

Notes for radio in interview –ABC radio – 702 Sydney Deborah Cameron’s morning show

Can you give us an overview of the current world energy situation?

Due to massive traffic and population increases around the world, specifically in China and India, energy consumption in the second half of the last century was two times more than consumption in the history of civilisation. And this process is accelerating.

Although we are aware of the effects of a world climate crisis and its effect on the environment and despite 15 years of world climate conferences, fossil energy consumption has increased by 50 per cent. This trend has to be stopped. An urgent need exists to introduce drastic changes to world energy consumption. We are still waiting for someone on the global political scene to step out of current system and leap into a sustainable, forward-looking energy system.

This task should fall on Australia. It would be much easier to show the viability of a renewable energy system here than anywhere else in the world. The continent of Australia has a very large area and a low population density. The sun radiation is more than twice as much as in Germany and wind conditions at the coast are perfect. Accordingly, the potential for renewable energy is huge.

How does wind power fit into the equation in providing renewable energy?

Wind is very viable, but not the best wind sites are not always at the right locations, so the industry needs Government support in establishing infrastructure to get the power lines to the correct locations.

When Germany introduced gross feed-in tariffs in 2000 it set its 2010 renewable electricity target at 12.5% of total consumption. It has now doubled the amount of electricity it generates from renewable energy sources with a high percentage of wind and solar and reached the 2010 target three years ahead of schedule.

As a consequence of this success, Germany recently increased its renewable energy target to 27% of all electricity generation by 2020.

These initiatives have been supported by the gross feed-in tariff. The gross feed-in tariff has created nearly 250,000 new jobs in the renewable energy industry in Germany, which will soon surpass the car and metal industry combined as that nation’s number one employer. The German solar power sector is now creating three times the number of jobs per installed megawatt as the coal fired electricity industry - all of this in a country receiving half the sunshine Australia does.

How easy is it to implement wind power or renewable resources in your home?

Small quite turbines are being developed right now, but at this point there are still some noise issues and we expect to have in less than 12 months some very viable wind turbines on the Australian market. These turbines annually would produce the power equivalent to a –2 to 3 kW solar power system, but would cost approximately half the cost of solar. But having said this one needs naturally to have the right location for a wind turbine.

There is a more recent development called buyers groups – what's the concept?

By getting together with friends and like-minded souls within a local area to form what's known as a solar buyers group, residents can dictate the terms of purchasing solar, and have the buying power to strike a better deal for everyone.

Basically, by ordering in bulk, and taking advantage of existing rebates, members of a solar buyers group can install a solar photovoltaic system in their homes for far below market prices.

How does Australia compare to other countries?

There are now over 50 countries with gross feed-in-tariff. But here in Australia we are going back to the days of the different railway tracks, when it comes to solar rebates. It's a shemuzzle, with each State developing their own feed in tariff. Canberra, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland all have different versions and then there is NSW - offering nothing, which is very disappointing. The current negotiations in regards to the power sale have meant, no decisions are made and nothing moves. So the taxpayers in NSW considering solar are worse off, due to the inaction of the NSW government.

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