

Wagga Motors: Switching to solar with the professionals

About Wagga Motors

Wagga Motors is not a new kid on the block – in fact they're more like the grandfather of the block with a long and proud history of selling cars and trucks, providing parts and services and offering finance and insurance solutions.

Established in 1950 on Dobney Avenue, Wagga Wagga, the business now employs 100 people and is one of the largest car and truck retailers in the Riverina.

Bridging three generations of the Braid family, Scott and Richard Braid who have sat at the helm of Wagga Motors since 2001, are two cousins with an unbridled passion for selling cars.



One of the Riverina's largest car and truck retails, Wagga Motors switches to solar power

- 170KW (Stage 1) solar power system installation
- Total of 680 panels - the largest solar installation in Wagga Wagga to date
- Payback period is expected to be 3 ½ years of the total \$250,000 investment made by Wagga Motors.
- Solar Professionals behind the scenes, unassuming approach was a big plus

The Business Challenge

Wagga Motors is a large operation spread over a number of sites within the Dobney Avenue and Chaston Street precincts of Wagga Wagga.

The business had high energy usage, spending close to \$15,000 on energy per month to run its two car and truck workshops, showrooms, signage lighting, offices and computers and flood lights in the display areas.

Scott Braid was interested in how they could control this expense particularly in the face of rising energy costs. "I was keen to explore how we could cap these costs by understanding our spend and taking control of it, which is initially why we got Solar Professionals on board," he said.

Wagga Motors' initial meeting with Andrew Meurant from Solar Professionals wasn't about solar power exclusively but more about auditing the business's existing energy and power usage. "Andrew looked at how we could consolidate some of our meters and at other ways to knock our energy usage down," said Scott.

Scott was particularly complimentary of the way Solar Professionals took the time to understand Wagga Motors' systems. "I liked Andrew's style, which was not only about what he could sell me but what he could save us.

"The solar seed was planted with no apparent motivation – Solar Professionals provided a great platform for us to be able to see where we could achieve greater energy savings, which helped to establish our trust to then start talking about the next stage, which included solar."



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Why Solar Professionals?

Solar Professionals' quiet and unassuming behind-the-scenes approach has no doubt won some fans. "Our business is large and there is lots going on, so it was imperative the business we employed would not impose on our operation – in fact I barely knew Solar Professionals were on site during the installation period," said Scott.

Choosing a local company was also high on the list of prerequisites. "It's good to support local. Solar panels have been an industry that is a bit trendy and you don't often know who comes in and out of it. Employing local means you know them, you know where they come from and basically there is greater accountability."



The Solution

Solar Professionals, through months of careful planning, looked at each of Wagga Motors' different building sites to determine the individual requirements.

A 200kW system totalling 800 panels has been designed for Wagga Motors and when completed, will make it the largest solar panel installation in the area to date.

The first stage of the project has been completed with 680 x 250kW roof tilt mounted Trina Honey panels and 7 x 20kW – 27.6kW Aurora inverters installed. A further 30kW will be installed in early 2015 when construction of a new showroom has been completed.

The Benefits

Once completed, the custom designed solar system will produce approximately 280,000kW per year which on current prices equates to an annual saving of around \$60,000.

While the switch to solar has only just been flicked, Scott Braid said the cost savings were the greatest motivation to choosing solar. "We are expecting a three and half year payback period on the \$250k investment made to install the panels, which means that after this time the panels will have paid for themselves in energy savings."

Beyond the cost savings there are also some of the intangible benefits of people seeing the solar panels installed Scott explains. "This sends a positive message that Wagga Motors is a progressive business that thinks green, which is important."



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Making the sun your asset



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