

Dear Sir/Madam,

I heard on the radio a few weeks back that there was 'talk' of charging customers for feeding into the grid in terms of solar.

I am really disappointed that these 'floating' remarks to 'test the community's tolerance' are followed up by consultation that appears to be little more than tickboxing. Apparently consultation happened over a period of 8 months. This 8 months was presumably the year of Covid. Given what the general population has been dealing with during this time, not least of which has been stalling mortgages, dipping into superannuation, facing unemployment and business closures, homeschooling and the rest, it feels very disingenuous that consultation for public comment on what is a 250 page document is another example of a 'fait accompli'. People whose job and expertise it is to prepare full-time, presumably as paid employees, the work that the community in general can only devote its attention to on an 'after hours' basis as 'volunteers'.

Nevertheless, I wish to share my thoughts on this issue, partly because it would affect my own future decision-making and partly because I am really disappointed with the way in which the community (market) is 'tested' with such little notice and public debate. A robust system would allow an equal amount of time for community input, but this is not always in the best interests of those making proposals. The fewer objections, the better the chances of passing something through.

I currently have no solar system in my home. I have 3 phase power. I have been paying increasingly high electricity rates for years and years and because of my personal circumstances have been unable to consider installing solar, though it is something that I would highly value in my home.

I want to know why it is that solar installation is being potentially disincentivised with talk of the introduction of 'fees' for feeding into the grid. Right now, having 3 phase power means I can try to install the necessary panels and sized system to neutralise my electricity costs in the future (once the system is paid off, assuming I have a long enough life!). If fees are charged for feeding into the grid (however 'small' or 'insignificant' these fees may seem to a regulator or governing body), the reality is that this is an imposition taking away from full benefit to me as a householder. It seems to me that this is penalising users of the system who are paying thousands to be able to see a long-term neutralising of exorbitant past fee hikes and will act as a deterrent rather than an incentive for the uptake of solar, unless federal government rebates were to somehow offset these costs.

Given our community and governments allow loopholes for multinationals and corporates to pay little to no tax, I would have thought that the cost of infrastructure needed to expand the grid network to cater for the growing demand through solar uptake in SEQ, would better be sourced from those who are not making a fiscal contribution to our community in this way. I would have thought that arguments could be raised with the federal government about applying for 'federal money' achieved by way of corporate JobKeeper repayments, public money paid by Queensland citizens as much as those of other states, given in good faith during the pandemic but apparently not needed as shown in profits to shareholders and CEO bonuses. I would have thought that if federal and state and even local governments can find billions of dollars to fund a 2 week Olympic event in South East Queensland 10 years ago, it is hard to understand why the provision of extended energy infrastructure eludes them as a core responsibility of good government. I would counter any arguments that large corporations do not need to be good corporate citizens by paying their dues because they contribute by 'creating jobs' with the argument that there are thousands of small to medium businesses who 'create jobs' but who can't get away with paying no tax.

I am really upset that the easy route seems to always be to put the cost of 'infrastructure' back onto the users when the whole point of a tax system is to build infrastructure across the community for the necessary utilities of life (be they education, health, energy, etc). Given that electricity was not always a market driven service, but became one through political will, the least the government and the decision-making stakeholders such as the Qld Energy Market Commission can do is offset the cost of exorbitant hikes over many years by ensuring that solar stays FULLY AND PROPERLY INCENTIVISED for householders.

In a time when governments are holding back on the superannuation contribution increase and encouraging reverse mortgages in retirement, when wages are frozen and when the housing situation for renters and homeowners alike seems to be precipitating another financial crisis, I fail to see charging for feeding into the grid is doing little more than taking the easy route for decisionmakers in the energy market. It is after all, so much easier to go after the 'little man (or woman!)' who does not have the financial resources or emotional stamina to continually be responding to public policy announcements and media releases. I wholeheartedly OBJECT to the notion of a charge for feeding into the grid. Alternative funding sources to 'grow' the grid need to be sought. Either we care about the planet and want everyone in. Or we don't and give we certain sections of the community a 'get out of jail' card. This is the monopoly that has been created.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important issue. I do not have the time to read a 250 page draft document but I do listen to the radio and watch current affairs and public debates because I like to be informed. There has not been enough of this in the public airwaves for robust debate on this topic and I would appreciate the timeframe for such debate to be granted a healthy extension so that the decisions can be properly informed by consumers, both those with and those without solar.