

CHRISTINE O'MALEY

RESIDENTS of the first solar-powered street in Blacktown are making big savings in their electricity bills.

All 16 Housing Department dwellings in Amy Close, Glendenning, had 1kW solar electricity systems installed on their rooftops last October as part of the Solar City project.

At the time BP Solar promised savings of up to 50 per cent on electricity bills and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

While it is still too early to calculate emissions, a spokesman for BP Solar said they were pleased with the project's progress. "The solar systems have been installed and are producing energy at the time of the day when energy use is normally at its peak," he said.

"We expect that families in Amy

Close are reaping the benefits of this.

Almost six months on, the *Advocate* revisited residents who claimed their bills appeared to have increased or stayed the same, but closer examination showed there were savings of almost 40 per cent.

For one household the solar system powered almost a third of their energy in the three months until January, and scored them a \$55 sun-power credit, from the extra power sent to the grid.

However, another resident said the panels proved more a hindrance than a help because she had to change from Energy Australia to Integral Energy and the process meant they weren't switched on for two months.

The BP Solar spokesman encouraged residents to make behavioural changes to see real savings.

"Combining solar power with energy-efficient behaviour, is a great way to reduce your bills," he said.

Residents curious about the use of solar panels during blackouts are advised that the system is not effective during power outages as it has no storage capability.

The Amy Close panels were funded by the Federal Government's Solar City project, the BP-led consortium and the Department of Housing.

A home electricity system costs around \$16,000, the Federal Government offers a rebate of up to \$8000 under the program.

# The sun drives down cost



Left: Carmine Cimittle is just one resident of Amy Close, Glendenning to take part in the trial. ISABELLA LETTINI/2706872

Inset: The BP Solar GCI Inverter is the key to solar-powered savings.

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