overhaul is required. Regulation must encourage energy savings, and the networks must have energy efficiency targets.”

“With help, households can reduce their consumption by 70%, but EA is proposing to spend less than 0.5% of their budget on energy efficiency and demand management.”

“EA is blaming air-conditioners when they should be using direct load-control and smart meters with in-home displays. It shows how important the new energy efficiency target will be for NSW and why EA should be radically reformed so it is an energy service utility, not a greenhouse pollution driver.”

The AER will be holding a forum today (30/07/08) – details at:
<http://www.aer.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/720353>
<http://www.aer.gov.au/content/index.phtml?itemId=720345>



Latest News

NSW Energy Savings Plan Win For Environment, Bills



Created on Thursday, 19 June 2008 20:28

“It will help turn around the outdated electricity utility culture of selling more and more power instead of focusing on energy efficiency and the environment,” said Jeff Angel, Director of Total Environment Centre.

“Proactive energy efficiency programs and targets like this are essential to complement an emissions trading scheme, which won’t impact on consumption for several years. It can deliver big and early greenhouse gains in response to growing alarm about global warming,” said Mr Angel.

“Reducing energy consumption is a win-win-win approach. It will help the environment, reduce electricity bills and carbon-proof consumers against rising energy prices,” said Mr. Angel.

“One of the best and easily implemented plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is energy efficiency, so this really makes sense,” concluded Mr. Angel.

The package includes commitment to a statewide energy efficiency target, new targets for medium and large businesses to cut their energy use by at least 10 per cent, advice for small to medium businesses on lighting upgrades and air-conditioning, and providing energy saving kits for low income households. Legislative targets will also be imposed on 200 of the state’s largest energy users, cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 120,000 tonnes a year.

Latest News

Government Turns The Light Out On Energy Consuming Bulbs



Created on Friday, 06 June 2008 19:59

One of the measures, announced as part of World Environment Day, is the accelerated phase-out of traditional incandescent light bulbs for energy efficient options such as cleaner, compact fluorescent lamps (CFL's).

"Lighting is a perfect way to make quick, easy cuts to our greenhouse gas emissions, this is a great step forward in the fight against inefficient and energy consuming lighting," said Jeff Angel, Director of Total Environment Centre.

"CFL's use about 20% of the energy consumed by traditional light bulbs and they can last up to ten times longer. Not only are they good for the environment, but they are five times cheaper to run, making them better for the consumer's purse strings".

"While we congratulate the government on this initiative, we need to ensure that as the demand for CFL's rises, there are sufficient recycling options available for used light bulbs which contain mercury," said Mr. Angel.

"A solid recycling program will ensure that these light bulbs will benefit the environment both during and after their use. Peter Garrett and state environment ministers should urgently press ahead with their plans for a comprehensive recycling scheme."

"With energy use expected to increase 56% by 2020, immediate and comprehensive action on reducing Australia's energy consumption is very much welcomed," Mr. Angel concluded.

Latest News

Is your Green Electricity accredited?



Created on Friday, 02 May 2008 21:33



There are many Green Electricity products available to consumers, however not all of them provide the same level of environmental benefit and their claims about renewable energy can be confusing. It is important that households and businesses buy accredited GreenPower products that are certified by a third party to not rely on the burning of fossil fuels.

So whether you are looking to purchase green electricity products or you are unsure about your current product, our fact sheet on accredited vs non-accredited green electricity is essential reading. To download the fact sheet [click here](#) [PDF 177Kb].

Latest News

Federal Govt Blunders in Dumbing Down Smart Meters



Created on Thursday, 10 April 2008 22:53

“This is potentially the biggest lost opportunity we’ve seen on climate change yet,” said Jane Castle, TEC Energy Campaigner. “We’re set to roll out new meters across the country but without the right technology and tariffs, they’ll be little more than expensive window dressing.”

Smart meters provide consumers with information about electricity usage and costs. With in-home displays, remote load control and flexible tariffs they allow customers to better manage their bills and become more efficient. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) committed to a national rollout in 2006. The flawed Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) released on Tuesday and the Cost-Benefit Analysis released in March effectively exclude in-home displays and are silent on tariffs, the main tools to help consumers reduce energy use and ensure the meters can be used.

“Without in-home displays, consumers won’t be engaged. Without direct load control, energy companies won’t be able to make energy-guzzling devices like air-conditioners and pool pumps more efficient. Without the requirement for time of use and critical peak pricing, at least half the meters will sit idle.”

“The rollout is a massive operation – going that bit further and providing householders with the tools to manage their electricity bills and greenhouse emissions is essential.”

“The RIS has set up smart meters to fail on greenhouse by excluding essential energy savings tools and then concluding that the meters won’t save emissions. They’re asking consumers to pay extra for the add-ons that make the smart meters work. That’s unfair, particularly for low-income households, who will have to fork out more to be efficient.”

“This is the consistent small-mindedness we’ve seen over and over from the bureaucrats that run the National Electricity Market. When are they going to come out from under their rock and realise they’re at the centre of the climate change debate?”

“With the right technology and tariffs, smart meters could save 19.4 million tonnes of greenhouse emissions per year, equivalent to taking 4.5 million cars off the roads. But these savings are only assured if energy businesses are required to realise the potential of the meters with innovative tariffs and demand management programs.”

“Ministers need to direct their bureaucrats to start again – this time with the reduction of greenhouse emissions as a key goal.”

Latest News

NSW electricity future - Jeff Angel on impact statement



Created on Tuesday, 11 March 2008 00:05

Impact Statement by Energy Consultative Reference Committee

The key question for me as a member of the Committee was whether possible problems with the government's plan can be avoided, but at the same time policy settings improved in this climate change aware world. When the scheme was first announced Total Environment Centre made it clear that the plan would be subjected to the test of its impact on climate change and energy efficiency policies.

I identified four key matters:

1. The failure of energy efficiency to become a mainstream activity of the electricity industry for both public and privately owned electricity utilities. Energy efficiency crucially affects when a new baseload power station will be needed.
2. That the NSW Government should not give indemnities about environmental policy impacts (such as carbon costs), to purchasers.
3. The NSW Government should not support free permits for coal generators (to protect them from carbon pricing and insulate the asset price) because this would corrupt federal policy making on emissions trading.
4. The future of the Munmorah power station – our oldest and dirtiest – given that a decision to extend its life for another 40 years would be made before or just at the infancy of a federal emissions trading scheme.

The environmental recommendations of the Committee satisfactorily cover these four areas. The Committee's impact statement notes that these recommendations, along with the other recommendations, must be implemented by the government if its scheme is to pass the 12 tests set by ALP policy.

There are nine recommendations relating to energy efficiency that will largely target the built sector (residential and commercial). This sector has a lot of low hanging fruit which can be quickly accessed. Further it greatly assists all households to avoid an increase in their share of income being allocated to electricity costs.

Six types of indemnities are described and should be explicitly rejected by the NSW Government.

It is recommended the Government should not have a position on free permits, preventing it from lobbying the federal government on this issue and helping assure integrity in climate change policy making.

Bidders who undertake to close Munmorah or convert the site to baseload gas should be favoured. It is noted that the Colongra peaking gas is currently being built at the site and conversion to a closed cycle gas turbine (CCGT) is practical. The best alternative coal technology is ultra supercritical coal and this is still more than double as carbon intensive as CCGT.

Total Environment Centre presented an analysis of the future carbon emissions from the NSW generator set over the next 40 years, which showed that unless emissions were cut by at least two thirds, we could not meet the 2020 and 2050 greenhouse gas targets, being advised by scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Latest News

NSW Consumers Sold Out on Efficiency, Greenhouse Emissions



Created on Tuesday, 15 January 2008 23:14

“The Regulator is acting as if we can continue to guzzle polluting electricity like drunken sailors blind to the global warming storm,” said Jane Castle, TEC Campaigner. “Energy efficiency must now be front and centre of electricity planning. Now is not the time for baby steps.”

TEC’s has also released “Win, Win, Win: Regulating Electricity Distribution Networks for Reliability, Consumers and the Environment ” showing how NSW energy regulation has failed to harness the potential for energy efficiency, leaving consumers and the environment short.

“The AER and electricity utilities seem set on a path of as little energy efficiency as possible. It’s time for a major change. The determination for NSW will set the trend for other states – to start with poor quality regulation does not auger well.

“NSW network businesses have spent just \$2.5 million per year on demand management measures to help households and businesses consume electricity more efficiently, out of annual revenue of about \$2 billion. This is about one fifth the average level of spending on demand management by US electricity utilities.”

“Electricity regulation needs a complete overhaul, not tinkering around the edges. This is proof that energy efficiency and demand management objectives need to be built into the National Electricity Law.”

While the AER has agreed to continue the demand management incentive (the ‘D-factor’) created by IPART, this is optional for networks, and only applies to parts of the network that are currently running out of capacity, rather than real forward planning. The only change that the AER has proposed to assist energy savings is to allow NSW electricity businesses to spend a miserly extra \$575,000 per year on so-called ‘learn by doing’ activities.

“Regulators should return to a revenue cap and earmark a minimum spending level for demand management of 10% of network revenue (about \$200m pa) on a ‘use it or lose it’ basis. Instead, the AER seems happy to endorse the \$8 billion of spending over the next 5 years on more inefficient poles and wires but on current trends, only \$15 million would be spent on efficiency.”

See TEC’s report: Win, Win, Win: Regulating Electricity Distribution Networks for Reliability, Consumers and the Environment [PDF 1.21Mb]

Latest News

Watchdog supports TEC complaint on GreenPower



Created on Saturday, 22 December 2007 04:48

In 2006, TEC, expressed concerns that these particular products were being represented as providing “100% green electricity at no extra cost” and “100% renewable energy”, on both the Energy Australia website and its promotional material.

“There was a major problem with Energy Australia’s products in that they implied certain things that were simply not true. They were clearly suggesting the products would make a difference, when in fact major parts were not new green electricity generation and made no change to our carbon footprint,” said Jeff Angel, Director of the Centre.

“As a result of our complaint, Energy Australia removed these products from their website but the damage had been done. The representations made were leading consumers to incorrectly believe that by signing up to the non-accredited products they were making equal or similar contributions to genuine new green energy projects and improving the environment.”

“We call on the other retailers who indulged in this greenwash to also implement the undertakings.”

Energy Australia has agreed to an administrative undertaking to resolve the ACCC’s concerns, which will involve:

- Providing all former customers of the unaccredited products with 3 months of the 100% PureEnergy product at the same price as their current contract.
- Send letters to all former customers of these products explaining the difference between accredited and unaccredited energy products in terms agreed by the ACCC.
- Conduct a review of their trade practices compliance program.
- Not make any future claims that they were the “first suppliers” of green power.
- Provide \$100,000 to an appropriate environmental organisation to publish a brochure explaining the differences between accredited and unaccredited green power products.

“Total Environment Centre is extremely happy with the results of this ACCC investigation and we also congratulate Energy Australia for agreeing to these rectification measures,” stated Mr. Angel.

“It further confirms the watchdog status of TEC in making sure that consumers are getting what they pay for, especially when their intentions are to benefit the environment.”

Environment groups, including TEC have also produced the 2007 rating report on green electricity products- see www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au

Latest News

A Green Light for Australian business



Created on Thursday, 08 November 2007 23:42

Launched today by leading Australian environment groups Total Environment Centre, Australian Conservation Foundation and WWF- Australia, the two part business review covers green electricity suppliers for both small to medium and large businesses, as opposed to GreenPower products available for homes. It should be an essential guide for companies seeking reduced carbon footprints.

