

Access ramp at Heritage Village

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COUNCILLOR Rose Swadling cut the ribbon yesterday morning on an access ramp which was constructed by a dedicated team of Heritage Village volunteers.

She was joined by staff and clients from LiveBetter Home Care.

The ramp will enable easy access to Lakes Creek Cottage, one of the village's most interesting heritage displays, for people with wheelchairs, prams, strollers and wheelie walkers.

The cottage is an original miner's cottage from Mount Morgan which was moved to Lakes Creek after the Mount Morgan Mine closed.

It was used by workers at Lakes Creek Meatworks before being donated to the Rockhampton Heritage Village.



CELEBRATION: Friends of the Heritage Village including (in front row) Wayne Wooler, Ross Cooze, Michael O'Dea, Gabrielle Howkins, Cr Rose Swadling, Lorna Marshall, Jessie Bambrick, Barry Hancock, Graham Horwell and Gerry Saunders cheer the completion of the access ramp.
Picture: Jann Houley

Throwing light on solar



DOLLARS AND SENSE
DAVID FRENCH

PART 1 of 2:

Some months ago I was interested to read in the *Morning Bulletin* an SMS from ANON (TMB, December 17) and the reply penned by Glen Dobinson (TMB, December 19) concerning Dobinson's investment in solar panels.

While I knew about the investment in solar panels, I only became aware of the company's significance through an overseas off-roading website.

Dobinson's is an economic role model for our region.

It is perhaps not widely known that part of the Investment Collective's business involves financing and installing solar panels on buildings owned by third parties.

We recover the cost and make a return from entering into a power purchasing agreement with the building owner.

Depending on the situation, savings can be substantial, and

currently we have installed capacity of 165 kilowatts – roughly 650 panels.

Having been involved in this endeavour for some years, it needs to be said that there are a number of factors that mean solar will not work for everyone.

The first issue is the time of day when electricity is used.

High levels of daytime consumption are ideally suited to solar power, while evening and night-time consumption would involve the use of batteries, if solar was to be the primary power source.

That means the capital cost is much higher and the savings, while still there, are less.

Then we have Ergon's tariff. This varies wildly, from standard household type charges at about 29 cents per kilowatt/hour (including GST), to peak pricing where a consumer's peak consumption within a month determines the overall electricity bill (even if that peak is for a short period each day), to arrangements with a very high fixed price (flagfall) but a very low cost per kilowatt/hour (sometimes as low as a few cents).

Next we have to consider the government-funded solar rebates, which effectively reduce the cost of solar panels for smaller projects, but for larger projects the benefits are not as readily calculated.

And finally, in deciding whether to approve a solar installation, Ergon has to take into account the capacity and configuration of the existing network.

The outcome can range from agreement, to modifications, or refusal.

Readers can see that business decisions on commercial solar projects are no simple matter.

Nor, as the climate zealots would have you believe, is there a straight line between the status quo, and what could be.

Properly researched and implemented solar is a rewarding investment which helps the environment, but those that go bull at a gate in slapping panels of roofs are likely going to find they lose money.

The problem with the global warming debate is that it is less a debate than a raft of loud and conflicting assertions.

I think this arises because of the way the issue was originally brought to the fore – by Al Gore, a Democrat Vice President.

This history has made it first and foremost a platform for political posturing, now morphed into a 21st century religion.

Approaching the problem in this way means we are not having a debate, we are having a proxy-war – a war in which the self-proclaimed "goodies" (the political left) reject any role for fossil fuels, and the "baddies" (the political right) claim that renewable energy is expensive, impractical and that the slightest move away from fossil fuels will cost jobs.

The juxtaposition of Bob Brown's green caravan with the recent actions of a few rabid Nationals puts the positions of these "sides" into stark relief.

Viewed through this lens, the climate "debate" isn't about climate at all, it's about politics.

The only way to move on from this energy-sapping waste of time is to frame the problem differently – as one of



CHOOSING SOLAR: Keith Dobinson and his brother Glen unveil the first of 2000 solar panels to help the Rockhampton business get off the grid, back in 2016.
Picture: Amber Hooker / CQ News

pollution, which in the West, most can agree is bad.

Bad for the environment, bad for health, bad for the economy (which captures both of the former and more be-

sides).
Put another way, let's just clean up the joint.

More thoughts on this a fortnight from now in my next column.