

Ray of sunshine for green pensioners

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Environmentally conscious pensioners will no longer have pensions docked for earning credit on an electricity bill if they generate power from solar panels.

The federal government yesterday bowed to pensioner outrage that bill credits, or cash payments, from electricity retailers for selling excess electricity back to the grid could lead to a cut in their fortnightly pension.

Under rule changes outlined by the Minister for Community Services, Jenny Macklin, solar feed-in tariffs that appear as credits on an electricity bill will be exempted from a pensioner's income test.

Solar tariffs paid as cash or a cheque still need to be reported to Centrelink but will be averaged over a year. The government said this means a \$260 credit from an electricity retailer would be counted as \$10 each fortnight. Single pensioners can earn \$142 a fortnight before pension payments are reduced.

Charmaine Crowe, of the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, said the change would be a relief to NSW pensioners with solar panels because they receive average payments of \$1500 a year from electricity retailers.

"This is good news for pensioners, who have generally outlaid thousands of dollars to install solar panels because of escalating electricity prices and a commitment to doing the right thing for the environment," Ms Crowe said.

Ms Macklin said the new rules, which take effect immediately, were fairer and would encourage pensioners to be green.

Source: [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

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