Green Electricity Watch 2007 (GEW) will help businesses of all sizes to make decisions on purchasing green electricity by outlining which GreenPower products perform best for the environment and reducing the confusion that often surrounds green electricity. GreenPower is government-accredited, clean, renewable energy sourced from the wind, water, waste and the sun.

“There are big differences between the GreenPower products and how much they help fight climate change. Green Electricity Watch takes the confusion away by ranking products on their capacity to reduce greenhouse emissions and their support for new renewable energy, so that business can make an informed decision based on their needs and environmental targets,” said Jeff Angel, Director of the Total Environment Centre.

“Unfortunately, overall, GreenPower products for business scored very poorly with the majority of products receiving only one star out of four. ActewAGL was the exception with an impressive score of four out of four in two products for both small to medium and large business,” stated Phil Freeman, Climate Campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The commercial sector accounts for about 10 per cent of Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions. It is therefore in a key position to help make a real difference and lead by example through using GreenPower products. The GEW ranking is a tool to allow businesses to do just that, and choose the best accredited product for their needs. More than 20,000 Australian organizations have already done so, but more need to follow suit,” said WWF-Australia’s Climate Change Policy Manager, Nicole Ikenberg.

While many GreenPower products include only a small percentage of accredited GreenPower, it’s the accredited portion that makes the difference to our environment. Electricity consumption is the biggest single cause of Australia’s greenhouse pollution, with 90 per cent sourced from dirty fossil fuels such as coal. Buying electricity with the highest GEW ranking helps cut greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the dependence on fossil fuels and oosting the demand for clean, safe, renewable energy such as wind and solar.

The 2007 GEW report and fact sheets can be found at www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au

Latest News

Baby steps on energy efficiency but....Giant leap back for environment



Created on Thursday, 18 October 2007 02:17

“Since 1990, electricity generation emissions have grown by 52%, resulting in an extra 60 million tonnes of greenhouse pollution every year. Since 1999, energy consumption has spiralled upwards by 24%, much faster than population growth. The National Electricity Market has done nothing to stop this,” said Jane Castle, TEC’s energy campaigner.

“The changes fall well short of what’s needed to secure a truly efficient and sustainable energy system. Without a universal mandate to aggressively pursue energy efficiency, the National Electricity Market will keep us all trapped in an energy guzzling dead-end. Baby steps are simply not enough.”

“Electricity networks must be obliged to reduce demand before they even think about building more expensive, polluting infrastructure. On top of that, the Australian Energy Regulator must be required to provide incentives for innovative energy saving programs rather than making them optional and subject to the networks’ opinions.”

“While staring down the barrel of global warming, the states have also dumped their environmental objectives and policies. This is a disaster for greenhouse emissions. Without environmental and social objectives the National Electricity Market will continue to operate on narrow economic lines and favour inefficient, expensive and polluting power. Other countries such as Britain have well developed environmental and social objectives in their electricity market laws – why not Australia?”

* The South Australian Parliament is the ‘national legislating body’ for the National Electricity Law, which governs the development of infrastructure and sale of electricity. The Law is agreed by all state and federal governments, which have handed over electricity regulation to new national bodies. The changes are currently being debated in the South Australian Parliament.

Latest News

Green Electricity Watch makes it easy to make the switch



Created on Tuesday, 09 October 2007 02:31



MR The latest independent review of GreenPower products - Green Electricity Watch 2007 - and Rankings - has revealed the country's top green energy providers. Launched today, the ranking system helps consumers to make more informed choices when buying government accredited GreenPower.

With climate change at the forefront of national debate, Australia's leading environment groups have commissioned Green Electricity Watch 2007 (GEW) to help consumers understand which GreenPower products perform best for the environment, as well as offer value for money. Overall, products from Origin Energy, ActewAGL and Climate Friendly received the highest Green Electricity Watch rankings.

Commissioned by WWF-Australia, the Total Environment Centre and the Australian Conservation Foundation, Green Electricity Watch provides an independent ranking of GreenPower electricity products offered by Australian electricity retailers, helping consumers to confidently choose a product that they know will help reduce Australia's greenhouse emissions.

"Over 500,000 Australians now have GreenPower, as more and more people realise that switching to accredited GreenPower for home electricity is the best and easiest way to cut household greenhouse emissions" said Phil Freeman, Climate Campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation

"There are big differences between the GreenPower products and how much they help fight climate change. Green Electricity Watch takes the confusion away by ranking products on their capacity to reduce greenhouse emissions, so that people can make an informed decision based on their needs and budget," said Jeff Angel, Director of the Total Environment Centre.

For the first time, this year's Green Electricity Watch shows the value for money of each GreenPower product.

"Providing a cost analysis helps people choose products that not only benefit the environment, but are good value for money too. It demonstrates clearly that switching to GreenPower is an affordable way of making a difference," said WWF-Australia's Climate Change Policy Manager, Nicole Ikenberg.

GreenPower is government-accredited, clean, renewable energy sourced from the wind, water, waste and the sun. While many GreenPower products include only a small percentage of accredited GreenPower, it is the accredited portion that makes the difference to our environment. Electricity consumption is the biggest single cause of Australia's greenhouse pollution, with 90% sourced from dirty fossil fuels such as coal. Buying electricity with the highest GEW ranking helps cut greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the dependence on fossil fuels and boosting the demand for clean, safe, renewable energy such as wind and solar.

Latest News

Smart Meters to Harness Massive Energy, Greenhouse Savings



Created on Wednesday, 12 September 2007 21:32

The new report, Advanced Metering for Energy Supply in Australia shows that a roll-out will deliver:

- * Reduction in total Australian electricity use by 4%-10%
- * Reduction in annual greenhouse emissions by up to 19 million tonnes
- * Reduction in total national greenhouse emissions by up to 3.5%
- * This is equal to taking 4.5 million cars off the road

“Smart meters are the all-time, greenhouse no-brainer,” said Jane Castle, Energy Campaigner at TEC. “For generations we’ve been using electricity stupidly because the real costs have been hidden. With smart meters we can both reduce greenhouse emissions and reduce the amount we spend on unnecessary infrastructure.”

“The Owen Report and lemma’s response have completely ignored the savings available from the imminent roll-out of smart meters. NSW could shut down one polluting power station and avoid building another if we harnessed the full potential of energy efficiency.”

“Australian governments say they are making plans, but they must not simply roll out the hardware. Retailers must be required to offer innovative tariffs and networks must be given incentives to use the meters as a gateway to energy efficient consumption by consumers. Protections must also be in place for vulnerable households.”

The following should occur:

- * 2-way communications must be the minimum to allow for remote control of electricity loads
- * Meters must be able to measure electricity exported from the home out to the network
- * Meters must be able to provide real time consumption information to the consumer
- * Retailers must introduce time-varying pricing for customers
- * Generous tariffs must be paid to householders who generate their own electricity
- * Electricity networks must actively encourage customers to change their energy-using behaviour

Briefing Note - Smart Meters

Full Report - Advanced Metering for Energy Supply in Australia

Latest News

Owen Inquiry only half an answer



Created on Wednesday, 12 September 2007 01:19

The Centre also released a report card on the Inquiry, giving it low scores on all counts.

NSW needs to sober up about electricity consumption and reject attempts to inject hysteria about the lights going out, into the debate about future electricity needs," said Jeff Angel, Director of Total Environment Centre.

The Owen report underestimates the contributions that can be made by renewable energy and energy efficiency. Owen makes the basic mistake of accepting current projections by Transgrid which do not include future energy conservation programs. A well funded and strategic energy efficiency program could replace the need for an existing power station and defer the need for another, until greener alternatives are available."

The lemma Government should develop an energy efficiency plan for NSW first; and provide adequate funds and regulatory support. Only with such a program can we objectively look at new power station needs."

The report card criteria will also be applied to the NSW Government's response.

Environmental Scorecard on the Owen Report into Electricity in NSW

Latest News

Pass or Fail? Owen Electricity Report Under Spotlight



Created on Tuesday, 11 September 2007 01:55

“The real test for the Owen Report is whether it recommends a move towards a more diverse, more efficient and less polluting electricity supply,” said Jane Castle, TEC’s Energy Campaigner. “Unless it rules out new polluting coal-fired power in favour of renewable energy and energy efficiency, it should be dumped as another short sighted failure to tackle climate change.”

The Environmental Scorecard for the Owen Report will rank the Report on the key areas of:

- * A modern, green energy system
- * Attractive investment climate for energy efficiency, low emission generation and renewable energy
- * Fairness, efficiency and protection for consumers
- * Regional development and jobs in new clean industries
- * Innovation in the energy sector
- * Reducing greenhouse emissions

“NSW has ample renewable energy and energy efficiency resources to make electricity cheaper and cleaner for its citizens. Anything less than a recommendation for the full-scale harnessing of these will make the Owen Report just the latest in a line of business-as-usual failures in intelligent policy making.”

Latest News

Federal Power Grab Threatens States' Greenhouse Action



Created on Friday, 07 September 2007 00:26

The Bill gives the Federal Environment Minister the power to kill-off effective state programs by cutting off the flow of vital greenhouse and energy information. Section 5 of the Bill should be dumped, TEC said.

“The Federal Government is playing politics with Australia’s future,” said Jane Castle, TEC Energy Campaigner. “The states and territories have led Australia on climate change for the last ten years and now they’re being punished for making the Federal Government look bad. Stopping the states from protecting the environment is dangerous and irresponsible, and should be seen for what it is – cynical political game-playing.”

“This Bill is supposed to facilitate the reporting and dissemination of information, but instead it gives Malcolm Turnbull the power to veto state schemes. It dumps the collaborative approach achieved by COAG.”

“Climate change requires a wide variety of responses at different levels, including state-based and local action. Extinguishing all other programs for a future emissions trading scheme is misguided and dangerous.”

The Bill uses the Corporations Law to override the States’ rights to gather energy and greenhouse information from relevant parties, thereby invalidating the reporting requirements that are core to their greenhouse, energy efficiency and renewable energy schemes.

Key state-based greenhouse programs under threat include:

- * NSW’s Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme
- * NSW’s Renewable Energy Target
- * Victoria’s Renewable Energy Target
- * South Australia’s Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Act

“Australia will enter a dangerous, uncertain void if the Bill passes in its current form as the supposed emissions trading scheme, which this Bill is meant to support, is at least 5 years away.”

“The Bill also disables the States from collecting information on a long list of air pollutants such as fine particles, oxides of nitrogen and sulfur dioxide and dangerous carcinogens such as mercury, arsenic and dioxins. Restricting that information will jeopardise the health of all Australians.”

Latest News

Australia to Dump Environment and Social Goals in Power Shake Up



Created on Tuesday, 22 May 2007 05:59

In the lead up to this Friday's Ministerial Council on Energy meeting in Melbourne, the groups have released the Power for the People Declaration which calls for environmental and social objectives in the new energy laws - to improve efficiency, reduce greenhouse pollution and protect vulnerable consumers.

"Federal, State and Territory Governments want to be seen to lead on climate change, yet they're in the process of neutering environmental policies by embracing the National Electricity Market (NEM) with its obsession with dirty coal generation," said Jeff Angel, Total Environment Centre Director. "The NEM has overseen a massive increase in greenhouse gas pollution and consumption. Hard-won environmental protections must not be dumped in the transfer of power to the national level. Other countries such as Britain have well developed environmental objectives in their electricity market laws – why not Australia?"

"It would be a fundamental failure if the policy framework does not guarantee basic social and environmental protection." said Gavin Dufty from the St Vincent de Paul National Council.

"Most states have had strong environmental objectives in their energy legislation and all governments now agree that we need to dramatically reduce greenhouse emissions. At a time of heightened community concern with climate change it is bizarre to think that future energy market developments occur in a manner that does not also support emission reductions," said Ric Brazzale, BCSE Director.

