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Benefits of Solar

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Hello from Kinglake.

I was one of many whose homes and community were destroyed by Black Saturday bushfires in 2009 by a fire caused by poor maintenance by an electricity distributor (but, that is another story of privatisation's negative effects). We are retired, but, very active in community organisations such as Landcare etc.

One of the good things that emerged from the fires, was that I and most of my neighbours installed solar power in the rebuild. Incidentally, the air is also cleaner because there are more efficient heating systems and less wood fired. Together with double glazing, insulation, better design etc I no longer burn firewood. My solar/gas hot water system is very efficient, even in cooler Kinglake, and uses very little LPG.

I had a 1.5 KW PV solar system installed during our rebuild by my electricity retailer Origin in 2011 and, apart from some sloppy coordination by Origin with their installation contractor, has worked quite effectively. The Sharp solar inverter failed recently, but, was replaced by Origin as it was inside the warranty period (although their practice is to replace by a reconditioned unit rather than a new one).

In the total confusion in our lives post fire, plus some very poor electricity bill issuing errors by Origin, I was not able to focus on my solar savings for some time. Once I did, I realised that I was not getting the 66c per KW hour that I was supposed to be. Cutting a very long story short, they "lost" my signed acceptance of the high rate even though I had evidence of sending it, so they eventually agreed to pay compensation for my loss of the higher rate for the next twenty odd years!

I now receive 28.83 c per kwh which is still below the approx 30c that I was supposed to get, but, I cannot bear the thought of yet another stoush! Also, I feel less aggrieved than many others getting much lower rates around Australia. Origin charges me 36.12c per kwh peak usage and 17.16c per kwh for off peak plus a supply charge which was \$117.13 last quarter.

Why are state and federal governments so intent on reducing citizens' benefits of clean green solar? Why are domestic solar power producers being penalised with such low returns for passionately supporting clean green electricity generation?

Rooftop solar creates no carbon pollution, no particulate pollution, nor any of the environmental or health problems associated with mining, transportation, and burning of fossil fuels. Solar puts much less strain on the distribution network by its very decentralised nature yet rooftop solar owners are being paid less and less for that.

You would think that millions of Australians conscientiously supporting clean green alternatives to polluting power generation would be applauded and supported by our representatives in governments. Instead, the perception is of our representatives supporting large corporations, often foreign owned multinationals, who are continuing to pollute our environment and strongly resisting clean green alternatives. Even worse, subsidising these corporations with "bribes" to change. The economic, environmental, and health costs of fossil fuel powered electricity generation are increasingly well known as is the negative contribution to climate change.

