Geoff Bragg, Installer
New England, NSW

GEOFF BRAGG IS AN ICON IN THE SOLAR INDUSTRY. He’s worked for New England Solar Power as an installer for over ten years. Geoff is also the NSW Chairman of the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) and Director of the Australian Solar Council (ASC). Having been in the industry for so long, he’s seen many changes.

“The solar industry is growing, and nearly 30% of the market is serviced by small companies. These are local companies, providing local jobs and helping our economy grow.”

But, the biggest issue for Geoff is the “solar coaster” — ambiguity in the sector caused by policy changes.

“Every time the Government changes a feed-in tariff policy, it dramatically affects our staffing and makes it difficult to forecast the future. But, as a small business, we’ve changed and tried to adapt as much as we can,” Geoff says.

But, a veteran of solar, Geoff knows that these obstacles are not impossible — and that the industry can move forward if traditional energy players work with the growing renewables industry.

“We need closer collaboration with networks and renewables industries. Both sides stand to benefit hugely from the move to solar power and increasing the different sources of energy production.”

“My experience shows that solar is clearly the industry of the future, creating local jobs, helping families take power over their bills and helping renewables grow in our communities.”

“But, what we need is a strong regulatory framework that allows competition between solar and traditional electricity markets — including the ability to access and connect to the grid.”

THE MOVE TO SOLAR IS A MOVE BY ORDINARY HOUSEHOLDS — BY FAMILIES, RETIREES AND SMALL AND LARGE BUSINESS OWNERS...

As the price of solar keeps dropping, and electricity bills keep increasing, the uptake of solar will continue to grow, creating with it a viable and thriving industry that provides thousands of local jobs and ensures affordable energy bills.

Solar also reduces the need for expensive grid upgrades, which are putting unnecessary strain on household power bills.

For these reason, it’s integral that measures are in place that assist and support more Australian families to take up the benefits of solar.

Governments across Australia need to resist the push by big power companies to penalise solar homes with additional fees or charges, or by refusing new connections to the grid.. We need to establish new policies and programs to help low income families and renters take up the benefits of the sun. And the current Renewable Energy Target should be extended and expanded, so that we can continue to work towards the day that every Australian business and home is powered by the sun.

SolarCitizens

Level 2, 33 Mountain Street,
Ultimo, NSW 2007

For more information,
please contact
info@solarcitizens.org.au

Australia’s top electorates:
Wright
Mayo
Kingston
Grey
Kennedy
Fisher
Wide Bay
Longman
Bowman
Wakefield
Brand
Pearce
Flynn
Canning
Blair
Barker
Makin
Braddon
Port Adelaide
Richmond
Dickson
Bonner
Fairfax
Petrie
Oxley
Fadden
Maranoa
Moreton
Boothby
Parkes
Cowan
Lalor
Forrest
Sturt
Moore
Hasluck
Forde
Hindmarsh
Tangney
Mcpherson
Hinkler
Lilley
Fremantle
Capricornia
Ryan
Lyne
Adelaide
Mcewen
Murray
Farrer
Page
Flinders
Indi
Gippsland
Mcmillan
Bendigo
Cowper
Groom
Corangamite
Hume
Gilmore
Gorton
Swan
Dawson
Holt
Canberra
Fraser
Paterson
Herbert
Stirling
Perth
Mallee
Chifley
Charlton
Greenway
Griffith
Macquarie
Moncrieff
Eden-Monaro
Macarthur
O’Connor
Durack
Calwell
McMahon
Mitchell
New England
Calare
Wannon
Hunter
Leichhardt
Dobell
Riverina
Dunkley
La Trobe
Fowler
Isaacs
Robertson
Corio
Ballarat
Lyons
Curtin
Aston
Werriwa
Cunningham
Lindsay
Shortland
Throsby
Berowra
Newcastle
Casey
Brisbane
Hughes
Gellibrand
Maribyrnong
Scullin
Franklin
Blaxland
Bruce
Deakin
Chisholm
Mackellar
Menzies
Bennelong
Denison
Batman
Wills
Hotham
Parramatta
Banks
Jagajaga
Bass
Watson
Goldstein
Reid
Cook
Barton
Bradfield
Braddon
Kooyong
Grayndler
Warringah
North Sydney
Melbourne
Kingsford Smith
Lingiari
Higgins
Melbourne Ports
Sydney
Solomon
Wentworth

The Solar Revolution in Hunter

AUSTRALIA IS ONE OF THE SUNNIEST CONTINENTS ON EARTH, SO PRODUCING POWER FROM THE SUN JUST MAKES SENSE. This has been recognised by millions of Australians who have chosen to take energy generation into their own hands.

One million rooftop power stations are now lighting up homes around the country. And many more households are looking to solar as a way to manage their energy bills, creating cleaner energy along the way.

This briefer details the rapid uptake of solar in Hunter and shares the stories of the families and individuals that are part of this shift to powering our nation with the sun.

Rebecca Cameron, Family
Milton, NSW

REBECCA IS A REAL ESTATE AGENT CURRENTLY LIVING IN MILTON, NEW SOUTH WALES. She and her family have lived there for nearly five years, after Rebecca spent the last 20 years as a police officer in Canberra. Rebecca and her husband have had two homes with solar hot water and PV, one in Canberra and one in Milton, NSW.

“Our system in Canberra, installed in 2002, cost $18K for a 2.2 kW system. When we moved to NSW, our system was $6K for a 4kW system. The prices have dropped because the technology keeps getting better and better.”

