

Energy Group Welcomes Labor Solar Power Home Plan

The Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE) has welcomed the Australian Labor Party's Solar Home Power Plan, which commits \$50 million over four years to install solar power in homes and other buildings.

The plan, unveiled on 28 March by Federal Opposition Leader, Kevin Rudd, and Environment Spokesman, Peter Garrett, would double the funding for rebates to install solar panels across Australia to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

Rudd said the plan will allow around 12,000 Australian households to install cleaner, greener power and it will reduce greenhouse emissions by up to 16,800 t a year. He said it is the equivalent of taking 4,000 cars off the road for a full year.

BCSE Executive Director Ric Brazzale said support for the Australian solar photovoltaic (PV) industry was critical to Australia making the transition to a low-carbon economy. "These programmes and market mechanisms have brought a massive roll-out of solar power in other developed countries such as the United States, Germany and Japan", Brazzale said.

He said the benefits of solar PV power include the supply of clean, zero emission electricity and a reduction of demand from mains electricity infrastructure. He said the global solar power industry has been growing at a rate of 40% per annum, supported by proactive policies such as tax rebates and feed-in tariffs.

"Australia, the sunniest continent on Earth, was once a world leader in solar power", he said. "It is important that we do not fall too far behind in an industry where it has great expertise and an outstanding natural advantage, lots of sun. If solar power works in countries that are covered in snow for half the year, there's no reason why it shouldn't work in Australia, with our abundant sunshine."

More than 30,000 Australian families have solar PV panels on their roofs, many supported by the federal government's Photovoltaic Rebate Programme (PVRP), which is due to expire in June. But the technology isn't cheap, with a starting price of \$12,000 per household, less a partial rebate with a 12 – 15 year payback in power savings. ■