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Enquiries spike ahead of January 1 solar roll-back

Approximately 146,000 solar powered households in New South Wales may be faced with a nasty surprise in the mail when their electricity bills start arriving next month.

From January 1, the Solar Bonus Scheme will end, with feed in tariffs rolling back significantly. Some households who are currently receiving a solar feed in tariff of 60c per kilowatt-hour may see it drop to as little as 5c per kilowatt hour. A solar feed-in tariff is the rate paid for electricity fed back into the electricity grid from a renewable electricity generation source such as a rooftop solar panel.

While South Australia and Victoria have also experienced solar FIT roll-backs, NSW solar customers are the hardest hit because their 2016 feed-in tariff subsidy were much stronger than those states.

This reduction of up to 55 cents per kilowatt drop could see thousands of NSW households, who currently pay very little for their electricity due to feed-in-tariff offsets, having to start paying considerably more for their electricity for the first time in years.

Since the announcement in July, energy experts [iSelect](#) have experienced **almost 50 per cent more** enquiries from NSW solar customers, compared to the same time last year¹.

Laura Crowden, iSelect spokesperson is also encouraging NSW residents who have not (or barely) paid electricity bills in recent times to act swiftly to ensure they are on the most cost effective plan with the most generous FIT.

"With the Solar Bonus Scheme ending, it's important that solar customers take the time to review their current energy plan and feed-in-tariff and make sure it is still offering good value," Laura said.

"Feed-in-tariffs can vary significantly between retailers so it's worth comparing both the plan and the FIT you will receive."

But Laura said customers need to remember that the plan with the highest feed-in-tariff isn't necessarily the best value option.

"While the feed-in-tariff is important, it is only one component of your bill. Make sure you look at the rate you'll pay for any electricity you consume off the grid, and also take into account any fixed network charges and discounts when choosing the best value plan."

Laura said that because of generous FITs, many solar households have adopted a 'set-and-forget' mindset when it comes to energy and haven't reviewed their plan in years.

"It's imperative that affected NSW residents get on the front foot and use this announcement as an impetus to review their current energy contract... you may not be able to offset the tariff reduction but you can limit the damage," said Laura.

Laura said solar customers should also look to change their energy consumption patterns to use more of their solar-generated electricity.

¹ iSelect solar customer enquiries in July - November 2016 compared to July - November 2015.

“Use your energy hungry appliances – such as dishwashers, washing machines and dryers – during the day when you are using the solar energy you are producing yourself, rather than at night when you are relying on energy bought off the grid.”

Laura said customers with gas appliances such as stoves or gas hot water systems should think about moving them across to electricity to make the most of solar energy produced.

iSelect's top 5 tips for finding the best energy deal
1. Save money with the right plan – reducing your consumption won't necessarily reduce your bill significantly. The best way to save money is to make sure you are on the best value plan to begin with
2. Flexible payment options – pay your bills weekly, fortnightly or monthly, or sign up for bill smoothing which will divide your annual usage into even monthly instalments, avoiding bill shock
3. Be wary of pay on time discounts – paying on time could save you up to 30 % but if you often pay your bills late, you could end up paying a lot more than you expected
4. Look out for special offers – increased competition means some retailers are offering generous introductory offers or rebates to entice new customers, such as credit towards your account
5. Shop around – use increased energy competition to your advantage by comparing current offers. Call an energy comparison service like iSelect and make sure you have a copy of your latest bill handy

ENDS

For further information, please contact:

Laura Crowden

Corporate Affairs Manager | iSelect Limited

Ph: +61 3 9276 8178 | Mob: +61 421 784 254 | Email: lcrowden@iselect.com.au

Verity Clough

PPR

Mob: +61 417 385 068 | Email: vclough@ppr.com.au

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