To date, the prices set by monopoly electricity distribution ("poles and wires") businesses have been regulated by States and Territories. As currently proposed, the transfer of regulation to the Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Energy Market Commission will prevent the new regulators from taking social or environmental goals into account when considering the billions of dollars spent on the energy system each year. By comparison, the UK, which has a similar energy system, has environmental and social measures in energy legislation.

Today's Power for the People Declaration calls on MPs to amend the Australian Energy Markets Agreement, the National Electricity Law and the National Gas Law by:

- * requiring regulators to consider the environment and sustainable development when making decisions
- * requiring regulators to consider social impacts, with particular reference to preventing negative impacts for low income and disadvantaged consumers
- * requiring the industry to implement cost effective demand management and energy efficiency to help consumers save energy wherever this is cheaper than investing in more infrastructure.

Power for the People Declaration [119KB]

Latest News

Qld GreenPower sellout?



Created on Friday, 01 December 2006 10:20

“TEC is concerned that unless the Government buys from approved sources and requires suppliers to surrender their mandatory Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), the purchase will do little to boost renewable energy and reduce greenhouse emissions,” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director.

“Trying to do greenhouse on the cheap is no substitute for action. Unless the Government buys the whole output of renewable generators and prevents Renewable Energy Certificates from being double counted, it can be rightly accused of ‘greenwash’.”

TEC has sighted a tender document for the supply of electricity to the Department of Main Roads Spring Hill Complex that clarifies the Queensland Government’s approach to the purchase of renewable energy. TEC is concerned that the purchases may not contribute to any new renewable generation being established in Queensland or elsewhere. The more such generation is established the cheaper it gets and this will benefit consumers and the environment.

“The approach appears to be a change in policy, hidden in Addendum 3 of the tender document. Why is the Queensland Government changing its policy? If it’s about cost-cutting by the new department charged with purchasing renewable energy, the Department of Public Works, then it’s cost-cutting at the expense of our climate.”

“The Queensland Government should be up front with the public. If it wants to make a difference to current greenhouse gas emissions through its purchasing power, then it should make sure that when it buys green electricity it is new generation and is not double counted. Otherwise it is selling the environment and renewable energy short.”

“This is no drop in the ocean. Over \$3 million is up for grabs and it could really help the renewable energy industry – or be wasted with phoney procurement for public relations.”

The tender document states that the “...request for renewable energy for Main Roads is identical to the type of renewable energy being sourced in the Queensland Government’s whole-of-Government contract” and that the renewable energy “...does not need to be supported by RECs, this element can be retained/traded by the retailer.” This means is that when the REC is re-sold, the environmental benefits will travel with the REC and the Government’s purchase loses its environmental benefit.

Environment groups recently released an audit of GreenPower products and assessed which products genuinely made a contribution to reducing our spiralling greenhouse emissions. Energex and ActewAGL had high ranking products in Queensland. See – www.greenelectricity.org.au

Latest News

Debnam's Solar Pledge a Goer



Created on Tuesday, 13 February 2007 01:47

“This pledge is a great initiative,” said Jane Castle, TEC campaigner. “It’s one small piece in the climate change puzzle. It should be followed by a commitment to zero energy growth by 2010. We look forward to lemma’s response.”

“The pledge puts pressure on the NSW Government to do better. If either Party’s serious about reigning in our wasteful use of polluting power, they’ll commit to halting new consumption. Reducing energy demand pays off with reduced greenhouse pollution, lower electricity bills and more efficient infrastructure.”

The NSW Opposition today released its ‘Solar Homes’ plan, promising to allocate \$58 million to solar hot water with rebates between \$500 and \$1000. Electric hot water is the largest producer of greenhouse emissions in Australian homes.

“Debnam’s rebate pledge doesn’t quite close the gap between electric and solar, but the reduced running costs of solar will more than make up for it. A well-designed scheme should drive the market so that prices come down even further.

“Solar hot water should be mandatory for all new homes, rather than being optional under the current Building Sustainability Index (BASIX) scheme. Failing that, solar should be cheaper than electric so that replacement with solar is a no-brainer. If the Energy Savings Fund isn’t delivering this sort of initiative, we can only ask – why not?”

“At the moment electric hot water enjoys a hidden subsidy because it doesn’t pay for greenhouse pollution. It’s a perverse incentive for climate change.”

To address climate change, NSW environment groups are calling for:

- * Legislated greenhouse emissions reductions of 30% by 2020
- * Zero energy growth by 2010
- * 25% renewable energy by 2020
- * A moratorium on new coal fired power and coal mines
- * A transport strategy to reverse growth in greenhouse pollution
- * A genuine end to land clearing

To see the groups’ report, NSW Action on Climate Change, see the media section of this website.

Latest News

Climate Action to be Election Clincher - but Fossil Fuel Lobby Still Dragging the Chain



Created on Thursday, 01 February 2007 01:48

But Governments should not be bullied by the fossil fuel lobby's self-interested push for untested and dangerous technologies based on skewed numbers released today by the Electricity Supply Association of Australia (ESAA), the group said.

"It's game on for NSW's climate change election," said Jane Castle, TEC campaigner. "The CSIRO report has brought the issue front and centre and so far neither Government nor Opposition have shown they can lead NSW through this crisis. Massive emissions reductions, 25% of our power from renewable energy and zero electricity demand growth through energy efficiency are now the minimum for any party contesting this election."

"NSW should be taking the lead, rather than pointing fingers at the irresponsible Federal Government. Premier lemma needs to clean up NSW's backyard by saying no to more polluting power and coal mines. Clean energy can provide power and savings equal to more six polluting coal-fired power stations. It's simply a matter of political will."

The ESAA report, also released today, uses subjective numbers on as yet unproven technologies for burying pollution from coal-fired power, while ignoring the massive potential of energy efficiency and inflating the cost of renewable energy, the group said.

"The ESAA report only got one thing right: we need a price on carbon. But their Chicken Little approach to increased costs failed to mention the bigger picture – the economic and environmental disaster that awaits us if we keep consuming fossil fuels. Australia's electricity prices are among the lowest in the world and people have shown they are willing to pay more to avoid climate catastrophe. The fossil fuel lobby needs to take off the blinkers and see outside their narrow self-interest."

Latest News

Use Your Power to Go Green: How you can help change climate change today



Created on Wednesday, 15 November 2006 01:13

Launched today by the Total Environment Centre, Australian Conservation Foundation and WWF-Australia, Green Electricity Watch 2006 is an independent ranking of GreenPower electricity products offered by Australian electricity retailers, providing consumers with a simple guide to all the GreenPower products available and which ones make a real difference in reducing global warming. Origin and TRUenergy had specific high ranking products in New South Wales.

“There are significant differences between the various GreenPower products on offer and how far they go in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. We have many requests for advice from people who are confused by the wide array of claims made by retailers,” said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of the Total Environment Centre. “Green Electricity Watch makes it easy for consumers to make the best choices and ensure they are buying products with the best environmental results”.

“Electricity consumption is the biggest cause of Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions – by buying electricity with the highest amount of accredited GreenPower, we help boost the demand for clean, renewable energy which immediately cuts our own greenhouse emissions” said Monica Richter, Sustainability Program Manager for the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF).

“Australia is rich in clean, renewable energy sources like wind, solar, bioenergy and hydro, but we still source 92% of our electricity from fossil fuels like coal,” said Dr Ray Nias, WWF-Australia, Conservation Director. “It is through buying accredited GreenPower that you will help drive the creation of new, renewable energy and reduce our dependence on dirty fossil fuels”.

A new website has also been launched to help consumers - visit www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au.

GreenPower is government-accredited clean, renewable energy sourced from the sun, the wind, water and waste. However while many GreenPower products include only a small percentage of accredited GreenPower, it is the accredited portion that makes the difference to our environment.

Buying accredited GreenPower electricity derived from renewable sources is the best way individuals can contribute to reducing Australia’s greenhouse pollution. But importantly, we also need the Australian Government to significantly increase its Renewable Energy Target to encourage greater investment in renewable energy and cut our emissions,” said Monica Richter.

For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:
Jeff Angel 02 9261 3437 or Jane Castle at the Total Environment Centre 0432 287554

Latest News

Renewable Energy Target Good Step Forward



Created on Thursday, 09 November 2006 21:37

The announcement, made at TEC's Green Capital 'Climate Crunch' event will help bring renewables into the mainstream and counter ineffective action by the Howard Government on climate change.

"This is the kind of action that is missing in action at the Federal level. NSW will now join Victoria as the only two states to provide a clear mechanism to deliver new renewable energy," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director

"The Premier has taken a concrete, important step towards action on global warming. He now needs to complete the picture by legislating tougher greenhouse reductions under the state's emissions trading scheme and quitting NSW's growing addiction to coal exports."

The 15% by 2020 target falls short of utilising the full potential of renewable energy projects on offer in NSW. Environment groups had recommended a 25% target by 2020 that would have delivered 4000 new permanent jobs and \$9 billion of new investment.

"The target will need to be increased when the scheme is reviewed in 2013. Global warming has become too urgent. We're confident that the NSW Government of the day will see the gains to be made by a higher target."

"The plan allows NSW retailers to meet the target by buying renewable energy from other states. Unless there are effective legislative requirements, this could lead to double counting by other states, taking the pressure off those states to fulfil their own renewable energy targets, reducing the total amount of new renewable energy projects that are built."

"We'll be wanting to see the details of the target and legislation to ensure NSW consumers get the best environmental outcome from the Premier's announcement," Mr Angel said.

TEC also welcomed the announcement of plans to legislate greenhouse emissions reductions targets, but warned that higher reduction targets - of 30% by 2020 and at least 80% by 2050 are needed to address global warming.

Read the environment groups' plan for 25% NSW renewable energy:
[The Great Opportunity - 25% Renewable Energy for NSW \[3.48MB\]](#)

Further information:
Jeff Angel or Jane Castle – 02 9261 3437 / 0432 287 554

Latest News

Power Blackouts threat – lemma Govt makes it worse



Created on Wednesday, 25 October 2006 21:23

“The cheapest and most environmentally responsible way out of the morass is by a comprehensive energy conservation program, not more expensive power generation. It is simply ludicrous to build more power plants so they can be used for a few days a year. The lemma government needs to reverse two recent decisions and announce new reforms, to fix the problem,” said Jeff Angel, Director, Total Environment Centre.

“We estimate over 5,000MW of peak power can be produced by a combination of low emission generation and energy conservation – more than enough to deal with any problems over the next 15 years. However the government does not have a coherent policy.”

“Last year it refused to apply stricter energy reduction targets to apartments, which are energy guzzlers and almost always feature air conditioning. While every other new residential building has to meet the 40% target, high rise does not. The lemma government caved into the lobbying by big developers.”

“Last night in State Parliament the government rushed through changes to the greenhouse gas abatement scheme without a new target for reduction in climate change gases. This means there will be fewer funds to invest in energy conservation and renewable energy generation and the government won’t be able to meet its greenhouse targets.”

“New programs should also be urgently announced, including:

- Extension of the Energy Saving Funds which are due to expire in 2010-11, when the energy shortages are predicted;
- Imposition of a levy on air conditioners and a requirement to install solar rooftop energy with new air con (solar power generation occurs at the same time as maximum air con use);
- Adopting a state energy conservation target to limit demand growth to less than 1% per year and zero growth after 2010, and lobby the Ministerial Council of Energy for a national energy efficiency target;
- A 25% mandatory renewable energy target for 2020;
- Roll out smart meters that allow people to vary their consumption when prices are highest (ie at the peak).”

