

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission into the “New plan to make room on grid for more home solar and batteries”. Having moved to our house in regional NSW less than two years ago, we had solar installed last year and recognize the benefits of such installation, not just to our household but to the whole community.

Certainly the sentiments sound fine to “recognis[e] energy export as a service to the power system in the energy rules to give consumers more influence over what export services networks deliver and how efficiently they deliver them” and “creating tailored options, not blanket solutions” to “open the solar gateway so more Australians can join the 2.6 million small solar owners who have already led the way”. I also like the concept of “community batteries” and the potential benefit they may provide.

I do, however, have some grave concerns about some aspects of the proposal and how it would be implemented. Firstly, it seems very much like a top-down proposal to me and would potentially benefit electricity providers, rather than the individual consumers. Has AEMC thought about encouraging electricity generators to develop large-scale batteries or pumped hydro, rather than extracting money from solar producers at times of the day when it may not be convenient to the producers? If that course of action is taken, it would also tap into the government’s (suspicious) plan, via the ESB, to require all electricity generators to enter contracts with dispatchable power sources, currently dominated by coal, which would potentially have outcomes at odds with rapid control of emissions (Cass, Gilmore, Nelson, *The Conversation*, 3 May 2021).

Secondly, it does sound somewhat like a further extension of the current Federal government’s anti-renewables ideology, inadequate approach to climate change and pretence at action. Some years ago, in opposition they beat up the cost of a “carbon tax”, yet this is more like a tax than the avoidable levy they railed against and in the same way is opposed to development of renewables and innovation in generation of power.

Thirdly, the plan would greatly weaken the economics of installing rooftop solar and effectively “extinguish” the chance a household solar system could pay for itself, as it would remove the value gained by exporting electricity. If this is meant to encourage uptake of household batteries, it is a very blunt instrument indeed. Only the wealthy could afford to install batteries, and many rooftop panel systems may have trouble charging batteries sufficiently during the day to be of benefit at night. Community batteries may help but significant government assistance would be needed to facilitate this process.

It might sound a fine ideal to shift some electricity loads into the middle of the day, but for many households (ours included) this is not a feasible option to a sufficient extent. We have chronic illness in our family that limits flexibility in meal preparation and necessitates heating in cooler evenings.

Thank you
John Chapman 2316