

## 'Incentives' effective in boosting rooftop solar?

Following South Australia's introduction of a feed-in tariff scheme for rooftop photovoltaic cell installations, the Queensland Government is introducing a scheme under which households and businesses will be paid a premium rate for any excess power generated. The Victorian Government has announced it will introduce a similar scheme.

However, Brad Shone from the Alternative Technology Association (ATA) has called on state governments to follow renewable energy leaders overseas and pay for the total output of rooftop solar systems – not just the excess. 'Calculating payback times [for rooftop solar systems] becomes unworkable because it is virtually impossible to know what portion will be returned to the grid,' he says.

Shone points out that after Germany introduced 'total output' feed-in tariffs in 2000, it was able to reach its 2010 target



Australian governments may need to provide greater incentives for rooftop solar installations. Energy Matters

of 12.5 per cent of national power from renewables three years ahead of schedule. Rooftop systems, he says, also reduce peak electricity demand, the cost of wiring and infrastructure, and the wholesale cost of electricity.

## Call to reconsider perceptions of recycled water

Modern treatment plants in Australia have demonstrated their capacity to safely remove most contaminants from recycled water, so it may be time for Australians to reassess the prospect of supplementing drinking water supplies with highly treated wastewater, according to CSIRO researcher Dr Simon Toze.

Dr Toze recently told a WA community water forum that scientists were confident today's water-treatment processes could safely remove microbial pathogens to a level where they present almost zero-risk to



Modern water treatment processes can remove most contaminants, making treated water as safe to drink as tapwater. Susan Trigg

human health – and certainly no greater risk than water supplied from current surface or groundwater sources. He said Australia could pursue the idea of augmenting drinking water sourced from depleted reservoirs or aquifers with high-quality 'manufactured' water sourced from stormwater, greywater and sewage. Scientists are currently focused on improving the energy efficiency of water-treatment processes and on characterising the processes within reservoirs and aquifers that remove pathogens.

## Tourism to alleviate Pacific poverty



A humpback whale off Tonga, one of 10 Oceania countries involved in a new tourism development initiative. Gary Stocks/iStockphoto

Australian tourists invest more money in the Pacific Islands than the Australian Government through its aid programs, according to the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI). Consequently, the FSPI has initiated an Oceania Sustainable Tourism Alliance (OSTA), which includes Victoria University and other Australian and New Zealand partners.

The OSTA is assisting 10 Oceania countries – Timor-Leste, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau,

Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu – to implement innovative tourism strategies aimed at fighting poverty and benefiting communities. Victoria University will work with OSTA members to design sustainable tourism models and policies.

Meanwhile, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has released a report showing whale- and dolphin-watching has become one of the fastest growing industries in the Pacific Island region, bringing in AU\$22 million annually.

## Sustainability news on plastics

CSIRO researchers are investigating how oilseed plants could function as 'biofactories' to synthesise oils for the manufacture of plastics, paints, cosmetics and other products. The oils are currently sourced from petrochemicals.

Researchers have already successfully modified and bred a plant species to concentrate the oils, known as unusual fatty acids (UFAs).

There is good news too on the plastics recycling front. Through the National Packaging Covenant's recycling project for rigid plastic #5 containers, items such as yoghurt, margarine and ice cream tubs can now be recycled here rather than shipped to China or sent to landfill.

The reprocessed material can be used in compost bins, pot planters, drainage/trenching products, cable reels and bar stools and other products.

[www.csiro.au/news/GreenPlasticsFromPlants](http://www.csiro.au/news/GreenPlasticsFromPlants)