

SOLAR REBATES AND ASSISTANCE

EARTH FIRST

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What do you know about the government's solar rebates and REC's? Last weeks article addressed the benefits of using a solar hot water system to reduce your home energy bills and reduce carbon emissions. It also described the types of solar hot water systems and how they work. If you are interested in installing a solar hot water system, it is important that you are aware of the current government rebates available.

What are solar rebates?

Solar rebates are refunds from government that provide an incentive to households and businesses to install solar hot water systems, roof insulation, and energy efficient appliances. Rebates on solar hot water systems (as described in last weeks article) as well as photovoltaic panel systems are available from state and federal governments.

Federal government rebates

Rebates for Solar Hot Water Systems are available from the federal government under the \$4 billion Energy Efficient Home Package. Under this scheme, the current rebate on solar hot water systems is \$1600, and is only available to persons who have not accessed financial support for ceiling insulation through the Homeowners' Insulation Program, and then only for systems purchased and installed after February 3, 2009

Up until June 9, the federal governments rebate system offered rebates for photovoltaic systems in private dwellings as part of their Solar Houses and Communities program, which dispensed rebates of up to \$8 000 for 1Kw photovoltaic systems. This rebate was expected to continue until 1st July 2009 but the department claims it was too successful that the budget ran out during June and the rebates were terminated three weeks early. The plan was reportedly responsible for installing 32 000 systems around Australia before June 5, with 63 000 still to be completed.

Rebates for photovoltaic systems will now be provided through a solar credit system – the Renewable Energy Target Scheme that will offer renewable energy credits (RECs). For more information, see the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator's website at www.orer.gov.au .

State Government rebates

The NSW Government is also a party to the solar water heating rebate scheme. Their rebate scheme was originally planned to end on June 30, but has been extended for a further two years until June 2011.

Persons changing to a solar hot water system could now be entitled to a combined federal and state government rebate of up to \$3 500 – which includes the REC rebate

mentioned above. The NSW government rebate, through the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, consists of an amount of between \$300 and \$1 200, depending on the size and type of the system installed.

To be eligible for the NSW rebate, you must:

- Be replacing an electric storage system with a solar heating system
- Have purchased and installed a system after October 1, 2007
- Be installing it on a residential dwelling in NSW.

How to apply for rebates?

Guidelines for applying for a federal government rebate on solar hot water systems can be found on the department's website at <http://www.environment.gov.au/rebates/index.html/> . Rebates must be applied for within 6 months of installation.

For information on other rebates from the NSW Government (including rainwater tanks, ceiling insulation, and washing machines) see www.environment.nsw.gov.au/rebates/

There are no rebates available from local government for solar hot water and photovoltaic panel systems at this stage.

Details about the federal governments Green Loans program will be available in a future article.

Green dates for the calendar

Wednesday, June 24: ECCO general meeting.

Wednesday July 1: ECCO public meeting on the environmental assessment for the proposed Cadia East goldmine.