



Energy White Paper 2014 – Issues Paper submission template

Details of person making the submission

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Country (if not Australia)	
State	National
Company or Organisation (if relevant)	Solar Citizens
Position in Organisation (if relevant)	Community Organising Manager
Type of Organisation. Please choose from the dropdown list right	Non-Government Organisation
Sector. Please choose from the dropdown list right	Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
Email. Please provide an email address if you would like to receive updates from the Energy White Paper Taskforce	

Confidentiality

<input type="checkbox"/>	Submissions may be published on the Department of Industry website. If you do not wish to have your submission made public, please tick the box.
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Issues for comment are listed against each of the Chapter Headings. In making your submission, you are welcome to make comment against some or all of issues in the fields provided. A field for general comments is provided at the end of the template.

1. The Security of Energy Supplies

The Government seeks comment on:

- ways community expectations can be better understood and reflected in reliability standards;
- the value of developing fuel reserves to meet Australia's international oil security obligations, and augment domestic security;
- ways to increase new gas sources to meet demand and measures to enhance transparency in market conditions; and
- issues relating to the regulation of energy infrastructure.

Please provide any comments on The Security of Energy Supplies below:

Solar Citizens is a national organisation that represents the 3.5 million Australians who are currently living with solar on their roofs - as well as the millions of Australians who want to make the move to solar one day.

To reflect the community's desire for more solar, it is important that the Federal Government maintains regulations that ensure that solar can continue to grow, such as the Renewable Energy Target.

Australia's solar energy resources are acknowledged as some of the richest in the world. Australia's energy security is best achieved by infrastructure investments designed to maximise Australia's use of this resource at both the local and utility scale.

In this regard, Solar Citizens does not recognise the need to increase new gas sources to meet demand. Instead, it is more integral to develop policies and maintain legislation that allows the millions of Australians who want solar to make that move, thus reducing the need to invest in energy infrastructure.

2. Regulatory Reform and Role of Government

The Government seeks comment on:

- priority issues, barriers or gaps within the COAG energy market reform agenda;
- possible approaches and impacts of review of tariff structures including fixed network costs, further time-of-use based electricity tariffs and the use of smart meters;
- possible measures to promote greater price transparency in gas markets; and
- areas where further privatisation of government-owned assets would contribute to more effective regulatory frameworks and better outcomes for consumers.

Please provide any comments on Regulatory Reform and Role of Government below:

For solar owners and lovers, it is important that there are structures in place that ensure that solar owners are provided a fair return for the energy they provide to the grid, as well as ensuring that these policies are long-term to ensure stability in the solar industry. In order to attract strong investment in world class solar energy infrastructure in Australia, policy certainty is essential.

In this regard, Solar Citizens recommends that the Federal Government expands and extends the Renewable Energy Target.

Additionally, it is important that COAG and other national bodies do not discriminate or penalise solar owners, such as by adding extra costs or increasing fixed fees, to allow solar to continue to grow. Many of these families made the move to solar incentivised by Government subsidies and the desire to reduce their cost of living through reducing their electricity bills. To penalise solar owners for doing the right thing is unfair.

3. Growth and Investment

The Government seeks comment on:

- commercial or market initiatives that could enhance growth and investment in the energy and resources sectors;
- areas where approvals processes could be further streamlined while maintaining proper environmental and social safeguards;
- further ways that regulatory burdens could be reduced while maintaining appropriate levels of disclosure and transparency in energy markets; and
- the impacts of variable land access policy and ways the community could be better informed and engaged on development in the energy sector.

Please provide any comments on Growth and Investment below:

The main commercial and market incentive that would enhance growth and investment in the energy and resources sectors would be to expand and extend the Renewable Energy Target. This would allow stability in the growing solar industry, which currently employs over 18,000 Australians. It would also ensure that solar and renewable energies are a growing, long-term and stable industry in Australia that would continue to create local jobs. Changes to the RET could cost thousands of jobs and make families face ever increasing cost of electricity with no means to take power over their bills.

Solar energy infrastructure at a domestic and utility scale has inherently low negative environmental impacts given the absence of an associated fuel extraction infrastructure development. In this way, the RET is driving investment in energy technology that requires significantly reduced long term environmental impact mitigation and this in turn simplifies approvals processes.

4. Trade and International Relations

The Government seeks comment on:

- how to grow the export of value-added energy products and services;
- ways to remove unnecessary barriers to continued foreign investment in Australia's energy sector;
- ways to strengthen support for access to export markets; and
- ways to support business to maximise export opportunities for Australia's energy commodities, products, technologies and services, including the value of Australia's participation in the variety of international forums.

