



# **The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP**

## **Premier of NSW**

### **Minister for Western Sydney**

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Tuesday 24 May 2011

### **NSW GOVT PROPOSES HARDSHIP PROVISIONS FOR SOLAR BONUS SCHEME**

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and Energy Minister Chris Hartcher today announced special provisions would be put in place to protect those with genuine hardship cases resulting from the NSW Government's changes to the Solar Bonus Scheme.

Mr O'Farrell said action had to be taken to change the scheme to protect NSW families from further increases in their power bills.

He said the NSW Government recognised that financial assistance may be needed to help some people who invested in solar panels in good faith.

"We want a scheme which is fair to everyone," Mr O'Farrell said.

"We want those who invested in the scheme to get a fair return while protecting families across NSW from higher electricity prices.

"Without action, the cost of the scheme would add \$170 to household power bills.

"The Labor Party left NSW with a disastrous blowout in costs and we are determined to clean up the mess.

"However, there may be some people facing financial problems as a result of the changes we are making to the scheme and we will provide assistance to them.

"We want to make sure people are able to recoup the money they put into purchasing solar panels as well as installation and connection costs.

"There is no reason they should suffer financial hardship as a result of Labor's incompetence and mismanagement in putting this scheme together."

Mr Hartcher said talks would begin immediately with relevant groups to work out an appropriate hardship package.

Groups representing pensioners, welfare recipients, farmers and self-funded retirees would be among those consulted in putting together a hardship package.

It is the NSW Government's intention to introduce the legislation before the winter recess.

Mr Hartcher said the Clean Energy Council, which represents more than 440 companies operating in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency, will also be consulted.

“We don’t think struggling families should pay higher power bills while some people are using the scheme to make windfall profits,” Mr Hartcher said.

“AGL has estimated that most people who have invested in the Solar Bonus Scheme will still make substantial returns under the revised plans.

“But we certainly don’t think those who are struggling with repayments under the new scheme should be penalised and that is where our hardship package will kick in.”

Mr Hartcher said consultations would begin immediately so that the hardship package could be considered by the NSW Government as soon as possible.

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