“That’s the consumer power of solar. You can make real change for yourself and your community, just by putting panels on your roof. It’s so cheap and helps with your bills – why wouldn’t you do it?”

Not only that, but solar is a political issue for Rebecca and her family.

“Solar is a vote winner for me. When we moved to NSW, a Federal Politician recommended that every new house that was built should have solar. I thought to myself, that’s so right! Why wouldn’t we take advantage of our natural resources?”

> “Why not make it legislation and ensure every house has solar on the roof?”

Hunter has
5,595
solar homes

Generating
13.99MW
of clean energy

Creating more than
18,500
jobs nation-wide

Investing
$42.0m
in solar power

Saving
17,483
tonnes of CO2

Saving
$3.1m
on power bills

NOTE ON FIGURES: These figures are estimates, based on an average 2.5kW system size, and Clean Energy Regulator, Sunwiz and Australian government data.

All in all, Hunter now ranks:
89
out of Australia’s 150 electorates

Jen Paradiso, Installer
Adelaide, SA

JENNY PARADISO WAS BORN AND BRED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. She currently lives in the North East suburbs of Adelaide with her husband, Dave Hille, and two children — a four year old, Violet, and three year old, Mabel. A few years ago, Jenny and Dave started Suntrix — a solar installation company in SA.

“We’ve been in operation for four years. That’s right — our daughter is as old as our business!”

In this short period of time, the business has grown rapidly.

“Four years ago, we were working from the kitchen table in our house, and we turned over $250,000 in our first year. Last year we hit $25 million, we’re operating from a large warehouse and showroom and employing over 20 staff,” Jenny says.

Jenny and Dave decided to start Suntrix because of the issues they had trying to put solar on their own roof when they were expecting Violet.

“Our idea to start Suntrix was simple. We had our first baby and knew we needed to save on our bills. One of the ways to reduce our costs was by going solar.”

“But, my husband and I were looking for solar, and we couldn’t afford it. Solar was more expensive back then, and the companies who came out to talk to us didn’t really know a lot about solar and were more interested in the sell. We did the research and decided to get solar installed ourselves and then started doing it for family and friends,” Jenny says.

“And from very small beginnings, we’ve grown much bigger than we ever thought! In fact, just this year, we were awarded Telstra’s South Australian business of year.”

Recently, South Australia boasted nearly 30% of its energy production coming from renewables, including wind and solar. The State has also enjoyed on average lower electricity prices — by $88 a year — a feat achieved by the move to renewables.

Having made the move to solar as a family, Jenny and Dave would never look back.

Jenny says she’s excited about watching this enthusiasm grow.

“I can’t wait for a day when solar panels on roofs are an assumption for every child. I’m waiting for the day when solar becomes that integrated in every child’s understanding of culture and life and their household.”

“That’s what I’m looking forward to.”

Sue Cooke, Retiree
Brisbane, QLD

SUE COOKE IS A RETIRED PUBLIC SERVANT WHO PREVIOUSLY WORKED IN NURSING, EDUCATION AND HEALTH.

“My husband and I decided to install solar on our roof about 3 years ago. We were interested in solar for all of the benefits you can think of — primarily to help the environment, to produce our own clean energy and not have to buy coal-fired power — but it also helped that the conditions were pretty good for installing them, and that we’d save on our electricity bills” Sue says.

“Our electricity bill completely turned around – we used to get a bill, but now we get a quarterly credit! Along with running on the sun, we’ve been quite electricity-efficient and have managed to keep to a low usage.”

“A few neighbours have since joined us, and the suburb has a high percentage of solar rooftops. It does help when you see other people feeling the benefits, and realise that it’s something you can do relatively easily yourself.”

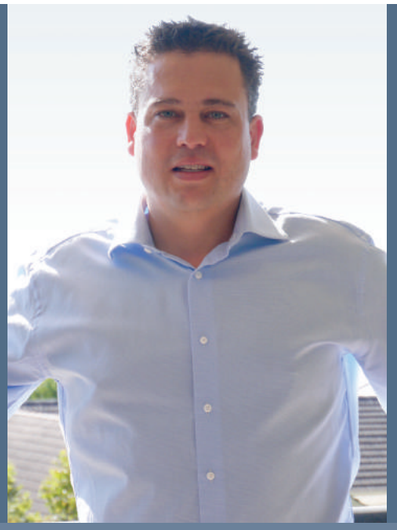
> “It’s a great superannuation scheme – to think you won’t have to pay electricity bills again!”

ORIGINALLY A SYDNEYSIDER WHO MOVED TO NEW ZEALAND, Justin Brown headed out to Western Australia to work in the sector where he’s been working for nearly twelve years. Alongside his busy job, Justin has also brought up a family, raising two young children with his wife. With the increasing cost of electricity, Justin knew that solar was the best way to go to take control over his energy bills.

“Because I work in the mining industry, I know we can’t keep digging up fossil fuels forever. That’s why I’m passionate about alternative sources of energy. I work so closely with our energy sources — and I know these things aren’t sustainable for all time.”

Justin’s family has had solar PV on their roof for over two years.

“Solar is finally at a place where it can compete with fossil fuels, and the costs of solar are decreasing substantially. That’s how we knew it was the right time to invest. We’re currently in a transitional period. We’re coming to the end of fossil fuels, and we need to embrace this fact and transition to renewables. Every house should have a solar array on it.”



Justin Brown, Family Man
Perth, WA