

In 2012 I installed a 9.18kW rooftop solar system in response to a Victorian Government offer of a feed-in tariff equal to the retail selling price. Less than 4 years later, under the auspices of the Essential Services Commission, this arrangement was cancelled, without grandfathering, and the feed-in tariff reduced to 5 c/kWh, despite previously contracted tariff arrangements being maintained to this day at 66 c/kWh. Since then there have been a number of changes to my feed-in tariff, usually including a change of retailer. It is currently at 10.2 c/kWh, its highest level since the cancellation of the original arrangement, and would now appear under pressure to return mid 2022 to 4.8 c/kWh.

Your request for input rings hollow in the context of previous claims by the Essential Services Commission that changes I had highlighted as desirable require changes to parliamentary regulation and therefore ministerial involvement. My experience of this minister indicates a determination to keep exported rooftop solar prices as low as possible without any recognition of the return-on-investment needs of exporters or of the overall electricity market.

Notwithstanding, I have the following additional input.

I am already paying a service charge including the cost of poles and wires. Twice, each invoiced as separate line items. Once on the way in and again on the way out. Why is this cost included in the calculation of the feed-in tariff? Double counting?

Why is the estimated wholesale price used to calculate the minimum feed-in tariff in a different time frame to that used to calculate the retail price? To have feed-in tariffs being reduced when retail prices are increasing is clearly exploitative. I have previously argued to the Essential Services Commission that the feed-in tariff is a retail market issue to which they respond that this is regulated by government legislation thus removing it from their sphere of influence. The fact remains that exported solar-generated power is purchased by retailers and presumably on-sold at a profit.

Do solar generators incur pricing calculations not applied to other electricity generators? What is proposed as feed-in tariff for wind-generated electricity, where the complication of own-use is not apparent? Apparently this is also a legislative issue. It seems to me that if government is going to regulate electricity pricing, all producers should be subject to the same rules.

Clearly solar producers are being enticed to invest capital and then have their investment returns slashed by unilateral reduction in the price they receive, but without assurance they are receiving fair treatment in the overall electricity market.