



SOLAR BONUS

EXCLUSIVE

■ Daniel Mercer

The Liberal Party is preparing to reveal a game-changing renewable energy rebate package in the hope of winning tens of thousands of votes from people with solar panels on their roofs.

The West Australian understands the State's growing ranks of solar households would be offered subsidies to install battery storage systems under a Liberal campaign pledge.

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Battery storage pledge

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Although details of the scheme are being kept under wraps by Energy Minister Mike Nahan, the policy would reduce the cost of installing batteries by thousands of dollars and take hundreds of thousands of people a step closer to disconnecting from the electricity grid.

Led by US technology giant Tesla, household-scale battery systems currently on the market across Australia typically cost between \$10,000 and \$12,000.

The unreleased policy comes on the heels of a now-defunct Government scheme that sub-

sidised the cost of solar panels by paying households a fee for every unit of electricity the systems pumped into the grid.

The so-called feed-in-tariff was launched in 2010 and originally budgeted at \$6 million a year. It had to be wound back amid rampant demand and spiralling costs before eventually being axed a year later.

While the cost blew out to \$45 million a year, the scheme was hailed a success by the Government after it induced massive uptake of solar panels.

There are now more than 200,000 WA households with photovoltaic cells, including more than 180,000 in Perth and the South West.

Renewable energy expert Ray Wills said encouraging battery systems could lower customers' bills and cut significant costs out of the electricity grid.

He said WA's electricity grids were built to cope with huge demand on just a few hours of the hottest days of the year as people cranked up air-conditioners.

By combining batteries with solar panels, people would be able to generate and use more of their own power, relieving pressure on the grid.

"I expect that most of the States will go this way this year — the advantage to the grid, and the advantage to the punter is batteries do bring security," Professor Wills said.

Dr Nahan declined to comment.