

Public DEFENDER

John Rolfe

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Future energy cost all fired up

John Rolfe

STATE-owned electricity companies have asked the pricing tribunal IPART to sanction charging consumers more than \$300 million extra from July 1 to recover the cost of Federal Government green programs.

Country Energy, which already has the highest prices, wants to raise \$24 million in 2011-12 — that's a revenue increase of about 2 per cent. It's after \$34 million the following year and \$35 million in 2013-14.

Integral — which distributes power in western Sydney, the Southern Highlands and Wollongong — is seeking \$16.5 million in 2011-12.

It decided not to put in for increases in the following years. Yet.

Ausgrid — the new name for the wholesale part of EnergyAustralia post the sell-off — wants \$34 million for 2011-12, \$89 million the next year and \$48 million in 13-14.

Its increases affect those in the eastern half of Sydney, Gosford and the Hunter.

Add the three together — and allow for what Integral is likely to seek later on — and the figure ends up at well beyond \$300 million.

All this is another blow to

NSW electricity consumers, who are already facing the prospect of double-digit increases from mid-year under earlier IPART determinations.

And that's on top of the mega-rises of last year and 2009.

These requests for additional increases relate to the Federal Government's Renewable Energy Target.

The target forces power companies to buy "renewable energy certificates" generated by solar panels and the like.

The number of installed panels has exploded in recent times courtesy of super-generous federal and state subsidies (also ultimately paid for by you and me).

Fortunately, the state electricity companies won't be turning to IPART to hit us up for the cost of the bungled state Solar Bonus Scheme — largely because *The Daily Telegraph's* Power Struggle campaign forced Macquarie St to find another way to pay the bill blowout.

If our governments are going to meddle with markets — and then expect us to pick up the tab — they need to have a better idea of the likely impact.

Solar power does seem to make sense for Australia — unlike the schemes supposedly designed to support it.



Happy travellers: Christine and Glenn Day received a refund on a cyclone-hit beach holiday

Wotif resort won't refund?

GLENN and Christine Day booked a four-night holiday at Airlie Beach through the website Wotif.

Their flights from NSW to Queensland were cancelled due to cyclone threat.

"We contacted Wotif to see if we could get a credit at the resort but the resort stayed with the no cancellation, no refund, no change of dates and no credit policy," Mr Day said.

So Mr Day wrote to us.

We went to Wotif, which leaned on the

resort — again and again and again. And then tried again.

"The hotel initially declined a refund to the guest because they were under the impression that flights and ferry services were still operating on January 30," a Wotif spokeswoman said.

"On the fourth occasion the hotel agreed to refund the booking. The guest is currently being contacted to arrange this.

"Our customers' best interest is always our priority."

Please help!

I need some legal advice

RTA wins eight-nil in double demerits

Terry asks:

I received a speeding fine on January 1 last year and paid it that month.

But when I received a letter from the RTA I noticed an anomaly on the ticket.

Being New Year's Day the offence should have attracted double demerit points.

The officer did not state that but did mention the payment amount. The ticket says four demerit points, however the RTA stated that I recorded eight points.

I have previously heard other officers say on television that if the officer does not fill out the form correctly, then it can be challenged. Do I have a case to challenge the RTA?

Have your legal queries answered on our blog with Maurice Blackburn legal expert Rebecca Gilsenan at noon today



Rebecca says:

Ouch, eight points. Unfortunately the technicality or loophole that you have identified is not going to help you.

The RTA is entitled to deduct double demerit points in identified double demerit point periods even if the officer who issued the ticket made a mistake in filling out the form.

It would be a waste of time to take this any further.

Legal information is general in nature and not to be regarded as legal advice by Maurice Blackburn

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