Submission to the Australian Energy Market Commission regarding rooftop solar export charging

In 2010 my wife and I were encouraged by the New South Wales state government to install rooftop solar. We did this in the belief that it would eventually reduce our electricity charges and we would be also helping reduce carbon emissions from fossil fuel-powered electricity generators.

Through our electricity supplier, Origin, we installed a 1.5 kW solar panel array. This has helped reduce the electricity imported from the grid and we occasionally export a small amount of electricity. We are paid a pittance for the exported power: 7c/kWh (compared to the 44.752 c/kWh charged by Origin for peak usage) but we are very concerned by statements from Mr Barr that in the future we might be charged for exporting excess power produced by our solar panels. We are pensioners and we can't afford to be effectively fined for our solar panels' excess output. As consumers we have no bargaining power to negotiate with the large corporations involved in electricity generation and distribution; we just have to accept whatever they offer in their limited range of contracts. We rely on governments to protect us from predatory pricing.

We think that the proposal to charge customers for exporting electricity would send the message that governments are not to be trusted when they ask people to participate in renewable energy schemes. This looks like a typical case of "moving the goal posts".

Perhaps a better approach might be to assist those with rooftop solar in the purchase and installation of batteries. This might well be more economical than making large scale changes to the distribution networks and control systems. It would also generate goodwill on the part of consumers instead of the negative impressions conveyed by the current proposals through the media.

In summary, many of us want to do our bit to combat climate change but we don't want to be punished for it through solar panel export charges.

Thank you

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