Please provide any comments on Trade and International Relations below:

One of the main ways to remove unnecessary barriers for continued foreign investment in Australia's energy sector would be to strengthen and expand the Renewable Energy Target.

If reviews to the Target were not conducted so regularly, foreign investors would recognise the stability in Australia's growing renewables market and invest money in Australia's renewable energy sector, which thus has the capacity to generate millions in revenue for the Federal Government and create thousands of local jobs.

5. Workforce Productivity

The Government seeks comment on:

- the nature of any current skills shortages being experienced and how these could be addressed by and with industry;
- the capacity of industry and education sector-led programs to meet long-term training and skills development needs of the energy and resources sectors; and
- specific long-term training and skills development needs for alternative transport fuel, renewable energy, energy management and other clean energy industries.

Please provide any comments on Workforce Productivity below:

Over the past 5 years, the solar industry has grown exponentially.

However, the main issue in the solar industry is the so-called "solar-coaster." This is instability in the sector caused by changes to State and Federal policies related to solar, such as changing feed-in tariffs or reviews or changes to the Renewable Energy Target.

As such, to ensure this industry can continue to grow, it is integral that the Government ensures stability in renewables policies, such as by expanding and extending the Renewable Energy Target.

6. Driving Energy Productivity

The Government seeks comment on:

- the current suite of energy efficiency measures, ways these could be enhanced to provide greater energy efficiency or possible new measures that would enhance energy productivity;
- the use of demand-side participation measures to encourage energy productivity and reduce peak energy use; and
- measures to increase energy use efficiency in the transport sector.

Please provide any comments on Driving Energy Productivity below:

Greater energy efficiency could be achieved by ensuring policies were in place that allowed the families interested in making the move to solar have the means to do so. This includes ensuring that the Renewable Energy Target is maintained to provide Small-scale Technology Certificates (STCs) that help families make the move to solar and reduce their bills.

As previously noted, the RET is driving investment in energy infrastructure that has no requirement for long term associated fuel extraction operations and accordingly the growth of this sector as driven by the RET is adding significant increased efficiencies to Australia's energy system.

7. Alternative and Emerging Energy Sources and Technology

The Government seeks comment on:

- ways to encourage a lower emissions energy supply that avoids market distortion or causes increased energy prices;
- the need to review existing network tariff structures in the face of rapidly growing deployment of grid-backed-up distributed energy systems, to ensure proper distribution of costs;
- additional cost-effective means, beyond current mandatory targets and grants, to encourage further development of renewable and other alternative energy sources and their effective integration within the wider energy market;
- how the uptake of high efficiency low emissions intensity electricity generation can be progressed;
- any barriers to increased uptake of LPG in private and commercial vehicles and CNG and LNG in the heavy vehicle fleet; and
- any barriers to the increased uptake of electric vehicles and advanced biofuels.

Please provide any comments on Alternative and Emerging Energy Sources and Technology below:

Renewable energy, especially solar, is growing exponentially in Australia. Over 3.5 million Australians have solar on their roofs, and that number continues to grow. Millions of other Australians want to make this move, and it's important that the Government recognises this overwhelming community desire for more solar.

The Renewable Energy Target is only a small percentage of an average electricity bill (2%) and the returns this policy has provided are even greater. Families are able to manage their electricity bills, produce clean energy and provide energy back to the grid. At the same time, the growing solar industry provides tens of thousands of jobs for Australians through thousands of local businesses.

These benefits can and will continue to grow if the Federal Government ensures that the solar industry does not have to deal with constant changes, such as reviews to the Renewable Energy Target. In this regard, Solar Citizens recommends that the current RET be expanded and extended.

General Comments

Any further comments?

Solar Citizens is a national organisation that represents the 3.5 million Australians who are currently living with solar on their roofs - as well as the millions of Australians who want to make the move to solar one day.

We stand for a fair go for solar, including ensuring that solar owners aren't penalised and all the families that want to make the move to solar are able to do so. Over 1 million homes have solar on their roof, and these families are across every income level and age group, living mostly in remote and regional areas. But, more than a million more Australians homes want to make the move to solar.

Given the stated intention of the current Federal Government to assist families to reduce their household costs, it is noted that the RET directly assists Australian families to act independently and secure long term reduction of their household energy costs. Providing long term stability and committing to the existing fixed GWhr RET target and expanding this target in the medium term will facilitate more families securing a long term reduction in their household energy costs.

In this regard, it is important that Federal Government policies match these community expectations. It's overwhelmingly obvious that in a country as sunny as Australia, any family that wants to make the move to solar should be able to do so.

As such, strong Federal policies, such as maintaining the Renewable Energy Target, need to be in place to allow solar to continue to grow across Australia. This will ensure that families can take control over their bills and create a stable solar industry in Australia.