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NEWS

Beaches councils' plan to cut soaring power bills

When green spells mean

Tyron Butson

MANLY and Warringah are the losers and their Pittwater cousin is a winner as councils across the Sydney metropolitan area are hammered by electricity price hikes.

New prices set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal will see Sydney councils forced to pay an extra \$7.5 million for electricity this year.

Some are contemplating sacking and cutting services, but northern beaches councils are going green to cut electricity use and reduce costs.

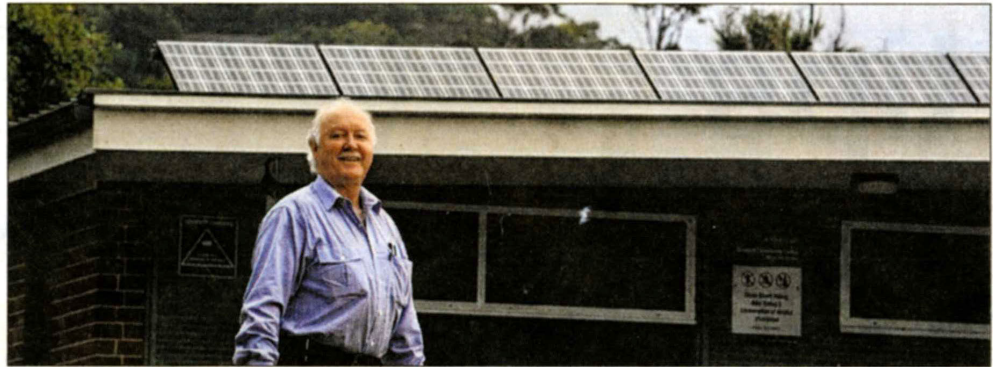
Warringah will cop a massive \$2.8 million electricity bill for 2010-11, a \$430,000 increase on last year.

The council will now spend \$672,850 on power for facilities and offices and more than \$2 million on street lighting.

Manly Council will pay \$1.3 million for electricity in 2010-11, a price increase of \$173,354 compared to 2009-10.

Deputy general manager Ross Fleming said the increase had prompted council to pursue a range of energy efficient options, including the installation of solar panels on council facilities.

"These initiatives will be further



Pittwater Council will earn money from harvesting solar power at the Newport Recreation Centre in an effort to avoid rising energy prices. Pictured is the council's electrician, Wayne Bardwell.

expanded under council's carbon-reduction program," he said.

"To offset these increases in electricity pricing council has been looking to reduce energy demands by retro-fitting many of its buildings and facilities with more energy-efficient lighting and devices and installing solar-panel lighting."

Pittwater Council has already seen the benefit of going green and has predicted a \$24,532 drop in its 2010-11 electricity bill. Its electricity bill dropped to \$1,135,600 in 2010-11, down from \$1,160,132.

"This is due to some energy

saving devices the council has installed in administration buildings and community centres," council spokeswoman Sally Williams said.

She said the council was already using solar panels and automated lights.

Since July 1 the average EnergyAustralia customer has been slugged an extra 10 per cent in their bills - meaning an average increase of \$2.42 a week - while Integral Energy customers have copped an additional seven per cent (an average of \$1.63 per week).

In 2011, households can expect another 11 per cent price rise.

NSW Local Government Association president Keith Rhoades said while rising costs were a serious concern, it was good to see councils taking steps towards pursuing cheaper, "green" solutions.

"Many councils have already implemented projects that save energy, such as installing solar panels, conducting energy audits and tinting windows," he said.

■ Turn to Page 18 for a 10-point guide on how to save money on electricity this summer.