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Lights on for battery deal

Solar households in line for power storage rebate

EXCLUSIVE

DARYL PASSMORE

A VOLUNTARY “battery buyout” deal for solar-equipped households on the most generous feed-in tariff is being considered by the Palaszczuk Government.

Under the proposal, the 238,000 customers on the 44¢ a kW rate would receive a rebate on installing a battery storage system in return for agreeing to cancel the Solar Bonus Scheme early.

Solar analyst Nigel Morris says the move could save the State Government more than \$1 billion by cutting a third of the estimated cost of the Solar Bonus Scheme, which does not end until 2028.

The money paid to households for power generated back into the grid from rooftop solar panels is recouped through higher electricity charges for all consumers, adding \$89 to the average annual bill last year.

Energy Minister Mark Bailey told *The Sunday Mail*: “We are looking at it.

“It’s early days. If the policy setting is right, there will be benefits for consumers and for the networks.

“The principal has to be that any change has to be voluntary.”

The Government recently rejected a recommendation from the Queensland Productivity Commission to end

the Solar Bonus Scheme eight years early.

But Mr Bailey said it made sense to consider new policies around the looming “revolution” in battery storage technology and its impacts.

“Battery take-up is very modest at present, but that will change and we want the policy settings in place. Every Australian government should be looking at this now.”

Mr Morris’s buyout approach suggests paying consumers on the Solar Bonus Scheme the equivalent of 50 per cent of what they could be expected to receive until 2028 as a rebate on installing battery systems.

Enabling consumers to store power would result in more efficient energy use, reducing the burden and costs of transmission and generation.

“It’s a win-win,” he said.

Solar Citizens spokesman Reece Turner said: “This is definitely something the Government should be considering.”

But it was essential that any buyout was voluntary and that the savings were directed to reducing the power bills of all Queenslanders, he said.

The Solar Bonus Scheme had helped give the state the highest penetration of rooftop solar panels in the world.

“And this could put us ahead of the curve in working out how to run a 21st century electricity grid,” he said.