

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY DEVICES IN RETIREMENT VILLAGES

AN OVERVIEW

CONSENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Installation of any of the devices discussed below will require the consent of the village operator and, in the case of Strata Title, the consent of the Owners' Corporation.

Such consents will generally have different conditions and requirements, village by village, as the Retirement villages Act does not address this issue. Further, the nature of the consent may depend on the type of device and, in particular, on whether the resident purchases or rents the device.

Where a device attracts Government payments applicable to the installation (such as Renewable Energy Credits ["RECs"], subsidies or pensioner rebates), the installation contractor arranges for claiming these and they thus reduce the cost of the installation for the resident, but only where the resident is a purchaser, not a renter, of the device.

Where the device generates electricity (PV Solar Panels), the electricity supplier to the resident will pay, or allow a credit to, the consumer for each unit of electricity. Currently, in NSW, "each unit of electricity" is taken to mean "each unit of electricity generated", even if some or all of that electricity is used by the resident. This is called a gross tariff. Some states allowance credit/payment only for electricity actually fed back into the supply (what the panel generates at any moment less what the resident is consuming at that moment). That is called Net Tariff or Feed-in Tariff.

Any arrangement for the generated electricity is between the resident and the electricity supplier and has nothing to do with the village operator. Therefore the resident needs no consent in this respect, should not be obliged to share the savings or proceeds with the operator and makes his/her own
ARRANGEMENTS WITH ANY AVAILABLE SUPPLIER OF HIS/HER CHOICE.

SOLAR PANELS FOR ELECTRICITY (PV SOLAR PANELS) – PURCHASED

Purchase has been the most common means of acquiring these devices but, increasingly, rental arrangements are emerging (See below).

A purchase involves the resident in dealing with an installation contractor, selecting the size of the unit and obtaining all necessary consents.

Significant conditions of consent could include:

- An obligation to obtain the consent of the local council for the installation.
- An obligation to use a licensed contractor who is required to produce evidence of holding adequate insurances;
- An obligation to make good any damage to the dwelling caused by the installer;
- An obligation to remove the device and repair/reinstate any mutilation to the dwelling, on departure. Alternatively the consent might stipulate that the device will be left in place and become the property of the operator on departure
- An obligation to insure the device and to indemnify the operator against damage to the dwelling during the life of the device (this indemnity might be part of that insurance policy but the resident should beware of this not being included in the policy).

SOLAR PANELS FOR ELECTRICITY (PV SOLAR PANELS) – RENTED

The information provided below is provided in good faith and is up to date at mid January 2011. However, like any other purchase or financial commitment RVRA recommends residents becoming fully informed prior to signing any documents. Buyer beware is a basic rule of thumb.

Some sources of information are:

NSW Department Industry & Investment which administers the solar panel rebate. Telephone 1300 136 888 or look at the Question & Answer section on the website.

Put 'STATELINE' in your search engine and then put 'Solar Energy' in the keywords search. There was a recent program about solar energy and the ABC has other programs on this topic.

Put 'SOLAR ENERGY PROS & CONS' in your search engine. You can then find the best value solar energy program in your area. There is a facility to put in your postcode and you'll then get 3 quotes.

The Solar Energy Society website also has useful information.

OTHER AREAS WHERE RETIREES MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR ENERGY REBATES (NOT SOLAR PANELS) ARE:

ENERGY REBATES

\$145.00 per year from 1 July 2010 for eligible NSW customers. Contact your electricity retailer for eligibility details or NSW Government Energy Information Line on 1300 136 888.

Or \$161.00 per year from July 2011. The exact amount credited on each bill will depend on the number of days in each billing period. Contact your electricity retailer for eligibility details or NSW Government Energy Information Line on 1300 136 888.

MEDICAL ENERGY REBATES and/or LIFE SUPPORT REBATES

The NSW Government's Life Support Rebate program assists people who are required to use energy-intensive life support machines at home in paying their electricity bills. The list of approved life support machines includes medical equipment that is essential for supporting life such as home dialysis, ventilators and oxygen concentrators. The rebate for this equipment is not means tested. Contact your electricity retailer for eligibility details or NSW Government Energy Information Line on 1300 136 888.

HOT WATER SYSTEMS

\$300-00 rebate to switch from electric to solar, heat pump or gas hot water systems. Contact Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW 1300 361 967.

HOT WATER CIRCULATOR

\$150-00 for a unit installed with your instantaneous gas hot water system. It recovers wasted water and sends it back into the system to be reheated or used later. Contact Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW 1300 361 967.

DUAL FLUSH TOILET

\$200-000 for buying a new 4 star dual flush toilet suite. Contact Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW 1300 361 967.