

POTENTIAL SAVINGS

How much will we save?

This will vary enormously depending on your current electricity tariff, how much energy you use and when you use it. We expect that RN will be able to beat the best market rates, including discounting, by between 5-10%. Compared to standard market rates, you could save as much as 30-40%.

Will savings go to reduce individuals' power bills or are all those savings returned to the community fund? What percentage of those savings goes where?

Savings from lower energy tariffs will go directly to lower your power bills. Even after offering lower electricity rates, RN may generate a small profit, and return a portion of that to the community.

How can the community benefit? Will there be grants available?(Not sure if this question is will this fund a community granting program or will there be grants to install solar.)

The community will benefit from lower energy costs, and the potential to create some additional local jobs on a permanent basis. We are also looking to return a percentage of money made by RN to the community.

How else can we support or benefit from Renewable Newstead?

RN aims to offer a combination of lower power prices, great deals on solar power and battery storage, independent energy advice, and great deals on energy efficiency solutions. This includes the potential to invest your money in local renewable energy for a financial return. If you think you can help with any of those, or benefit from any of those, then RN is for you! Get in touch if you'd like to support us.

FEED-IN TARIFFS

What happens after 2024 when the premium feed-in tariff ends?

After this time, we expect that feed-in tariffs will be negotiated directly with electricity retailers. In the case of Newstead, this could be with a new entity, "Renewable Newstead", which aims to offer a fair feed-in tariff (FIT) for all solar customers.

Can we feed in and take out energy from Newstead and not affect the premium feed-in-tariff?

Renewable Newstead will have no impact on the premium feed-in tariff. This is set in place by legislation.

Will RN offer a flat-rate feed-in-tariff?

We are still working on what feed-in tariff will be possible to offer Newstead solar customers. It is likely to be a flat rate and slightly better than the standard market rate.

How will FIT rates be established for RN?

We will aim to offer a fair feed-in tariff to solar customers. A fair feed-in tariff needs to consider the time of day that excess solar energy is produced, how this varies season by season, and what effect this has on the value of that energy generated. Working this out is reasonably complex, but we are getting closer to an answer for this.

Will people on retail contracts (to get the FIT) be able to be released from those contracts to be able to sell to RN without losing the premium feed-in tariff (PFIT) or being worse off?

Customers who currently receive the PFIT will be able to retain that PFIT regardless of who their retailer is. If you want to make your solar system larger, you won't be able to do this without losing your PFIT.

How long will we be locked into contracts and prices under the RN model – what does this look like?

If you buy standard, grid-supplied (green) power from RN, you are likely to be on a 12-month contract, or a contract that is renewed month to month. If RN supplies you with a financed solar system (i.e. we install solar on your roof and sell you the energy that it generates), then you are likely to be on a 7-10 year contract.

GENERAL

How are we going to meet the winter energy demand?

We plan to maintain a connection to the mains grid to ensure reliable power all-year round. Give we are likely to install a lot of solar power, it is likely that we will generate more energy than we need in summer, and less than what we need in winter.

I am concerned about usage aligning with solar generation

When you have solar power, you are still connected to the grid. So you don't have to worry about the power going out when solar panels are not producing. Of course, the best time to

use solar energy is when the sun is out! So we can help you adapt your energy use to get the most value out of your solar system.

Can Newstead be self-sufficient?

Perhaps in the future, Newstead may be completely self-sufficient for energy. At this stage, we do not believe this can be done, while ensuring people receive lower power bills.

Can Newstead still generate energy in the event of fire?

Newstead may still be subject to power outages in the event of nearby fires. If you would like your own back-up power supply, it might be worth investing in your own system. In the future, RN will be able to help you with this.

I am on the grid outside the Newstead town area. Can I still hook up to RN?

Yes, we plan to service at least the Newstead postcode and any nearby towns that identify with Newstead and the project more broadly.

Will this project reduce purchased fuel – both gas & wood?

By offering energy efficiency advice and products, we will also aim to reduce consumption of gas and wood. It might be possible to help reduce the cost of sourcing wood, by organising “bulk buys” of wood at a discount.

Will there be education about encouraging people to use energy efficiently?

Yes, we plan to offer energy advice and energy efficiency solutions as well including insulation, hot water upgrades, and more efficiency heating/cooling systems

Will we be educated about how to read energy meters?

If this is something you would like we can probably help out.

What will this cost a business?

It will depend on how much energy use. As a rough guide, take your average annual energy bill and multiply it by 3. That’s about how much you might want to spend on going solar. Of course, if you just want cheaper energy, we can do that for no up-front cost. You’ll feel great knowing you are spending less on energy, and that the money you do spend is staying local.

Who maintains the street lights? If the power model changes, will they stay on?

Council and Powercor will still maintain street lights, as per usual

I am new to Newstead. How do I find out what's available?

You've come to the right place! Perhaps contact us and we'll see if we can help

INVESTING IN RN

How much investment is required per household?

For the immediate township of Newstead to become 100% renewable energy with solar power, we expect an investment of between \$2m-\$3m. That is about \$5,000 - \$7,000 per household and business in this area. Households and local businesses will be asked if they want to contribute. It will not be compulsory.

What return will be available if I invest? How long until I get a return on investment (ROI) on a solar system under RN's model?

We anticipate offering investors the chance for between 4% - 6%pa return on investment, over a 7-10 year period. In simple terms, we aim to offer better than bank interest, but probably not as good as sharemarket, or property market investment returns.

Is further investment required?

