

Kerala following in WA's footsteps

Regen Power Founder and Curtin University Emeritus Professor Chem Nayer recently delivered a keynote address at an international conference in Thiruvananthapuram, capital of India's south-western state, Kerala.

Kerala faces an acute shortage of power, but with the availability of abundant sunshine is looking at rooftop solar photovoltaic power plants as an alternative.

Kerala is launching the "10,000 Solar Homes" program this year where 10,000 solar power plants of one kilowatt capacity each would be installed as grid connected power plants – similar to the installation done in Australia under the Solar Homes and Communities Plan in 2008-2010.

Regen Power has installed the first fully monitored rooftop solar system at the Agency for Non-Conventional Energy and Rural Technology (ANERT) office in India.

The cost of solar power installations has dramatically decreased in the past two years. Regen Power has installed around 5000 rooftop solar installations in Australia – the majority in Western Australia.

Electricity prices in Australia have risen in the past couple of years, with Synergy's commercial R3 tariff increasing from 31 cents to 37 cents per kilowatt-hour in 2011.

According to Mr Nayer, with the newly introduced Carbon Tax, the price will go up further from July 2012. "It is in this context the investment in solar is becoming safe and very attractive," he said.

Several factors have combined to make solar photovoltaic power increasingly attractive in WA, including the growing awareness of climate change and the need for renewable energy to replace fossil fuels. The average family in Perth will save about 10 metric tonnes per year of carbon dioxide emissions per unit of electricity used by switching from grid power to solar power.

Solar power is an attractive option for residential, commercial and

remote communities – solar power is clean, green, emission free, safe, no noise pollution, long panel life, relatively attractive, easy to have installed and free once you have paid the initial capital cost. There is minimal maintenance and few moving parts.

Studies have shown the investment of a rooftop solar power system increases the value of the property by five per cent.

An average family consumes between 10 and 20 units of electricity a day. A 2-3kW system will supply most of an average family's needs. The government rebate is limited to a 1.5kW system though – beyond that, renewable energy credits are received for the excess capacity.

"This results in the price of a PV system increasing steeply as you grow beyond 1.5kW," Mr Nayer said.



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