

Solar panel



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The local council of Greenville recently made a proposal for all houses and businesses to install solar hot-water systems by 2010. Houses and businesses that who have not installed solar hot-water systems by then would be charged a “ greenhouse levy”. However some residents have expressed anger over the proposal. “ Solar Sellout” published in a local newspaper, an opinion piece and its accompanying cartoon written Bob Walsh, contends that the proposal which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is not appropriate for the small suburb of Greenville.

Walsh uses a sarcastic and angry tone which is quite personal, and aims to clearly outline why the proposal by the government is a bad idea. Walsh manipulates the reader by using a series of techniques to convey his point of view. The first technique which stands out is the headline, and the use of a graphic. The headline ‘ solar sellout’ is conveying the meaning that the proposal will be exactly that, a “ sellout”. The cartoon stands out instantly due to its size and placement on the page. The image portrays the character of the Mayor.

He’s depicted to be a person of obvious wealth, shown by the ‘ bling’ worn around his neck and his incredible size. The size of the Mayor also gives the impression that he’s a force to be reckoned with and that the population of the town don’t have a chance of standing up to him. The image shows the two classes of wealth present in the town, one, being the rich, represented by the large, well-kept houses both with solar panels on the roof, yet also clearly the minority. Then the working class which is represented by the collection of smaller houses that aren’t able to afford the panels.

The reader then sees the families living in the less attractive houses being forced to pay the Mayor their well-earned money. Walsh uses a series of techniques to emphasise his point of view. He commences with emotive language like “... become a captive of the radical environmentalists” who have made the council their “captive”. By describing environmentalists as “radical”, Mr Walsh evokes a sense of fear in the audience, questioning whether environmentalists can be trusted and if they are safe to be consulted with.

This leads the reader to question the honesty of the council and their ability to fend off environmental lobby groups who have their own agenda in the scheme. The word “captive” forces the reader to question the credibility of the council in its ability to make logical decisions on the community’s behalf. Such an implication is likely to leave readers questioning the real motivations behind the council’s decision. The use of the loaded term “incredibly” coerces the reader to consider the proposal as ridiculous and out of line.

Furthermore, it belittles those who are supporters of the proposal and leads the reader to consider supporters of the proposal as absurd. The author continues with loaded language saying that “this is a blatant abuse of residents’ rights...” in an attempt to appeal to the audience’s self interest and desire for freedom. By describing the citizens as “innocent” Mr Walsh creates a divide between the council and the residents of Greenville.

This intends to imply to the reader that the residents are the victims of the proposal and the council is set to take advantage of the residents. In a bid to add credibility to his argument, Walsh utilises statistics such as “The cost?

\$200 per house, and \$500 per business! ” Wash also uses rhetorical question and then answering it himself. By doing so, Walsh ridicules the suggestion of the cost to the consumer. This appeals to the readers sense of financial security and makes the suggestion seem ridiculous.

He also states that even if every Australian household installed hot water systems, “ greenhouse gases would only be reduced by... just 5. 1%”. The use of these statistics is employed not only to add credibility to his own argument but to discredit the council’s claim that its proposal would significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The council claim is further made illogically when the author says “ Greenville only represents a tiny fraction of that 5. 1%” so “ how can one suburb’s actions affect the whole world? The author’s sarcastic use of this rhetorical question aims to embarrass the council and its proposal, thus convincing the reader to believe the council’s argument has been discredited and that Mr Walsh’s is the most valid. Finally,

Mr Walsh proposes his own solution to this proposal and challenges the mayor to “ lobby governments for more nuclear power plants, rather than squander public money on frivolous solar panels”. The emotive term “ frivolous” intends to ridicule the proposal and coerces the reader to feel that there are far more effective alternatives than the council’s current proposal. Furthermore, contrasting the current proposal with his own proposal, allows Walsh to appear to be well-informed on the issue, thus he knows what he is writing about. By appealing on the readers sense of self-interest, financial insecurity and suspicion of authority, Walsh persuades the reader to consider

that the councils proposal would be ineffective and would suppress individual freedoms and rights; inappropriate for Greenville and the greater good.