“These programs are practical and will help people avoid high energy prices and secure our energy and environmental future,” Mr Angel said.

Latest News

Renewable Energy Target Launched as Key Election Campaign Issue



Created on Monday, 23 October 2006 22:44

The groups released a report today "The Great Opportunity: 25% Renewable Energy for NSW" which outlines that a 25% renewable energy target for NSW would conservatively deliver:

- * 4,000 new permanent jobs
- * \$9 billion new investment in NSW
- * 4000 MW new electricity generation capacity equivalent to 2 coal-fired power stations
- * A 13 % reduction in electricity sector greenhouse emissions on current levels by 2020
- * Enough renewable electricity to power every household in NSW

Releasing the report at the Earthpower Technologies bioenergy plant in Western Sydney where food waste is turned into electricity NCC Director Cate Faehrmann said today:

"Australia has woken up to climate change in recent months. It's important that now we start implementing some big solutions. A 25 per cent renewable energy target for NSW would see thousands of jobs created, billions of dollars worth of investment and a reduction in NSW's greenhouse pollution. All we need is the political will to make it happen."

Greenpeace Energy campaigner Mark Wakeham said:

"NSW is being left behind in the race for renewables. Since 2001 South Australia has installed 215 wind turbines while NSW has installed 2. In NSW there is no incentive in place to develop new renewable energy projects. Victoria and South Australia have seen the benefits of renewables and legislated their own state targets. Now its time that Premier lemma gets serious about climate change and follows suit with a target to guarantee the growth of renewable energy in NSW. A 25 per cent target would generate enough clean energy to power every house in NSW."

Total Environment Centre Director Jeff Angel said today:

"NSW should grasp this great opportunity to win back leadership on climate change. Emissions from electricity are rising rapidly in NSW, and renewable energy is key to the solution. \$3 billion dollars worth of renewable energy projects are in the pipeline in NSW, but none may get built without Government action."

Ms Faehrmann concluded:

"The introduction of a renewable energy target is a key ask in the lead up to the March state election. Climate change is the number one environmental issue for the state election, and if we're going to address climate change we need targets to reduce greenhouse pollution, targets to kick-start renewable energy and a commitment to begin the shift away from polluting coal."

See full report: [The Great Opportunity: 25% Renewable Energy for NSW \[110KB\]](#)

Latest News

Greenhouse Scheme Extension Falls Short as Emissions Spiral



Created on Friday, 20 October 2006 21:32

"Today, not years into the future, is when we should be fixing the scheme to ensure it delivers actual greenhouse reductions," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "We believe the first step towards the Government's long term promise of 60% reductions is a cap that delivers a 20% reduction on 1990 levels."

"The changes proposed by the Government are dangerously delaying real action. This is not an appropriate response to the alarming situation of rapidly increasing greenhouse emissions and a worsening climate."

The proposed amendments, passed through the NSW Lower House on Wednesday, extend the current scheme until 2021 and leave the per capita cap on emissions at the same level as now. As a result, population growth will cause total emissions to rise steeply. The Government has argued that an emissions trading scheme may start in 2012 as the reason for not reviewing the target and making it more ambitious.

"It's not good enough to use the mirage of a national emissions trading scheme to delay on real action. By 2012, the earliest date that a national scheme could commence, we will be locked into dangerously high emissions, and reducing them will be even harder. This is a recipe for global warming and increased business uncertainty."

"Government figures show emissions from the electricity sector will rise from 2007 with the scheme as it stands. Electricity sector emissions are already 32 per cent higher than in 1990, and consumption is rising at just under 3 per cent per year. The legislation is a disaster."

"We urge the government to accept amendments in the Upper House," Mr Angel said.

Latest News

Emission trading on the agenda – time to move ahead



Created on Wednesday, 16 August 2006 23:38

“It’s better than carbon or other taxes because the revenue is directly linked to environmental action. Under a properly developed scheme the community can have the confidence they would want - that any rises in electricity prices will be helping reduce greenhouse gases,” said Jeff Angel, Director of the Centre.

“Criticisms by Federal Government Ministers should be ignored. They are just throwing smelly labels like ‘it’s a tax’ or ‘it won’t work’ around, in an effort to disparage a constructive first effort by the states.”

“The fact is that NSW has a carbon permit scheme and it has reduced millions of tonnes of carbon emissions, with a small increase in electricity prices. The new multi-state scheme has also learned the lessons of the European Union experience.”

“Now the next stage is the detailed arrangements. Issues such as free permits to existing polluters; the cap; the starting date; and role of other energy programs can be discussed. We need to stop environmental damage from the emissions being a subsidy to support energy intensive industries.”

“It’s important to note that the modelling by the states shows that energy efficiency has a big role to play in curtailing the price rises. This should lead to a bigger effort to set up energy efficiency funds, like the one in NSW and reform of the National Electricity Market, so that it stops favouring coal fired generation above energy efficiency,” Mr Angel said.

Latest News

NSW must stand up to Federal attack on clean energy



Created on Saturday, 29 April 2006 00:22

“Ian Campbell is trying to play Pied Piper to NSW Government’s energy policy,” said Jane Castle, TEC Campaigner. “The knee-jerk response to ‘not in my backyard’ is reckless in the face of dangerous climate change. Wind energy is key to reducing our greenhouse emissions, but it is in decline due to the failure of the Federal Government’s policies. NSW must show its maturity by resisting moves to squash this clean energy industry.”

“If you are going to stop wind farms on this basis then we look forward to the Federal Minister stopping all the new coal mines and fossil fuel power stations that are causing massive local problems as well as much broader environmental impacts. Of course they won’t because they are not consistent, nor genuine in their greenhouse policies.”

The Federal Government has been moving to limit wind farm proposals by rejecting the Bald Hills wind farm in Victoria, pushing for a national wind farm code and trying to extend federal powers to allow it to stop wind farms on community objection grounds. NSW planning laws are already sensitive to the local amenity impacts of wind farms and have caused proposals to be altered, for example, the Taralga wind farm which was forced to reduce the amount of turbines.

“NSW needs to boost, rather than reduce, its renewable energy industry or risk losing more than \$3 billion of investment, 2000 jobs and 1500MW of clean energy. Otherwise, renewable energy will continue to decline compared to fossil fuel energy. NSW is losing valuable investment, jobs and clean power to the other states – it’s an embarrassment.”

There is currently only 17 MW of wind power in NSW compared to 252 MW in South Australia, 104 MW in Victoria, and 67MW in Tasmania. However, there is an impressive range of potential new projects (1,400MW) slated for NSW that could be built in the next 6 years. These would mean thousands of jobs and over \$3 billion of investment in NSW, much of it in regional areas.

“Rural communities opposing wind farms need to take a trip up to the Hunter Valley, where vast, polluting coal mines are devastating local communities. They also need to think about the effect of climate change on their dwindling water supplies and jobs that renewable energy can bring to regional areas.”

Latest News

Green Power Opt-in a Step in Right Direction



Created on Friday, 10 February 2006 21:42

TEC also called on electricity retailers to immediately get on with the job of offering genuine Green Power under the policy.

"Delay should not be tolerated," said Jane Castle, TEC Campaigner. "Every day we don't replace coal power with Green Power, the worse our greenhouse emissions become. This policy is essential to raise awareness about the world's most pressing problem - dangerous climate change. It will also help boost clean, renewable energy which has suffered from a chronic lack of attention from the retailers."

"With the new policy NSW can now rescue itself from embarrassing under-performance on Green Power compared to the other states. There are currently only 27,988 residential Green Power customers in NSW compared to 65,833 in Victoria and 62,257 in Queensland. This is appalling for the most populous state in Australia."

The NSW Government estimates that if half of all new customers stay with Green Power, 125,000 per year, total Green Power sales would increase from 175 GWh to 265 GWh in the first year. This is equivalent to 35 new small wind turbines being built. The increased take-up of Green Power would also reduce greenhouse emissions by 90,000 tonnes, increasing to 700,000 tonnes avoided after 10 years.

"More will be needed, however, as our inefficient consumption is predicted to grow. Without other impetus for renewable energy, increasing residential Green Power sales by 150% will not even keep pace with growing demand. It is urgent that NSW adopts a Renewable Guarantee of 15% renewable electricity by 2012 and 25% by 2020."

"NSW has an impressive range of new projects on the drawing board that could be built in the next five years, with more than 1,400MW capacity. If these go ahead it would generate thousands of new jobs and more than \$2.9 billion of investment in regional NSW."

The 10% policy was announced in the NSW Greenhouse Plan late last year, all new or moving customers must be offered Green Power, but are able to opt-out if they choose. It has not yet been implemented.

Latest News

Energy Bill Shame for Federal Government



Created on Friday, 10 February 2006 21:46

The Bill requires some businesses to conduct energy audits, but doesn't require them to implement the savings. The Bill should go further to ensure implementation, include more companies and establish a Fund to help smaller companies participate, the group said.

"This is a colossal lost opportunity for tackling dangerous climate change," said Jane Castle, TEC Campaigner. "The Federal Government is at best supporting a go-slow, ad hoc voluntary system and at worst giving the nod for companies to continue their energy guzzling habits at the expense of the environment and economic efficiency. Unless companies are required to implement savings, they will continue to ignore efficiency in favour of quick bucks elsewhere."

"Reducing wasteful energy use is the cheapest and quickest way to address global warming while making us more competitive. But this Bill only addresses one of the many barriers to energy efficiency - lack of information. As long as there is no price on greenhouse emissions, and no requirement to reduce waste, many companies will continue to waste energy and pollute, passing this cost onto the environment and future generations."

"Companies must be required to implement savings. Investments in energy efficiency deliver huge savings at the very minimum and returns are double the initial investment. And the Government's own report shows that companies can cost-effectively become 30% to 70% more energy efficient."

"Australia's performance on energy efficiency is much worse than other OECD countries. There is no excuse, considering climate change is the world's most urgent problem, and Australians are the world's worst greenhouse polluters."

Latest News

Trees for energy - a greenhouse and forests policy blunder



Created on Monday, 12 July 1999 10:00

The NSW Government has just announced sawmill waste and thinings from native forest are to be burnt for electricity. We understand several plants are to be located around the state.

"The least efficient sawmill operations make the most wood waste. By creating an energy market for wood waste the Government will encourage inefficient mill operations reducing the incentive to invest in new machinery and use wood for higher value uses," said Jeff Angel Director of the Centre.

"The forests of north east NSW will also be drawn into the furnace with previously unloggable trees that were safe from the woodchippers now being burnt for electricity. These trees provide essential wildlife habitat and the scheme heralds an intensification of logging and the conversion of diverse native forests into virtual plantations".

"The Pilliga forests in west NSWNSW are also involved, and combined with the trees for charcoal/silican plan announced last month , decisions on a much-needed reserve system are being pre-empted."

"It is a very dangerous proposal and the predictions of last year that the Government's forest decisions would cause another 20 years of conflict are coming true. There are better ways of reducing greenhouse emissions and establishing a genuine green energy market that creates jobs and environmental gains."

Latest News

Energy smart buildings could save Sydney CBD from spiralling greenhouse emissions



Created on Thursday, 02 September 1999 10:00

Jeff Angel from Total Environment Centre said, "This welcome program provides a clear alternative to spiralling electricity consumption in the CBD and plans by Energy Australia and Transgrid to increase greenhouse gas emissions by 1 million tonnes per year".

The state's largest retailer, Energy Australia has become one of the first beneficiaries of SEDA's Star Building Greenhouse Rating Scheme. It has enabled Energy Australia to halve electricity consumption in their corporate headquarters. Other prominent CBD buildings like Darling Park and Town Towers have also achieved spectacular energy reductions.

