

Energy switch

By **Kylle Stevens**

JOANNE Williams of Glendenning will save up to \$250 a year on electricity bills, while doing her bit for the environment, now that her home is powered by solar electricity.

It was one of 16 Housing Department properties in Amy Close fitted with solar panels last week.

The department has joined the Blacktown Solar City project in a pilot program to reduce greenhouse gases.

Over the next two years, it will fit 100 solar water heaters and 140 solar electricity systems to dwellings in the area.

Solar systems will also be installed in 40 blocks of unit for to light communal areas.

Ms Williams, who has three children and another on the way, said the saving will come in handy. "It's exciting that low-income earners like myself get this chance," she said.

"I've only had it switched on for a few days but it's already making a difference.

"Not only am I saving money but solar energy is also better for my children."

Housing Department director-general Mike Allen estimated that the program would cut greenhouse gas emissions by 13,000 tonnes.

"Low-income households are at greater risk from climate change with energy and water costs taking up a larger proportion of essential income," he said.

Tenants can get energy advice, audits, discounted appliances and free energy-efficient light bulbs under the Federal Government's \$1.3 million project to which the department chipped in the remaining \$714,000.



Making the switch: Joanne Williams's home is one of first Housing Department dwellings to be fitted for solar energy for household use such as drying the hair of her 18-month-old daughter Kathleen. Many more of the department's 11,000 households in the Blacktown area will switch to solar in the next two years. **Picture: Mike Sea**