

# Solar group to pitch its bright idea to council

BY ROSEMARY BOLGER

A CLIMATE change group is lobbying Port Phillip Council to support a “buy in bulk” approach to retrofitting houses with solar panels.

Solar Neighbourhood Port Phillip coordinator Helen Halliday said the concept of “solar neighbourhoods” had become a popular way for residents to take action together to reduce their carbon footprints.

“Bulk purchasing reduces the cost of solar panels and combined with government rebates makes it possible for communities to afford to go solar for generating electricity and providing solar hot water,” Mrs Halliday said.

In June 2007, the council adopted the Toward Zero – Sustainable Environment Strategy 2007, which outlined targets such as a 50 per cent reduction in the community’s greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

But a 12-month report card found the community increased its emissions by an estimated 1.4 per cent since the strategy was adopted.

**‘Bulk purchasing ... makes it possible for communities to afford to go solar’**

Architect and activist David Saunders set up the first solar neighbourhood, of six houses, in the municipality.

Mr Saunders believes if the council led the project, hundreds of residents, particularly elderly people, could benefit from the scheme. He said the previous council had been unresponsive to the idea, but Port Phillip Solar Neighbourhood founders will meet the new council this month.

Mayor Frank O’Connor said the council was interested in the scheme and would consider it as part of its plan and budget preparation.

Ms Halliday hoped the council would lead by example and fit solar panels and other energy-saving devices to council buildings.



Helen Halliday, Lena Rosenberg, David Saunders, David Robinson and Louise Kyle of Solar Neighbourhood