Yet these results are in stark contrast to plans by Energy Australia and Transgrid to expand electricity capacity into the Sydney CBD.

"Proposals to expand infrastructure in the next few years, building more cables between the CBD and coal-fired power stations in the Hunter Valley, cannot be justified" said Mr Angel.

"This program provides demonstrable evidence that demand management is a cost effective alternative" he said. "Judicious application of SEDA's new program could reduce CBD energy consumption by 20%-40% over the next 5 years."

Yet Energy Australia and Transgrid have consistently denied the potential of energy efficiency to match growing demand.

"If Energy Australia can reduce their own electricity consumption by 50%, why can't other CBD buildings?" said Mr Angel. Electricity customers are about to start asking, if "Energy Australia can reduce their own power bills by such a significant margin, why aren't they doing more to help the rest of us do the same" he said.

Latest News

Delta Electricity moves on north coast forests for furnace



Created on Friday, 08 October 1999 10:00

"This is the second electricity generator in NSW to propose burning forest products to generate power. It's an ill-conceived policy with dubious greenhouse benefits and it's definitely a threat to native forests," said Jeff Angel, Total Environment Centre Director.

"Greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity industry are spiralling, and burning trees is not the answer. Last year only 2.6% of energy used in NSW was from genuine sustainable energy like solar and wind - this must increase dramatically if there is to be any real reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in this state," he said.

Delta Electricity have called for tenders for cogeneration plants totalling 100 MW at Condong and Broadwater sugar mills. Fuel for the plants will be composed of sugar cane waste, forestry products and other, unspecified, 'green waste'. The plants will power the mills during crushing season, with electricity sold as 'renewable' energy in the off-season.

"Burning forest products to generate electricity is not environmentally sustainable, not genuine renewable energy, and not a serious attack on the greenhouse problem," said Mr Angel. "These practices must be outlawed and the Government and consumers should require the electricity industry to make substantial greenhouse gas reductions where it really counts - by installing green energy technology."

Latest News

Greenhouse gases blow out - again



Created on Friday, 26 November 1999 11:00

The report of the Licence Compliance Advisory Board (LCAB), released yesterday, shows an ever widening gap between the state target and electricity emissions.

"It is clear that retailers are not taking greenhouse gas reduction seriously," said Jeff Angel of Total Environment Centre.

"The LCAB report shows that most retailers are failing to implement even their own environmental strategies- savings from energy efficiency are less than half of what they predicted for this year, and investment in renewable energy is way down."

"If retailers are unable to make the effort to meet strategies that they themselves have devised, what chance is there that they will take government targets seriously?"

The report also reveals that coal-fired power stations, which produce most of the electricity used in NSW, are producing more greenhouse gas emissions per unit of electricity than ever before. Retailers bought only 2.6% of their energy from renewable energy generators, or low-emission sources like natural gas-fired cogeneration.

"While retailers continue to source most of their electricity from coal and pay only token attention energy efficiency and renewable energy, greenhouse pollution in NSW will continue to spiral out of control," said Sebastian Crawford, of the Community Information Project on Sustainable Energy.

Retailers are required by the Electricity Supply Act 1995 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 7.27 tonnes per capita by 2000/01, but have failed to adopt a downward track in the last two years.

Latest News

Key consumer group attacks Sydney's crazy electricity expansion plans



Created on Thursday, 23 March 2000 11:00

The proposal, put forward by Transgrid and Energy Australia, will increase greenhouse pollution by 1 million tonnes per annum (equivalent to the emission of 167,000 cars). It was criticised by Lynette Thorstensen from the Australian Consumers Association and Cathy Zoi, former head of SEDA.

Lynette Thorstensen, giving evidence for the Australian Consumer's Association said, "We've been hearing for some years now about new energy technologies like solar and wind and about potential energy savings from improved energy efficiency and reduced energy bills. Well, consumers have a right to start asking when? When will the electricity utilities start delivering these technologies?"

The senate committee heard that the CBD augmentation proposal is an example of how the fossil fuel industry is dragging its heels. "Alternative technologies are fully developed and cost effective, yet the conservative electricity industry continues to overlook them in favour of traditional polluting technology" Ms Thorstensen said.

"Improved energy efficiency and new generating technologies could easily displace the need for more cables and coal fired power into Sydney's CBD, but Transgrid and Energy Australia have rejected these options".

"New technologies are available, and yet the electricity utilities are denying customers and energy users the right to choose."

Latest News

NORTH POWER FAILS GREENHOUSE TEST - AGAIN



Created on Monday, 26 March 2001 10:00

"Only two companies - Integral Energy and Origin - met and bettered the official target. The rest, including Energy Australia, North Power and Ergon, did worse than last year - by up to 15%. It is time for the Government to introduce penalties and embarrassing public exposure programs on these tardy companies," said Jeff Angel, Director of Total Environment Centre.

"North Power is a gross underperformer.

And it appears intent on burning biomass, including native forest material as an answer. This makes the situation worse. Information of this type will inform environmentally conscious consumers when choosing their electricity supplier in the competitive market that begins in 2002."

"Those companies that failed to reach the target in fact, performed worse than the previous year. They are on a downward slide and so is global climate change. It is the height of irresponsibility and should be condemned by the government and the community," Mr Angel said.

The annual greenhouse audit was undertaken by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. The greenhouse benchmark is set at 5% below 1989/90 levels to be reached by 2001/02. The actual 1999/00 target was 7.27t per capita, with industry exceeding this with a figure of 8.03t per capita.

North Power exceeded it by 15%, Ergon by 13% and Energy Australia by 8%. The industry only achieved one third of its projected savings from energy efficiency programs and produced less low emission energy than promised.

Latest News

Dead koala electricity - a political hot potato



Created on Tuesday, 12 June 2001 10:00

"The use of native forests to produce electricity fails on environmental, economic and community acceptance grounds. It is rightly called 'dead koala electricity', said Jeff Angel Director of the Centre.

"Opinion polling reveals massive opposition to such schemes, which are simply an extension of unpopular woodchipping in native forests. It is economic suicide for the renewable energy industry to ally itself to the longest running environmental battle in Australia. And such wood burning power stations produce more greenhouse gases than coal fired stations."

"The issue is high on the environment movement's federal election agenda. It is also a critical matter for state governments which control the supply of forest material. With almost a dozen proposals on the east coast, this means that state ALP Governments also have to act. For example, in NSW, there are at least six plans to burn native forest in power stations."

"Bob Carr, who has made forest protection a major part of his environmental platform and says he wants to play an environmental role in the coming federal election, risks igniting massive protests if any native forest material finds its way into power stations. He should ban the schemes," Mr Angel said.

The Centre has been active in state and federal elections in the past.

Latest News

Greenhouse benchmarks take root



Created on Tuesday, 22 January 2002 11:00

"It is a move of national and even international importance. An industry that has repeatedly failed to work cooperatively with the voluntary system, has now had to be regulated. The most recent audit of the industry shows that almost all the electricity retailers performed worse than the previous year. They were addicted to fossil fuel power and could not get off it," said Jeff Angel Director of Total Environment Centre.

"The decision is good for the environment, good for the economy and jobs and for the consumer. The green energy sector is one the fastest growing industries and this new rule will boost its financial and employment contribution, including to regional areas where solar and wind generation is best placed. Consumers will now have effective environmental choices for their power supply."

"We urge the Coalition to support this new move. After all it was their parliamentary support in 1995 that established the benchmark system in the first place. I would hope that all stakeholders in the debate can agree that the voluntary system has been given a chance and failed. We can't afford to ignore the threats from human induced climate change."

"Environment groups will be pressing for upgraded benchmarks for coming years and a focus on power supply strategies that give permanent reductions in greenhouse gases, rather than dubious tree planting schemes."

Latest News

NSW greenhouse regulations welcomed



Created on Wednesday, 08 May 2002 10:00

Key environment groups from across NSW and Australia today congratulated the Carr Government on its announcement of enforceable greenhouse benchmarks, describing it as a decision of international importance.

The announced target is for an annually enforceable reduction of 5% from 1990 levels by the end of 5 years (2006-07) for NSW electricity retailers - tougher than the Federal Government's weak greenhouse position.

Executive Officer of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Kathy Ridge, said the decision represented the first time an Australian state government had introduced enforceable greenhouse gas reduction targets.

"The Carr government is forging the path for a state-based response to the global issue of climate change. The best thing about these benchmarks is that energy savings are recognised as a large part of the solution to reducing emissions. Electricity customers can reduce their emissions and their energy bills at the same time," Ms Ridge said.

Total Environment Centre Director, Jeff Angel said: "We can't waste this first genuine step in greenhouse pollution reduction from electricity. Therefore environment groups will be taking consumer action through regular green energy surveys to help achieve the best greenhouse outcomes from this decision, by ensuring that households and business know which retailer has adopted the most useful alternatives to greenhouse polluting power. Any loopholes or token action will be exposed.

"The decision should also lead to a very significant growth in jobs in the renewable and energy conservation sector."

Dr Frances MacGuire, Greenpeace Climate Campaigner welcomed the announcement and said, "The key to the meaningful implementation of the benchmarks is a responsibility for retailers to develop strategies, plans and reporting systems for energy efficiency, demand management and investment in sustainable energy such as wind and solar".

The groups said there remained, however key issues that would need to be resolved before the enforceable benchmark rules are finalised in 2003. These were:

* To ensure that there is a cap on carbon sequestration or "sinks" activities - there remain significant flaws in measuring the effectiveness of carbon sequestration in plantations, and in securing the plantations against drought, flood, pests, diseases, etc; and

* No excuse clause for retailers who make poor investment decisions.

Latest News

Energy Price Hike Shows We Use Too Much



Created on Tuesday, 15 April 2003 10:00

"Electricity pricing that reflects environmental costs is long overdue, but more needs to be done to pass on the benefits of energy efficiency to the consumer. Energy companies need to lead the way in reducing Australia's excessive share of greenhouse gas emissions - electricity is almost 50% of emissions," said Jeff Angel, Director of Total Environment Centre (TEC).

Referring to plans by Energy Australia and Integral Energy to lift prices by between 5 and 7 per cent in 2004/5, TEC said that the energy retailers don't go far enough in their efforts to manage demand.

"Consumers care about global warming and are willing to alter their energy use, but they need to be given clear incentives and programs to do so, by making energy efficient appliances and buildings more affordable," said Mr Angel.

If no action is taken to reduce demand, up to \$8 billion may need to be invested in the electricity system in the next decade at the consumer's expense. The State budget will also suffer as there will be less dividends from government owned electricity companies.

"Governments could do better too," Mr Angel said. "We need better regulations that ensure energy planners factor in reduced demand before building more generators and networks. The old 'build and generate' approach to energy supply is no longer workable."

Issues such as the impact on low-income consumers and the role of air conditioning are part of the debate, and can be accounted for. However, they should not prevent the price move.

Latest News

Energy Black-out Threat - Whose Fault?



Created on Monday, 28 July 2003 10:00

"Current proposals for additional capacity are bandaid solutions and once we have spent the \$4 billion proposed for the next five years, we will have to spend another \$4 billion after that - it is a financial and environmental crisis, if we don't change our ways," said Jeff Angel, Director of the Centre.

"Customers, whether small or large industrial, will suffer not only because of the need to pass on the cost of new infrastructure through price increases, but as the greenhouse costs of fossil fuels becomes a central part of our economy, there will be even more steep rises. More energy efficient housing and industry are the only sustainable solution."

"It has been estimated that savings of up to 50% can be made in energy use - this is far cheaper and far more environmentally responsible than pumping more fossil fuel power into the city. There is also the added benefit of the thousands of jobs that will be created," Mr Angel said.

