

I'm very disappointed to learn that IPART has come up with the kooky idea of punishing solar power generators for doing the right thing by investing our money in clean, sustainable renewable energy, while the big coal and gas companies that have been bludging for decades and polluting our air and water continue to get massive handouts from the government, as well as charging us many times more for the dirty electricity they sell to us than we are able to get for the clean electricity we sell to them. This does not seem to be a reasonable decision arrived at on the basis of fairness or facts by a genuinely independent organisation.

The big energy retailers have been using their heavily taxpayer-subsidised market position to extort money from millions of customers. A huge proportion of electricity bills is a line rental that is way out of proportion to the cost of the connection of a supply line to a home or business. That cost was borne by the electricity customer when the line was first attached, and there seems to be no reason why it should continue to be paid to a company that did nothing to attach it, and contributes nothing to its upkeep. This high charge, which is the same regardless of energy use by the household or business premises, does nothing to encourage more efficient use of energy, and appears to be money for nothing. Why does IPART not choose to reduce this line rental to a level which reflects the relatively small outlay by the retailers and wholesalers of electricity, rather than slug the producers of clean energy? Is it because we small generators are not able to offer financial incentives to IPART under the table, or to bully IPART?

Electricity I harvest from the sun earns me about 11c per kilowatt hour. I use this money to offset the 33c per kilowatt hour I have to pay for dirty electricity from the big retailers. That doesn't go very far. I also had to pay many thousands of dollars to install my solar system, while the big retailers' dirty and obsolete generators were paid off many years ago, by their customers. More recently they received several billion dollars from their customers, via the federal government, as compensation for the effects of the introduction of the Carbon Price. Since the scrapping of that successful initiative, that money has not been refunded by the energy retailers to taxpayers. Why not? Is it not time for IPART to view that vast handout as an account to draw from in order to reduce the price of electricity to consumers? This would make much more sense than picking the pockets of those who generate clean, reliable energy from infrastructure we have recently installed (thus creating new jobs) and are still paying it off.

I support a fair price for clean renewable solar and wind energy, whether generated at large or small scale. This energy lacks the costs to the nation and economy arising from pollution of our land, water and air and the destruction of land values and other industries that usually accompanies coal and gas extraction under weak Australian legislation. It is therefore reasonable that clean energy should cost more per kilowatt hour than dirty energy, but since that would send problematic economic signals it would be sufficient to charge around 20c per kilowatt hour for clean energy, and to make that a mandatory minimum feed-in tariff, payable by energy retailers.

Solar energy generators are helping to bring down the price of electricity for all consumers in NSW, while many of the big retailers are using their size to bludge off solar producers and rob their customers, while also poisoning our environment by prolonging their addiction to

polluting coal and gas. They should pull their weight, and compensate the state for being allowed to use our farmland, rivers and lungs as toxic waste dumps. IPART should recommend that the big retailers invest in large scale renewable energy and battery storage as fast as practicable and phase out destructive fossil fuelled generation. In the meantime they should pay a fair feed-in tariff (20c or similar) to small solar producers.