See above

What is the process to get solar on roofs, invested in by some-one else?

We will be working through this in more detail, but indicatively, if you are thinking of going solar but don't want to own your system, this could be a good option for you. We will assess your roof, your energy needs, and install a system for you. You won't pay anything up front, and instead will either pay for the energy you use or a simple quarterly fee. This fee will be lower than the value of energy you save, meaning you will always be better off financially.

I am financially constrained and can't invest in solar panels on my house. How can I be part of this?

See answers above.

This is not my main residence? How can RN make getting solar panels installed pay?

See above

Will solar systems we install be Australian made?

It is likely that we will offer a range of solar systems including Australian-made systems. It will be up to individuals to decide what is important to them when considering price, quality, and support for Australian companies.

Are there any subsidies/support if we want to expand our current solar system?

There are still currently good rebates on purchasing solar power, even if you are expanding an existing system. Note: customers with a PFIT will lose this if they expand their system

How should I respond to callers pressuring me to buy solar systems or who offer energy deals? How can we protect the vulnerable especially those aged over 65 from salespeople?

If you are thinking of going solar, or looking for a better deal on your electricity, make sure companies send you the full details of their offer before you make a decision. If you are nervous about making a decision or looking for a second opinion, please contact RN & we will endeavor to help.

STORAGE BATTERIES

Would I be better off investing in batteries and going off-grid?

RN will be able to provide you with solar power, storage and energy efficiency solutions to help you go off-grid if you would like to. Whether or not this is the right thing for you will depend on what you are trying to achieve, and how you use energy throughout the year. If you are looking to cut down your energy costs, going off-grid is unlikely to be your best option in the short-term, unless you are building a new home and would otherwise be paying \$5000-\$10,000+ to connect to the grid.

Technology is changing so quickly. How can we be forward thinking and eco-wise?

Yes, in particular we expect batteries to change a lot in the next few years. RN will endeavor to help you make the best decision, no matter what your situation.

What is the return on investment on energy-storing batteries?

This will vary depending on your situation, but for many "hybrid" battery systems, in which you stay connected to the grid, batteries will not pay themselves off before the end of their warranty period. We don't recommend installing hybrid battery systems just yet, but for some people facing an expensive grid connection charge, for example new home builders, going

off grid could provide a very good return on investment, paying itself back in less than 6-7 years.

PREMISES NOT SUITED FOR SOLAR PANELS

My house is not suited for solar panels. How can I be part of this?

You can sign up as an RN electricity customer and get great rates on clean, local energy. You can also invest in local renewables, for a financial return, and get advice on energy efficiency. You never know, energy efficiency may be your best option!

What can we do if trees are blocking the light from reaching our roof?

In some cases, it might be best to simply trim trees slightly to ensure your solar panels are in full sunlight. We can also orient panels to the east or west - this reduces output by about 10%, but might mean you avoid shade from a northern tree. It might also mean you generate more energy when you need it. For example, west-facing panels can be great in summer if you need to use an air-conditioner in the afternoon.

Is it possible to have off-roof or ground panels?

Yes, it is possible but not common for households. Of course if you would like this, it is your choice.

Do solar panels have to be on roof because they are quite ugly?

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, no? They are typically on the roof to keep them out of the way and in clear sun throughout the day.

Can ground or roof-mounted panels track the sun?

Yes they can, but tracking the sun adds a lot of up-front cost and isn't justified by the additional savings.

Is there any chance we could get solar panels embedded in roofing materials?

There are a number of companies starting to offer this, and it may be worth considering if you need to replace your roof.

Could I tap into solar panels at the community centre for my energy?

Because of how the energy market works, this can't really be done directly at this stage. But RN will share the value of local solar energy generation across customers who sign up, which means you could be tapping into solar panels at the community centre, the school, your neighbour's house, or all three of them!

Council has mandated that every house on the local heritage register must not have solar panels visible from the street. Will you work to have this 1980s view changed?

We would be happy to talk to Council about this in due course.

PLANNING TO GO SOLAR

I am planning to go solar. Will there be bulk-buy offers?

We plan to offer great prices on solar from one or more suppliers/installers. This will be negotiated over the coming months

Should I wait to see what RN is offering?

That is up to you. We hope to have offers available early in 2017t, so if you can wait till then, we'd love to help you at that time.

I am planning to build. Should I buy our own solar system or wait to see what RN is offering?

See above.

What solar set-up is best?

This varies a lot depending on your situation. We will give every solar customer independent advice to make sure they get the best outcome.

What govt subsidies are available?

Rebates are still available on solar systems, and work out to be around a 30% discount on a typically installation.

What is the lifespan of panels and equipment?

Good quality solar panels and inverters will come with a 10-year warranty. Solar panels may continue producing for 20 years or more. A good inverter should last at least 15 years.

What are my storage options?

There are lots! Too many to list and compare here. For now, we only suggest using storage if you are going off-grid to avoid a significant grid connection charge. For most people, storage still won't be a good option financially or environmentally - it is best to wait a little longer if you can.

Do my panels have to be cleaned & maintained & will RN offer that service? Should I clean my solar panels to maximise generation efficiency? If so, can the old and infirmed get help to do this?

The cost of cleaning panels isn't usually justified by the additional output. A decent shower of rain is usually good enough to keep them clean. If there is sufficient demand, RN will consider making this service available.

Will Powercor charge even if you are off-grid? Do they have the right to charge?

This will be decided by energy market institutions and policy makers and will not be controlled by RN.

What's in this for off-gridders?

See above.