"We also call on all parties, including the Opposition, to support a green solution and not engage in the 'blame and panic' game."

Latest News

Green Groups Slam Energy Planners for Ignoring Demand Management



Created on Thursday, 31 July 2003 10:00

"Forcing tax-payers to fork out \$10 billion for new generation for a few peak demand days each year is gross economic stupidity when smarter, cheaper solutions are ready to go," said Jeff Angel, Director of Total Environment Centre (TEC).

"The Government's own studies have confirmed that Demand Management is the way forward. Demand can be easily reduced by energy efficiency programmes if government and industry have the will to make them happen. This will also reduce greenhouse pollution."

"Distributors in NSW have proposed spending about \$1 billion per year on expanding their networks, yet plan to spend only \$3 million on Demand Management. When investment in DM has been shown to be extremely cost-effective, this just doesn't make economic sense."

"Environmentally and economically corrupt policies keep pushing coal when better solutions are available. Two new gas co-generation plants are ready to go but subsidies to coal and the captured transmission sector are stopping them. The peak environment groups reject coal-fired, band-aid solutions, along with the proposed Redbank 2 power station."

"Energy planners and government need to lead the way to reduce Australia's excessive share of greenhouse gas emissions. Electricity makes up almost 50% of emissions because of our heavy reliance on coal and our failure to adopt Demand Management."

"New generation cannot be installed in time to meet forecast demand, so Demand Management is the obvious solution."

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Latest News

Air-conditioner Levy Set to Cool Energy Demand



Created on Friday, 08 August 2003 10:00

"Up to 50,000 air-conditioners are set to be sold every year in NSW," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "These energy guzzlers are driving claims for \$10 billion of inefficient spending on electricity networks."

The increasing market penetration of air-conditioners has been blamed by Integral Energy and Energy Australia for surging demand.

"Air-conditioners consume around 40 per cent more energy than natural cooling, and use up to 250 per cent more network capacity on hot days. Yet prices are averaged so that low energy users subsidise electricity hogs. With networks planning to spend \$10 billion to cope with demand, it's the responsible energy users who will be unfairly footing the bill."

"A levy of 10 per cent on the total cost of a new air-conditioner would raise around \$5 million per year which should go to the Government's Demand Management Fund and energy efficiency solutions." said Mr Angel. "A levy and higher electricity prices would also send a message to consumers that air-conditioners are energy guzzlers."

* \$100 for every \$1000 of a/c unit cost. Assume \$1000 each and 50% of new customers to retailers over next 10 years.

"The Government's own study has been ignored in the rush to accommodate demand rather than slow it. Over 5000 MW has been identified by the Sustainable Energy Development Authority (SEDA) for energy savings in NSW alone. Meanwhile, the National Electricity Market (NEM) is claiming that massive investment in infrastructure is needed to supply a mere 1400 MW for the whole of Australia. This is grave economic incompetence for which the whole community will pay."

"Energy distributors in NSW have proposed spending only \$3 million per year on Demand Management compared to \$1 billion on network augmentation. When Demand Management has been shown to be extremely cost-effective, this just doesn't make economic sense."

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Latest News

Giant Polluting Power Station Gets Government Help



Created on Thursday, 04 September 2003 10:00

"It's a scandal, particularly when the Carr Government makes great play of its greenhouse policy credentials. The document shows that senior bureaucrats from State and Regional Development, Environment Protection Authority, Treasury, and Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources attended a two day 'media risk management workshop' in April 2003 and developed plans to counter public opposition to the 1,000MW Project Waratah coal electricity plant," said Jeff Angel, Director of the Centre.

"The confidential meeting was held just after the State Election in the offices of the NSW Department of State and Regional Development and assessed a large range of risks to the project, including environmental concerns and competition from cleaner fuels - with a view to 'controlling' the risks - through manipulation of public opinion and the media."

"We call on the Carr Government to bring the bureaucrats under control and withdraw any policy, strategic, financial or political help that the project is receiving and ban any future help,' Mr Angel said. "For the sake of the Government's greenhouse credibility, they should haul the agencies out of this carbon cesspit of a power station. They are boosting dirty power over the practical cleaner alternatives the community wants."

"The agencies and developers identified opposition by green groups as a high probability with a high risk value. Well, they certainly got that right, and we will now be even more determined to stop the biggest and dirtiest power station to be built in NSW for many decades. And we won't be falling prey to their manipulation strategies, like planting lots of trees - a dodgy and unreliable exercise," Mr Angel said.

Project Waratah is located at Ulan and is being proposed by John Holland Investment and X Strata. Start up is planned for 2007 and involves two 500MW units. It comes on top of the 150MW Redbank 2 coal station currently before the government for a decision.

"It and Redbank are contrary to the state's power supply plan which requires the use of gas, solar, wind and energy conservation. Redbank and Waratah will wreck the prospects for mainstreaming cleaner power. If we care about the environment and want to prevent a worsening of human induced climate change - neither power plant should be built. The economic and human costs of climate change are horrendous and, at a state level, we would get more jobs from the cleaner alternatives, than another power station.

Latest News

Dinosaur Developer Meriton Shirks Energy Standards



Created on Wednesday, 17 September 2003 10:00

The developer's attempt to shirk the Government's requirement for a minimum 3.5 Star Energy rating on appliances in the 8 storey development is a backwards step for sustainability and will burden residents with high energy bills.

"Meriton has shown itself to be way out of touch," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "Attempting to pass the buck onto residents whose energy bills will spiral over the life of these inefficient appliances is unacceptable."

Meriton, Australia's biggest developer, has applied to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Resources (DIPNR) to remove the requirement for 3.5 Energy Star appliances for its commercial and residential development. Meriton argues that 3.5 Star clothes dryers are more expensive and will increase the price of their development.

"Meriton has provided no economic or financial analysis of the costs of the appliances concerned. It has also failed to reveal that energy efficient appliances are less expensive over the life of the appliance, providing a saving for residents".

"If the Government caves in to this challenge, the whole community will pay in higher energy prices and more greenhouse pollution. Mr Knowles should reject this attempt to weaken the consent conditions, and make minimum efficiency standards a bottom line on all future developments. The Government must send a strong message to developers that sustainability is non-negotiable."

"Meriton should use its capacity to buy in bulk to access cheaper energy efficient appliances from suppliers instead of passing the buck."

"With electricity prices set to rise in NSW, the cost burden of inefficient appliances will become even greater. Given the undesirable trend to install air conditioning and the infrastructure being called on to meet energy demand, the lack of 3.5 star appliances becomes an even more serious issue."

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Latest News

More Coal Power or Green Energy Plan? Challenge to Premier



Created on Monday, 29 September 2003 10:00

The Centre also released a five point plan for a sustainable and green energy future.

TEC Director Jeff Angel said a decision on the Redbank Power Station is imminent, while some government agencies were promoting the construction of a 1000 MW facility at Ulan. In addition, some senior Ministers are greenhouse sceptics.

"While the Premier has taken a leadership role on protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse emissions, the acid test is with these two power stations, which have powerful backers. With so many greener and cleaner alternatives available, this is the critical battle for our future energy supply," Mr Angel said.

"People who care about the environment across NSW are calling on the Premier to back smarter, cleaner strategies for meeting our energy demand."

TEC has today released a five-point plan for a sustainable energy industry for NSW over the next 10 years, which includes:

- government support for renewable energy technologies, including wind, solar and hydro;
- statewide take-up of solar hot water, including compulsory solar heating on all new properties;
- reducing energy demand and a 10 per cent levy on all air conditioners;
- greater use of cogeneration and gas to meet peak power needs;
- rescuing the failing government building energy management program;
- requiring energy companies to promote accredited Green Power amongst all customers.

Total energy available is in excess of 5,000 MW, about a 40% increase on current supply, including peak power.

"Rather than simply building more dirty power plants, there are a range of options available now, that the Premier could embrace to truly stamp himself as a green Premier," Mr Angel said.

Latest News

Redbank rejection - right decision



Created on Tuesday, 14 October 2003 10:00

"Only last week TEC released a 5 point energy plan which found 6,000 MW of power from gas, renewable sources and energy efficiency - with far less impact on climate change. Redbank would have produced only 150MW and was more greenhouse gas intensive than any other power plant in the state," said Jeff Angel, Director of the Centre.

"NSW has reached a critical turning point in its energy planning. If we build more coal fired plants, then it will be all the harder for the next generation to act against human induced climate change. Alternative sources are practical and available and the Carr Government, which prides itself on its greenhouse policies, needs to bring green energy and energy efficiency from the margin into the mainstream. Thousands of jobs will also be created."

"The decision announced today by Planning and Infrastructure Minister, Craig Knowles, shows a maturity of assessment and policy making. Redbank had some powerful backers but analysis of its claims to be environmentally responsible and necessary were shown to be unsubstantiated."

"No doubt there will be further attempts to foist coal fired power on NSW, such as the proposed 1,000MW Project Waratah to be based at Ulan. However, the time for coal has passed and the community is demanding environmentally sustainable electricity," Mr Angel said.

Latest News

Survey Embarrasses Hypocritical Electricity Companies



Created on Tuesday, 21 October 2003 10:00

"The offending companies are getting the community to pay three times," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "First they spend thousands on air-conditioners; then they have to pay sky-rocketing electricity bills; and finally they pay for the environmental damage caused by global warming."

"Cashing in on air-conditioner sales and then reaping the rewards from spiralling energy bills is greedy and environmentally irresponsible. What retailers fail to tell customers when they sell air-conditioners is that energy prices will be going up as a result of escalating demand. Some companies claim they give energy conservation advice, but it is hypocritical to also sell air-conditioners."

In response to the survey, Energy Australia has stopped selling air-conditioners. Energy Australia blamed air-conditioners as part of the reason for its \$696 million budget blow-out. Six other retailers also refuse to sell air-conditioners.

"Selling air-conditioners takes away the incentive for cheaper, sustainable housing designs with natural cooling," said Mr Angel. "Air-conditioners consume around 40 per cent more energy than natural cooling, and use up to 250 per cent more network capacity on hot days. We commend those companies who don't sell air-conditioners and call on the irresponsible retailers to stop, and find some integrity."

"Retailers who sell air-conditioners are also contributing to an unfair cross-subsidy. Customers who use less electricity will be paying for those running energy guzzling air-conditioners as prices are averaged out. It's the responsible energy users who will be unfairly footing the bill."

Surging demand for electricity in New South Wales, driven in large part by air-conditioners, is behind \$5 billion of network infrastructure planned by electricity companies for which consumers will have to pay. Similar problems are being faced in other States.

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Latest News

Transgrid White Elephant Must Go



Created on Wednesday, 19 November 2003 11:00

"The Wollar-Wellington line is another example of the lumbering ineptitude of this under-regulated monopoly," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "Transgrid's infatuation with infrastructure is killing opportunities for smarter energy solutions. The government should pull this engineer-driven mammoth into line before the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy are lost forever."

Consultants had identified cost-effective energy solutions in a 2001 report which included local gas generation (75MW), energy efficiency (50MW) and wind energy (10MW). These cleaner, cheaper options, supplying well in excess of energy requirements for the area, have been suppressed by Transgrid.

"We call on the ACCC and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to conduct an investigation into how these cost-effective solutions have been excluded. Transgrid is displaying all the signs of anti-competitive behaviour in its moves to block the development of non-network solutions."

"Transgrid wants us all to pay for another excessive project which destroys rural communities, increases greenhouse gases and costs more for all NSW electricity users," said Mr Angel.

