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IMPROVING SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SOLAR FEED-IN SCHEME

Minister for Energy Michael O'Brien said today the State Government is extending the life of South Australia's popular Solar Feed-in Scheme.

Minister O'Brien says the extension of the Solar Feed-in Scheme is part of a number of changes contained in legislation introduced today to Parliament.

"The Government's aim is for South Australia to be the leading State in Australia in the take up of this form of clean energy," Minister O'Brien says.

"The Solar Feed-in Scheme has proved more popular than ever with a take-up rate accelerating to the point where ETSA Utilities now estimate the installed capacity as well as approved applications to connect already account for about 74 megawatts.

"The Government has decided to replace the previously announced cut-off point, which was a total scheme capacity of 60 megawatts, with a closure date of midnight on 30 September 2011," he says.

"Together with the amendments introduced to Parliament, we believe we have been able to strike the right balance between providing the necessary financial support to solar energy and creating a framework that gives consumers the certainty they need in to make long-term investment decisions.

"The practical effect of the decision to extend the life of the scheme will be to ensure all consumers who have, by 1 October 2011, purchased a system and received permission to connect to the grid will be eligible for the bonus.

"Customers who have received Permission to Connect from ETSA Utilities will be eligible under the scheme if within 120 days of 1 October 2011 they have booked through ETSA utilities to have an import/export meter installed."

Minister O'Brien says the change in the cut-off provisions are part of proposed amendments to South Australia's solar feed-in legislation.

"Once these legislative changes have been passed, South Australian households and small customers will be guaranteed a payment of 54 cents for each kilowatt-hour of electricity fed into the grid," he says.

"In addition to the 54 cents, retail electricity providers will be obliged to pay a cost for the power they receive from residents with a fair and reasonable payment to be determined by the Essential Services Commission of SA."

Minister O'Brien says the proposed legislation provides for other eligibility criteria including:

- a limit of one generator per customer;
- the exclusion of dedicated generators installed specifically to create a profit from the scheme;
- and a limit on the bonus to the first 45 kilowatt-hours a day - this limit won't affect normal residential systems (i.e. those less than 7.5 kilowatts capacity).

These eligibility criteria do not affect customers who received permission to connect by 1 September 2010 and connected their generators within 6 months from the commencement of the legislation.

Further information on the amended scheme and eligibility criteria is available online at:

www.climatechange.sa.gov.au.