

Author name: A. Darroch

Date of submission: Monday, 7 May 2018

Submission: "IPART Submission on Roof-Top Solar

Why do we only think of large scale battery installations funded by the taxpayer, expensive energy wasting pumped hydro and, perhaps, a decade wait for significant free-market installation of batteries alongside domestic solar systems. There are plenty of existing domestic solar panel owners, who either aren't prepared to make the substantial capital investment involved or don't have a suitable location to install batteries.

Despite the difficulties imposed by past simplistic privatisation models, why not allow retail electricity suppliers to provide customers an option of battery storage at a village scale? Customers, with solar panels who sign up, could receive an export volume credit, rather than payment from a feed-in-tariff up to a set limit. They could later be credited with stored electricity at a special rate up to the limit of their 'banked deposits'. Obviously, to get buy-in, the long-term deal needs to make environmental and financial sense to customers. So, it will be a loss-leader for retail/distribution companies to install the facilities, but keeps customers as willing participants in the grid, thus supporting it for others.

The advantages over domestic-scale battery installations are economies of scale, supervised maintenance and control and a total grid storage capacity that will be greater and occur faster. Managed and maintained by the local electricity companies, they could also be quarantined to assist grid supply at times of abnormal peak demand and supply vulnerability. This would also help reduce exorbitant peak wholesale electricity prices saving money on all consumer bills and, in the long term, stop solar customers migrating off-grid. Retail companies can also avoid paying some of the high peak charges helping recoup the cost of the installations.

Legislative changes may be required to enable such local network storage arrangements to be permitted."