

Federation switches on to solar energy

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Federation has always been a powerhouse of the union movement, and now its Sydney headquarters is literally just that.

An array made up of 158 solar panels has been installed on the roof of Teachers Federation House in Surry Hills, generating 85 kilowatt hours of energy and saving more than \$30,000 in electricity bills per year.

Federation General Secretary John Dixon said that during the renovation of the building, further environmental measures were undertaken, including the latest LED lighting technology and motion sensor lights.

“It makes us sound cheap and hollow to say the decision was all about money because it was also the right thing for the union to do,” Mr Dixon said.

“The union has a range of environmental policies and a sustainability committee, so essentially we put our money where our mouth was.”

The solar array cost \$155,000 to install, and attracted \$40,000 in rebates based on trading credits meaning the investment will pay itself off within four years. It will also return power to the grid.



“You think when you open your electricity bill you get a shock you should see Federation’s,” Mr Dixon said. “Our electricity bill is around \$230,000 a year.”

He said Federation had also reduced its power usage by up to \$20,000 a year from the installation of the most recent LED lighting technology.

“We’ve also investigated the possibilities of solar farm battery technology but that’s still an ongoing project,” Mr Dixon said.

“At the moment the batteries are too expensive for a commercial organisation, and you don’t get much in the way of a rebate from the Government for batteries at the moment.”

Federation President Maurie Mulheron told October Council last year that the union has a long history of environmental activism dating back to the late 1960s, early 1970s and was one of the first unions to support environmental movements.

Federation’s Environment Policy from 2011 Annual Conference states: “NSW Teachers Federation recognises the preservation of our natural environment and addressing environmental challenges such as climate change is union business. As workers who are educators, our members have a role in encouraging the growth of a clean economy that will be safe and prosperous for future generations.”