

## How Renewable Energy Will Benefit You And Your Community

You have probably heard much about renewable energy in recent years. What is renewable energy and what will it mean for you to embrace it? Renewable energy, as the name suggests, is energy that replenishes itself. It does not run out and therefore it is a sustainable energy resource; and it is clean energy. Renewable energy sources include hydroelectric energy (from large dammed rivers), wind energy, bioenergy (from biodegradable materials), ocean energy (from the tides and waves of the sea) and solar energy (from sunlight). Australia currently depends predominantly on coal for electricity (figure 1). Yet the country is surrounded by oceans and gets plenty of sunlight all year round, especially in the northern parts. Imagine how much energy we could generate from Australia's oceans and from the sun.

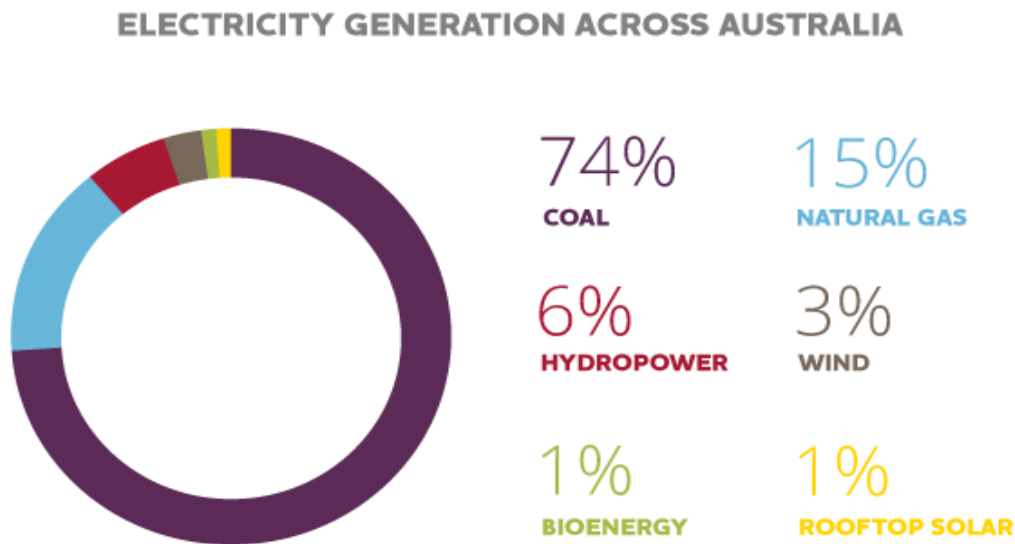


Figure 1: Source: <http://www.originenergy.com.au/energymix>

Investment in renewable energy will benefit small business, families and the community. With the rising cost of electricity, you can use renewable energy to cut your costs. For example, having solar hot water means you will be using energy from the sun to heat your water and you will reduce your water heating bills and your family's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission. Over time you will recoup the cost of your investment, and after that the hot water is free. With solar panels on your roof for energy generation, you will offset your energy consumption by the solar energy you are generating. This will reduce your energy bill significantly and you will also reduce your GHG emissions. The community will also benefit from a cleaner environment due to reduced fossil fuel use for power generation and associated reduction in GHG emissions. In addition, as extra energy generated from solar panels is put back into the local grid, there is reduced pressure on the power grid, especially during heat waves when everybody turns on their air conditioners. The power system will be able to cope better with increased demand so that there will be no

blackouts. As you embrace renewable energy, you will be supporting the renewable energy industry to create new jobs, which in turn will support the economy. If for example your business is a pig farm, you could invest in biogas technology to generate power from the pig waste. You could power your whole pig farm from this renewable energy source, saving you money and improving your profits. And you will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and odour emissions from your farm and improve your relation with your neighbours. Reduced odour emissions will also improve the amenity value in the neighbouring community and could improve property values in the neighbouring community.

Information recently released by the Clean Energy Council indicates that there have been over two million solar power systems and solar water heaters installed in homes across Australia. We invite you to consider renewable energy as a sustainable alternative to fossil fuel. There are government rebates and incentives that will help with your upfront cost. Check out the Renewable Energy Target (RET) scheme at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/35043>

Maleena Imbeah, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia