

All fired up about

Renewable energy

It's a term that's often bandied around, but what exactly is renewable energy? It is energy from sources that are naturally replenished and produce very few greenhouse gases when used, such as solar, wind and hydro power. In contrast, non-renewable energy, such as coal-generated electricity, comes from diminishing stocks of fossil fuels and produces large amounts of greenhouse gases.

You have many options for clean, renewable energy sources in your home. These range from sophisticated solar power systems, through to simply purchasing Green Power from an electricity supplier.

Solar hot water

If there's one thing Australia has an abundance of, it's sunshine. Solar power is powerful and free, so why not harness its energy for your advantage? Installing a solar water heater could be the single most effective way that you can reduce your energy bills. Water heating accounts for about 30 per cent of your total household energy use, so the potential difference that a solar hot water system can make is huge.

To provide hot water on cloudy days or when demand exceeds supply, most solar water heaters come with a gas or electric booster (a gas booster produces less greenhouse gases). Although the cost of a solar hot water heater is higher than gas or electric water heaters, you will make up for this with the savings you make on your electricity bill, and solar hot water systems generally have about twice the expected lifespan of electric or gas systems. Most state governments also offer a rebate to assist with the initial cost of the system. Contact your state government environment department to find out what's currently available.

Solar power

For the really committed, solar (photovoltaic) panels can be used to convert sunlight into electricity to power your home. Solar power systems can be connected to the electricity grid, so you can draw electricity from the grid when not enough power is being generated by the solar panels. When the sun is shining, the excess power produced by your solar power system can also be sold back to your electricity retailer.

Green Power

If setting up your own electricity-generating system doesn't appeal, you can still support renewable energy production by purchasing Green Power. Available from almost every electricity retailer in the country, Green Power is electricity generated from clean, renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar and hydro plants, as well as landfill gas, biomass and wave energy.

There are numerous Green Power options offered by retailers, but if you want to make a real difference, choose a product that has been government accredited and given the Green Power green tick. Accredited Green Power products are individually assessed to verify they comply with high environmental standards and that the electricity retailer purchases energy from new renewable sources. By buying new renewable energy you are helping to support the development of the renewable energy industry and reducing the demand for electricity from the burning of fossil fuels.



Look for the Green Power tick when purchasing green electricity.





Energy saving tips

- Install energy efficient lighting.
- Turn off sound systems, TVs and DVDs at the switch on the wall when not in use.
- Choose LCD television and computer screens as they are more efficient.
- Dry your clothes outside instead of the clothes dryer.
- Choose energy efficient appliances.

For more information:

Green Power website
www.greenpower.gov.au

Your Home website
www.yourhome.gov.au