

Place in the sun



Prime Minister John Howard visited the solar-powered William Lawson Childcare Centre on Monday.

By ADAM SCROGGY

BLACKTOWN is set to become the first 'Solar City' in New South Wales.

Prime Minister John Howard announced on Monday that Blacktown would receive up to \$15 million in federal government funding as part of the Solar Cities Program.

Visiting the solar-powered William Lawson Childcare Centre at Prospect, Mr Howard said the initiative would include the provision of 860 photovoltaic systems and 2100 solar water heaters to households and commercial buildings in the area.

"Blacktown is an Australian city of the future, young and diverse, and experiencing a growth in energy requirements," Mr Howard said.

"I think people will see the value of solar power as good for the environment, and a financially attractive option with reduced power bills."

One of four cities in Australia to receive funding

as part of the initiative, Blacktown's bid involved a consortium including BP Solar, Integral Energy, Blacktown City Council, Landcom, and the ANZ and Big Switch Projects.

President of BP Solar, Gerry Hueston, said residents of Blacktown would benefit greatly from this program.

"Hundreds of Australian-made solar electricity generating systems will be installed, tens of thousands of energy efficiency packs distributed, and significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will be achieved as a result of [Blacktown's] participation," he said.

Joined by Federal Member for Greenway, Louise Markus, the Prime Minister said solar power had an important role in Australia's energy future.

"This community will save \$3 million in energy costs and greenhouse gases will be reduced by 25,000 tonnes a year," he said. "I congratulate Blacktown for embracing the Solar Cities concept."