



Germany ahead of Australia – and not just in soccer

German government official shows WA the way on renewable energy

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Sustainable Energy Now Inc.

A packed Perth audience heard this week from a senior official in the German Government that Germany – despite many natural disadvantages – is far ahead of WA in renewable energy use and greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Dr Volker Oschmann, from Germany's Ministry for Environment, currently on research leave at the University of Western Australia, joked it was not just the soccer in which Germany excelled.

He told the meeting hosted by WA volunteer organisation Sustainable Energy Now that while Australia gets just seven per cent of its electricity from renewable energy sources including wind, wave, solar, hydro, geothermal and biomass, Germany currently produces more than 16 per cent of its electricity from these sources.

Dr Oschmann said this was despite the fact that Germany experienced less than half the solar radiance and with its much bigger population, had a much smaller land mass and coastline on which to build wind farms and other renewable energy plants.

One reason for the difference between the countries might be the feed-in tariff policy that Germany introduced in 2000, which had caused its installation of solar photovoltaic systems and wind energy farms to skyrocket, Dr Oschmann said.

Germany's feed-in tariff involved a small levy being placed on all electricity consumer's bills which was then paid as a premium price for electricity produced from renewable energy sources.

Dr Oschmann said that Germany's recently-elected conservative party, equivalent to Australia's Liberal Party, appeared even more supportive of renewable energy than the previous centre-left German national government, as it had recently announced that it intended to substitute all conventional energy with renewable energy.



“Germany has a much more limited potential for renewable energy than Australia as we receive only half of your solar radiance,” Dr Oschmann said. “We also are a lot smaller than Australia and we have 80 million people living there compared to your 20 million people, which we means we have much less space – but still Germany is pursuing much more ambitious renewable energy targets than Australia,” Dr Oschmann said.

“What impresses me is that Germany is on track to meet those targets. If Germany can do this, Australia really can do it much more easily than Germany.”

Dr Oschmann said that Renewable Energy is also big business in Germany with total turnover being 33.4 billion Euros (AUS\$48 billion) for investment and operation in 2009 and jobs in the sector at 300,500 for the same period.

Dr Oschmann, who is in Perth until July to further his legal studies through the Centre for Mining, Energy and Natural Resources Law at the University of Western Australia, said that 16 per cent of Germany’s electricity presently came from renewable energy, up from 4.5 per cent 10 years ago. In comparison, just seven per cent of Australia’s electricity is from renewable energy sources.

“Germany’s target is to produce 80 per cent of electricity from renewable energy by 2050,” Dr Oschmann said.

“Germany has committed unconditionally to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to 40 per cent below its 1990 levels by 2020, whereas Australia has only committed unconditionally to a five per cent reduction in the same timeframe.

“Germany intends to reach its target mainly through a combination of energy efficiency and different renewable energies, including in the transport sector, using one million electric cars by 2020 instead of other fuels.

“Germany intends to achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets ultimately without nuclear power.

“The previous German Government announced it would phase out all nuclear power in Germany by 2022. Since then, Germany’s new conservative Government has said it would extend the existing plants’ life possibly by another 10 years. But there is no intention to build any new nuclear power plants, possibly because polls show little public acceptance for new nuclear power plants.”

Sustainable Energy Now Chair Steve Gates thanked Dr Oschmann on an inspiring presentation.



"Sustainable Energy Now is a grassroots volunteer organisation formed in WA in 2007 with a focus on promoting renewable energy including wind, wave, solar thermal, solar photovoltaic, geothermal and biomass and showing how these sources can meet our energy needs, in particular electricity demand on the grid serving Perth and the south-west of this State," Mr Gates said.

"We regularly host high-profile speakers from the renewable energy and electricity sectors at our monthly meetings.

"Dr Oschmann's presentation showed that if the political and public will is there, strong targets to reduce emissions and increase renewables can be made and met.

"I urge people to keep an eye on our website at www.sen.asn.au where we will soon post a video of Dr Oschmann's presentation."

Media seeking more information, are asked to call:

Sustainable Energy Now Chair Steve Gates on 0400 870 887;

or

Sustainable Energy Now Secretary Tim Barling on 0412 382 594.