

Buyer Beware! Solar expert speaks out...

Ged McCarthy is the President of the Solar Energy Industries Association (www.seia.org.au), elected as one of the most respected installers and experts in the Australian solar industry. Ged is a long-time resident of the Hastings area and lives with his wife and young family on the banks of the Ellenborough River. He has just returned from an Australia-wide speaking tour for the Australian Solar Energy Society (AuSES). AuSES asked Mr McCarthy to talk to their membership in each capital city about solar installation best practice. 'Time and again at these meetings all over Australia, solar installers expressed their concern about the actions of disreputable large companies preying on vulnerable community sectors by selling sub-standard products and services. So Ged is keen to share his findings and alert members of the public who are interested in Solar Energy Solutions for their homes or businesses.

The Industry as a whole is concerned that some large, low cost, solar sales companies are using untrained personnel for installation of solar arrays on rooves and then relying on electricians with only basic solar training to effect connections. The NSW Department of Fair Trading are currently working with SEIA to legislate best practice in the

solar industry in order to prevent the sort of fatal accidents we saw last year with the insulation debacle. While the public's broad uptake of solar power for hot water and grid connect systems is cause for celebration, it is important to ensure that these installations are conducted safely.

Ged says 'of course price is a major consideration as home owners investigate renewable power options but purchasers must be cautious and ask themselves, and their suppliers, important questions before proceeding:

- What is the warranty timeframe for the panels (minimum 25 year is usual)
- What is the warranty timeframe for the inverter (a good inverter should have at least a 5 year warranty)
- What warranty is offered on the system as a whole?
- Who will be doing the installation and what training do they have?
- Who will be doing the connection and what training do they have?
- If anything were to fail with the system

who would come to repair it and in what timeframe?

Ged says that purchasers should then make sure they get any guarantees or warranties in writing, and he cautions that at least one distribution company closed its doors last year and then immediately started trading again under another name ridding itself of any warranty claims as it is the importer that provides the warranty to the customers. Another big company was investigated and prosecuted by ASIC for false and misleading advertising. 'Please, please be careful' says Ged. 'This is a major purchase for your home and will add value to the eventual resale as well as saving you money. But a good quality system, with top quality panels and inverter will generate more revenue over a much longer timeframe than some of these incredibly cheap pv panels and inverters being sold today.'

Ged has been installing solar systems for home owners, business, aboriginal communities and government for almost 15 years and he says that the industry has changed enormously over that time. 'Unfortunately these big companies buying and even manufacturing incredibly cheap products from China and India are undercutting the small businesspeople who have been in this industry since it started and I'm afraid the industry will lose these passionate, committed and knowledgeable solar experts and then who will be there to pick up the pieces when big business turns its attentions to the next trend?'

The solar industry is looking down the barrel of a two or three company monopoly, which Government has indicated it wants to see and the true professionals are being squeezed out by the public's demand for ever cheaper product.

Ged and his family live on a rural property which is totally solar driven and they know only too well that you get what you pay for 'I can't stress enough that good panels generate more kw/hours a day than poor imitations and a quality inverter will maximize that output in short, medium and long-term.'

'Installers all over Australia are concerned that these big cheap solar mobs are selling systems



Ged McCarthy of Energy and Space Pty Ltd

which can never be upgraded. Which means that if you are happy with your grid connect system and want to invest the funds in adding more panels in order to increase your return from Country Energy, you won't just be paying for panels - you'll need a new, bigger, inverter which will cost approximately \$1,500 - \$2,000. Price is all relative so please make sure you really do your research before you sign any contracts.' Ged urges.

The Australian Solar Energy Society's nationwide tour was a sellout and plans are now underway for bringing the speakers to regional centres around Australia so more people can benefit from the combined wisdom of these industry professionals. As more and more Australians embrace solar technology and the sun as a reliable and efficient energy provider it is important that we ensure the safety and continuity of the industry so that Australia can finally step up to the plate as an industry innovator and global leader.

For more information visit www.seia.org.au or www.energyandspace.com.au and www.auses.org.au or call 6587 4377.



New home 5kw solar grid-connect installation

HARNESS THE POWER OF THE SUN

Did you know that every hour, of every day, the sun warms the earth with enough energy to meet world demand for a year?

That means that there is no need for our reliance on fossil fuels. A clean, green future is not just a crazy dream, but an easily achievable possibility. We just have to change our thinking. Luckily, government rebates make solar electricity more affordable whether you are looking for a solar system connected to the grid, and offsetting your power bills, or as a stand alone power station on your rural property.



However you want to utilise the power of the Australian sun, please talk to the local solar experts first.

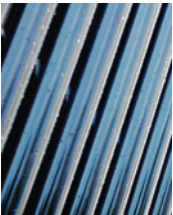
We won't be the cheapest, but we strive to be the most honest, practical and professional solar company right here in the Hastings. And we won't sell you what we want you to have, we will carefully assess your power needs, advise you on better power efficiency (if applicable) and design a system that serves your short, medium and long term needs and power demands.

Let our experience help you make a clean, green power choice for your future, our children's future, and their children's future.



Ged McCarthy has been a licensed electrician since 1990. Ged has been a BCSE and CEC accredited solar installer since 2000. Energy and Space also install solar hot water, remote area stand-alone solar systems, security systems, solar pumps, hydo and wind power and all normal electrical work.

Solar - why wouldn't you?



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