Energy efficiency programs in NSW have had benefit to cost ratios of 10 to 1. Electricity companies are legally obliged to investigate these options before building their networks, however, they are unwilling to do so because they reduce earnings from electricity sales.

"Transgrid has a clear conflict of interest when it comes to energy efficiency. An independent NSW Demand Management Fund should be set up to immediately fast-track energy efficiency measures for the benefit of the people of NSW and the environment."

Despite planning to spend billions on network expansion across NSW, Transgrid has committed only \$1 million per year to demand management in one part of Sydney.

"The government should come clean on whether they want this line to serve the dirty power station planned for Ulan. If so, this is dirty economics - getting Transgrid to foot the bill now for a polluting power station later that the people of NSW don't want."

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Latest News

Taxpayers Told to Pay Millions for Unnecessary Power Line



Created on Friday, 05 December 2003 11:00

"This development is ridiculously excessive given that peak demand in the area is growing at less than 9MW per year," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "It is not surprising that TransGrid's economic analysis shows that the line has an economic disbenefit of \$24 to \$39 million. By contrast, demand management, distributed generation or a smaller line would be more efficient and cost a lot less than the \$68 million that Transgrid wants taxpayers to spend."

TransGrid today announced that it wants to build the controversial line in the Northern Corridor which runs past the Ulan coal mine. Secret Government documents leaked earlier this year revealed plans for a new coal-fired power station at the mine, in conflict with the Government's greenhouse reduction policies.

"It's no coincidence that this line runs right beside Ulan's coal mine and is many times bigger than what's needed for the area. TransGrid's discussions with proponents for a Ulan power station confirm that dirty economics are at work. TransGrid needs to immediately explain why it wants to build such a wasteful line or own up to plans for another polluting power station."

"TransGrid has ignored and dismissed cost-effective, sensible alternatives to this line in contravention of the National Electricity Code. They have made alternatives look expensive by fiddling the numbers, for example, costing peak-period, local generation on a 12 hour a day basis when it would only be used for a few hours per year."

"A 2001 report concluded that there is a range of cost-effective solutions in the area including local gas generation (75MW), energy efficiency (50MW) and wind energy (10MW). These cleaner, cheaper options, which supply well in excess of energy requirements for the area, have been suppressed by Transgrid."

"An outrageous abuse of the consultation process has taken place. We call on TransGrid and the Government to bring this development down to size and invest in cheaper, cleaner energy solutions for the area."

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Latest News

Networks Throw Our Good Money After Bad



Created on Friday, 09 January 2004 11:00

We are well on the way to becoming one of the most greenhouse polluting States in the world. Today's IPART report says we need more committees and policies to achieve energy efficiency. We have to stop talking and take action in 2004.

"Consumers are being forced to throw good money after bad with price rises that ignore the savings potentials of demand management," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "Electricity demand in NSW has reached crisis proportions. If nothing is done to reign in network expansion, the State is set to be one of the most greenhouse polluting in the world."

"IPART is happy to sign off on \$8 billion of capital expenditure but has baulked at real action on demand management. It is critical that IPART disallows inefficient investment that ignores demand management. Spending by networks of around 1% on demand management is clearly inefficient when there is potential for 35% savings."

Demand management investments have a proven benefit to cost ratio of over 10:1. The Federal Government's recently released paper 'Towards a National Framework for Energy Efficiency' has confirmed that there is the potential for 35-70% savings in the residential sector. The report shows that energy efficiency could save \$1.8 billion GDP.

"Investment in energy efficiency is languishing in a cesspit of industry inertia," said Mr Angel. "IPART has recognised the problems for over a decade but we're still waiting for a coherent response. The decision to remove the overall cap on network revenue has resulted in a clear incentive for the networks to sell more electricity."

"It is now urgent to fast-track the independent Demand Management Fund recently announced by the Premier. The pressure is on Minister Sartor to deliver the efficiencies that the networks are ignoring."

Despite 18 months of deliberations, IPART failed to finalise the mechanisms to encourage demand management in its review. Instead, the regulator has promised to set up working groups to further investigate demand management.

Electricity makes up almost 50% of greenhouse emissions which are causing global warming. On Wednesday, scientists warned that even a moderate increase in temperature could wipe out 40% of the world's species.

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Latest News

Greenhouse trading - not dead



Created on Monday, 12 January 2004 11:00

With the UK's Chief Scientist stating that climate change is more serious than terrorism, you'd think Prime Minister Howard would get the message. It's myopic policy making that does a great disservice to the community. Australia will not be immune from the severe impacts of climate change. And with our major trading partners developing such schemes, it is essential our economy can fit in with them and retain a healthy economic relationship, the groups said.

"The Commonwealth is just one voice and there is a big groundswell among key states and business groups to have an emissions trading scheme. NSW Premier Bob Carr has already announced an approach to other states and we are working on a practical model. This will be discussed with business, state governments and peak environment groups over the next few months. A trading scheme is not dead," said Jeff Angel, Director of Total Environment Centre.

Anna Reynolds, WWF Australia climate change campaign manager said: "This bad news comes within a week of a new scientific study predicting globally a million land animal and plants- including some of our iconic Australian species - could die out due to global warming. The Commonwealth government seems to be totally unaware of the urgency and the economically-viable options for Australia to minimise impacts from climate change by adopting emissions trading and other critical policies to curb carbon emissions".

Darren Gladman of Environment Victoria said: "With brown coal being the worst greenhouse emitter in the energy sector, Victoria needs the economic stimulus that a trading scheme will bring. It is a market-based approach that creates viable economic ways to transition from polluting to clean energy. A multi-based state scheme with the involvement of key industrial and energy states would benefit each state and also Australia, in the international marketplace

Latest News

Electricity Companies Off the Hook for Failing to Save, Again



Created on Thursday, 10 June 2004 10:00

The Tribunal has allowed \$8 billion in spending while approving the networks' failure to undertake efficiency. While its measures for demand management are a small step in the right direction, its failure to penalise electricity companies for inefficiency reflects regulatory failure.

"The Tribunal should stop sitting on the fence and decide whether it is a rubber stamp for network spending or a regulator with the backbone to prevent monopoly excess," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "Allowing networks to recover costs on demand management is of little consequence in the face of an \$8 billion spending spree. IPART must be weaned off its habit of allowing lazy, build-focused investment if they want to see any real efficiency."

"Networks have shown little interest in pursuing demand management and IPART is happy to approve this inefficiency year after year. It is consumers and the environment that are paying for this failure to regulate."

"IPART's disallowal of 'learn by doing' programs puts real pressure on the Government to fast-track the Demand Management Fund promised to the people of NSW. Electricity demand in the state has reached crisis proportions. If nothing is done to reign in network expansion, the state is set to be one of the most greenhouse polluting in the world."

"It is clear that the Demand Management Code of Practice has failed to encourage greater efficiency by networks. The Code of Practice should be upgraded to become a mandatory requirement, and DM targets for networks should be embedded in legislation."

The inefficiency of the networks is well documented. For example, 10 per cent of Energy Australia's network is used for less than 1 per cent of the time.

Demand management investments have a proven benefit to cost ratio of over 10:1. The Federal Government has confirmed that there is potential for up to 70% savings in the residential sector, huge reductions in electricity bills and greenhouse emissions, the creation of new jobs and massive GDP savings.

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Latest News

Greenhouse Amendment for this Week's Energy Bills



Created on Monday, 21 June 2004 10:00

Environment groups today are calling on the Federal Opposition, Greens and Democrats to amend the Energy Market Bill and the Trade Practices Amendment Bill that will be in the Federal Parliament this week.

The Bills establish and recognise the powerful new bodies for the regulation of electricity. Currently, the Bills fail to recognise the huge impact of the energy sector and spiralling demand on greenhouse emissions, say Total Environment Centre (TEC) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).

"The National Electricity Market is an environmentally devastating mammoth that ignores the environment and low-income consumers," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director.

"These Bills must recognise that Australia's electricity sector is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions and be amended. Rushing through legislation that cements in place severe architectural National Electricity Market defects is unacceptable."

"The Bills also need amendment so that the new National Energy Commissioners have environmental qualifications. Amendments must ensure that the ACCC listens to the community, and that consumer and environment groups are able to seek Judicial Review of decisions that affect them."

Australia is expecting \$30 billion of electricity investment over the next 10 years. The new energy bodies will oversee the development of this future investment. Consumers will be expected to pay for this investment in higher electricity bills.

Australia has the highest per capital greenhouse gas emissions in the world. 34% of the nation's emissions are caused by electricity generation. Greenhouse emissions cause global warming which will result in more droughts, cyclones and water shortages.

Latest News

Black Boxed Energy Bills: Unconstitutional, Anti-Environment



Created on Thursday, 24 June 2004 10:00

The Energy Market Bill may also be unconstitutional, according to the Department of Parliamentary Services, as it hands over the states' responsibility for electricity regulation to South Australia.

"These Bills attempt to set in stone a secret deal that utterly fails to address the spiralling greenhouse emissions from the electricity sector," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "They attempt to put in place an inter-governmental agreement that no-one has seen and an Australian Energy Market Commission that is yet to exist."

"Labour should support amendments from the Democrats and Greens or admit that they are happy to play second fiddle to Howard's appalling energy policies."

"Rushing through legislation that cements in place the severe architectural defects of the National Electricity Market is unacceptable. Questions over their unconstitutionality should also be investigated."

"The Bills also need amendment to ensure that the new National Energy Commissioners have environmental qualifications and that the ACCC listens to the community."

Australia has the highest per capital greenhouse gas emissions in the world. 34% of the nation's emissions are caused by electricity generation.

Latest News

Historic Coalition Calls for Urgent Electricity Reforms



Created on Wednesday, 06 October 2004 10:00

The Package tackles inadequate protections for low-income consumers and spiralling greenhouse emissions caused by inefficient consumption. South Australians have been hardest hit by the move to a competitive market.

"We call on both the major parties to endorse this reform Package to improve conditions for consumers and the environment," said Jane Castle, Total Environment Centre (TEC) campaigner.

"Both parties have shirked responsibility for the effects of the market on spiralling greenhouse emissions and energy bills. It's been left to the minor parties to take a stand against the rapacious profiteering by the coal lobby and the greedy energy companies."

The Australian Progressive Alliance and the South Australian Greens have endorsed the Amendment Package. Senator Meg Lees has called on Federal and state governments to reform the National Electricity Market so that it recognises environmental and social objectives. The Member for Mitchell, Kris Hanna has also called on the Rann Government to take action.

Carolyn Bond, Consumers' Federation of Australia Chair, said: "The reform of electricity markets needs to take into account low-income consumers who aren't in a strong position to bargain."

"South Australians have been used as guinea pigs in the energy market experiment," said Ms Castle. "These amendments will begin to reverse this trend, tackling the energy market flaws at their very source."

"The energy market has not emerged as a key election issue because both the major parties prefer the mess to be left behind closed doors. It's time for both parties to admit they've made mistakes and consult more openly with the community."

Signatories:

ACT Council of Social Service
Alternative Technology Association
Australian Conservation Foundation
Climate Action Network Australia
Conservation Council of SA
Consumer Law Centre of Victoria
Consumers Federation of Australia
Environment Victoria
Environmental Defenders Office
Moreland Energy Foundation
Nature Conservation Council of NSW
NSW Council of Social Service
Public Interest Advisory Centre
QLD Conservation Council
QLD Consumers Association
SA Council of Social Service
Tasmanian Conservation Council
Tasmanian Council of Social Service
Total Environment Centre

WWF

National Electricity Market Amendment Package: <http://www.tec.org.au/member/tec/projects/Energy/NEL.html>

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Latest News

Environment Groups Call on NSW Government to Rule Out Dirty Coal



Created on Monday, 06 December 2004 11:00

The plan identifies almost 6000MW of cost-effective, clean energy and demand management that would be quicker to implement than building a new power station. This comes in the wake of the release of the NSW Government's Green Paper on Energy and claims that NSW may experience brown outs this summer and is considering investing in new coal generation capacity to meet future demand. The plan will be developed into a comprehensive Clean Energy Future for NSW study.

