

green saver

Rae Doble

Rebate reward

Investing in “green” devices around the home can be expensive, but there are ways to cut the costs



WE ALL KNOW THAT THE MORE energy efficient a product is, the more environmentally friendly it is and the cheaper it is to run in the long term. But the more stars it has the more it costs – luckily there are some financial incentives that can make the switch more affordable.

Water

Washing machines with a blue 4-star or 5A rating are the most water-efficient washing machines on the market. These new models can save up to 21,000 litres of water a year compared with older models. They also have a four-star price, starting at \$600, with top-end models retailing for \$1900.

Currently NSW, WA and Queensland water departments offer a rebate of up to \$200 if you buy these machines. The rebates are also eligible for machines bought on lay-by, if you buy and install the machine before the scheme ends (WA's ends this June).

If this is still too expensive, ask for a discount for cash or floor stock, or try factory

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outlets, classifieds or second-hand dealers. But be aware that if the item is not new, you won't get the rebate.

Rainwater tanks are another big investment. The general advice is to get the biggest one you can afford (generally 4000 to 5000 litres). A variety of styles and sizes is available. Bluescope Steel tanks retail from \$1040 for an Ultraslim 1000-litre tank to \$1698 for a round 8800-litre tank.

You can find cheaper tanks in classified newspapers like the *Trading Post*, so it pays to shop around. Of course there will be installation and delivery costs as well as other fees depending on your circum-



stances. It all sounds like a lot of money, but again rebates are available. Sydney Water offers up to \$800 rebate (including \$300 rebate if you connect your tank to the toilet or washing machine), and Queensland's rebates go up to \$1000. Most states' water departments offer rebates – check out www.smartwatermark.info for terms and conditions in your local area.

Solar power

Solar hot water systems start at \$3000, significantly more than conventional electric heaters. While there are no government rebates available, energy savings mean you will break even within five to 10 years.

Solar hot water systems are eligible for Renewable Energy Certificates, which are sold to companies who wish to offset their carbon emissions. A household solar hot water system is eligible for 10 to 64 RECs, around \$180 to \$1200. Got to www.orer.gov.au to see whether you are eligible.

Solar electricity generators are not popular at the moment because of the expense. Systems can be stand-alone or grid-connected and range from \$15,000 to \$30,000 for a new system, although second-hand ones can be bought for around \$4000. Government rebates are due to finish in June. Rebates based on watts the solar panels produce are capped at \$4000, with extensions to existing systems capped at \$2500. For more information go to www.greenhouse.gov.au/renewable/.

Green tip

The latest rebate to hit the news is for LPG. With ever increasing petrol prices, converting to gas is a sensible option for the environment and your wallet. LPG cars produce around 15% less greenhouse gases and one-fifth of the toxic emissions of petrol-driven cars.

Under the federal government's LPG Vehicle Scheme motorists can apply for a \$1000 grant to buy a new LPG vehicle. Alternatively, you can convert your existing car to receive a rebate of \$2000, providing the car is for personal use. The incentive is not a one-off. You are eligible for the rebate on each vehicle you convert.

Converting your car will set you back between \$1500 to \$3000, depending on your model and the mechanic you go to. The rebate is available until 2013.

For application forms and information see www.ausindustry.gov.au or phone AusIndustry on 132 846.