ACF Climate Change campaigner Monica Richter said: "The Premier has taken a national leadership role on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He must now get down to business by implementing the viable alternatives to another polluting power station for NSW."

"The Government should rule out polluting, coal-fired power for NSW. This report shows that a new coal-fired power station for NSW is unnecessary if the Government implements the many programmes on offer, including renewables, demand management, energy efficiency, cogeneration, gas and green energy," said Total Environment Centre spokesperson Jane Castle. "Over 5,000 MW of smart, clean energy or energy efficiency is now available. This would be an increase of 43% on current capacity, especially for peak power. Most can be implemented more quickly and more cost-effectively than building new power stations. A range of these proposals are close to sign-off, promising clean energy and jobs growth well in excess of the jobs found in the fossil fuel electricity generation industry."

Anna Reynolds, WWF-Australia's Climate Change Manager said "The NSW government is at a crossroads. We need to cut emissions by at least 60 percent by 2050 if we are to help prevent NSW being severely damaged by climate change. We will not reach this target if we build new coal fired power stations."

"NSW could lead the world in becoming a clean energy future state. We've got lots of resources such as the sun, plenty of wind, space and other fuels. Rather than doing what we've always done, let's be creative. Not only will renewable energy be good for the climate, it will also be good for rural and regional jobs growth and allow investment and export of these technologies," said Julie-Anne Richard of Climate Action Network Australia.

"NSW has a huge untapped potential for renewable energy. A state renewables target of 10% by 2010 and 20% by 2020 would give investors the incentive they need, and provide regional jobs and development. The alternative of another dirty coal power station is simply unacceptable". said Philip Freeman, of Greenpeace.

The groups, including Climate Action Network Australia, the Total Environment Centre the Australian Conservation Foundation, WWF-Australia, Greenpeace, North Coast Environment Council, The Wilderness Society, the Hunter Environment Group, Rising Tide, National Parks Association of NSW and Nature Conservation Council of NSW recommend the government can avoid future brownouts by being smarter about supplying our energy needs by doing the following:

1. Develop the market for renewable energy such as wind, solar, low-impact hydro and geothermal
2. Provide real incentives for demand management and energy efficiency
3. No new coal fired power stations and better support for cogeneration and gas as an interim fuel
4. Becoming a world leader by supporting take-up of solar hot water technology, and
5. Encourage more green electricity products.

For full report see our Energy page.

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Latest News

Secret Numbers on New Coal Must Be Released



Created on Thursday, 26 May 2005 10:00

The full cost to consumers of polluting power must be made clear, as well as the assumptions behind the economic modelling. TEC has questioned the Government's endorsement of more polluting coal power.

"The number crunchers driving polluting power must come clean on how they arrived at such a horrendous decision for the people of NSW," said Jane Castle, TEC campaigner. "Polluting coal-fired power is inefficient, expensive and unnecessary. There must be an independent and public assessment of every single step down the road to this appalling proposal."

"There is no reason for the Government to hide its calculations. We should all be able to see what assumptions they have made in arriving at such an atrocious decision."

The NSW Government's leaked Energy White Paper has given the green light to more polluting coal-fired power for NSW. Coal-fired power is the greatest contributor to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions which cause climate chaos and contribute to the worsening drought and water shortages.

The new Energy Savings Fund that comes into effect on July 1 has \$40 million per year to reduce waste and save energy. The Fund can help neutralise demand growth and save consumers on their electricity bills.

"We want to know whether savings from the new \$40 million per year Energy Savings Fund have been included in the calculations. The Energy Savings Fund can deliver reductions of 2000MW of average demand and 1000MW of peak demand. We don't need more dirty, expensive fossil fuel generation."

"The imminent destruction of Bob Carr's reputation as a leader in the fight against climate chaos should not be taken lightly. He should look closely at Treasury numbers which are being used to dig NSW's greenhouse grave."

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Latest News

Coal Power Bad News for NSW Consumers



Created on Saturday, 25 June 2005 10:00

"The true costs of coal-fired power are absolutely exorbitant and will place a ridiculous burden on the NSW economy," said Jane Castle, TEC Campaigner.

"Once you include the cost of fuel, the cost of delivering the electricity and the cost of greenhouse emissions, saving energy is the only sensible choice."

"NSW consumers don't deserve to be treated like fools with magic pudding pockets. The Government must level with the community about the true costs of coal-fired power. It's a bad deal."

The report compares the cost of the Government's proposed 1500MW expansion of the Mount Piper coal-fired power station to energy savings that would deliver the same capacity. When the full costs of 1500MW of new coal-fired generation are included, the actual cost to NSW consumers of the proposal would be \$9.4 billion over the 30 year life of the power station. This is equivalent to \$3915 for every current household in NSW, compared to \$500 with an energy savings strategy.

"The NSW Energy Savings Fund has already been established and is set to reduce demand by 765MW over 5 years. If the Fund is extended over 30 years, \$9 billion of coal costs could be averted for a fraction of the price. Over 30 years, NSW consumers would save \$2.2 billion due to greater efficiency."

"We should see a full life-cycle costing of all the options by the Government in the public domain."

"If New York and California can eliminate demand growth, as they have done recently, then NSW should at least be able to halve demand growth over the next 10 years. NSW does not need more base-load energy capacity. This is a myth being pedalled by Treasury bureaucrats because they don't have the ability to seek out real efficiency."

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Latest News

Lemma Government has to go further on no coal power policy



Created on Thursday, 15 September 2005 10:00

"Now it's time to rule out coal for base-load as well. New energy demand can be met more cheaply and quickly with energy efficiency and renewable energy," said Jane Castle, Resource Conservation Campaigner for the Centre.

"The NSW Government should not be panicked by threats of 'the lights going out' - it's nonsense and with peak demand supplied from demand management and gas, there is plenty of time to ramp up the alternatives for more megawatts."

The NSW Minister for Education, Carmel Tebutt, made the commitment at an Environment Forum held at Petersham Town Hall on Monday night. Ms Tebutt confirmed that peak energy demand would not be met by coal, and that 'personally' she didn't believe that NSW needed more coal-fired power.

"It's a no-brainer," said Ms Castle. "Coal-fired generation is the wrong type of fuel for peak demand because it takes too long to fire up and is highly polluting. Saving energy at peak times is by far the cheapest and cleanest option."

"The Government must now aggressively pursue energy savings to reduce new electricity demand growth by half. Energy savings are five times cheaper than new coal. When you add up all the extra costs of another 1500MW of coal-fired generation, the cost is over \$9 billion."

"The Government has announced aggressive targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. They will simply not be met if the Government approves more coal-fired generation. Support for new coal will damage the ALP vote in Marrickville and the 2007 State Election as the environment is a big concern for the community", she said.

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Latest News

Massive Energy Surplus on Tap for NSW



Created on Wednesday, 09 November 2005 11:00

The Real Solutions for NSW Energy, released today by the Australian Conservation Foundation and Total Environment Centre shows how NSW can increase its energy supplies by 50% over the next decade and beyond by pursuing renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency.

"This massive surplus of clean energy is just waiting for the go-ahead from Government," said Jeff Angel, TEC Director. "The challenge for the new Premier is to say no to the coal lobby and yes to clean energy."

"If NSW doesn't act soon we'll find the thousands of jobs in renewable energy going to other states and offshore. This is about economic and environmental sustainability."

The report shows how energy savings, renewable energy, cogeneration and efficient gas can deliver hot showers and cold beer well into the 2020s. The potential from clean energy is equal to more than six polluting coal-fired power stations.

"Climate change is threatening our way of life; clean energy can protect it," said ACF's Executive Director Don Henry. "And this won't cost the earth: saving energy is at least five times cheaper than generating it. Energy efficiency and renewable energy also create far more jobs than power from coal. NSW energy policy should not be dictated by the coal industry."

Coal fired power generates massive amounts of greenhouse pollution, increasing the impact of dangerous climate change. For every megawatt hour of electricity produced, coal-fired power creates 1 tonne of greenhouse pollution. This compares with 0.4 tonnes from efficient gas and no pollution at all from renewables like wind and solar.

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Latest News

A Renewable Guarantee for NSW - or lose our wind power



Created on Monday, 14 November 2005 11:00

"The NSW Government should not let the opportunity for new green industry and jobs pass by. NSW can do even better than the recent Victorian 10% renewables announcement. We have an impressive range of new projects on the drawing board that could be built in the next five years if we introduce a Renewable Guarantee," said Ben Pearson from Greenpeace.

"If these go ahead they would generate more than \$3 billion of investment in NSW and more than 2000 jobs, and give more than 1,500MW of renewable electricity capacity," Mr. Pearson continued.

"Giving a Renewable Guarantee is like taking out an insurance policy for NSW consumers. It means a significant supply of clean energy without greenhouse pollution, at the lowest costs." said Don Henry of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

NSW is being left out of the renewable revolution with most renewable developments going to South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.

New renewable energy projects are not viable without the green electricity market which was provided by the Commonwealth Government's Mandatory Renewable Energy Target. This has now been filled up, five years early. Without expansion of the market, the industry will have to go elsewhere.

"The NSW government needs to step in where the Commonwealth has failed. NSW needs a Renewable Guarantee of 15% by 2012 and 25% by 2020. The impact on consumers would be negligible, adding about \$15 per year to the average household bill in 2012." said Jeff Angel of Total Environment Centre.

"A Renewable Guarantee would mean enough market growth to support manufacturing facilities for key renewable energy technologies. We urge Premier Iemma to act now."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

* A Renewable Guarantee for NSW of 15% of electricity by 2012 and 25% by 2020 builds on existing renewable capacity of 8%, meaning NSW would gain an additional 7% by 2015. This growth will enable NSW to meet emissions targets at least cost.

* Without urgent action, 3 approved wind power projects in NSW will not get built, despite being announced by the NSW government. Unless a new market mechanism is found the industry will be forced to leave the state.

* There are renewable energy projects in NSW for nearly 1500 MW, representing \$3 billion worth of investment in NSW which may be lost to the state, and representing more than 2000 new jobs.

* NSW has been left out of most of the new renewable energy development as it has gone to South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. There is currently only 17 MW of wind power in NSW compared to 252 MW in South Australia, 104 MW in Victoria, and 67MW in Tasmania.

* However, there is an impressive range of potential new projects (1,400MW) slated for NSW that could be built in the next 6 years (see over). These would mean thousands of jobs and over \$3 billion of investment in NSW, much of it in regional areas.

* The Commonwealth Government established the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) in 2000, requiring electricity retailers to buy an additional 2% of electricity renewable energy by 2010. This was intended

to increase the percentage of Australian electricity from renewable energy to 12.5% by 2010.

* The MRET target is almost full, five years early. New renewable energy projects are not viable without the incentive provided by MRET or a similar mechanism.

* The percentage of renewable energy in Australia's electricity mix is in fact declining due to increasing demand for electricity. If federal and state policies do not change, the percentage of energy coming from renewable sources will be roughly 10% by 2010, and 8% by 2020.

* Australia produces some of the cheapest wind power in the world and costs are falling. However, the lack of environmental or health taxes means the current price is higher than coal fired electricity. A Renewable Guarantee of 25% for Australia would bring down the costs to equal fossil fuel generation by 2020.

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