

Laws governing renewable energy: roadblocks or encouragements?

Angela Daly¹

¹ Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Law, Brisbane, Australia

Abstract:

This presentation will examine the legal and regulatory frameworks which govern renewable energy technology, especially solar panels, and offer some observations on the extent to which these areas of law encourage the transition to renewables and a low-carbon scenario, or the extent to which they place obstacles in the way of this transition. The focus will be on international trade law, intellectual property law and sector-specific energy regulation. These legal regimes' governance of renewable energy technology will be assessed against two normative criteria: the extent to which they facilitate environmental sustainability and individual autonomy. The Australian situation on this matter will be used as an illustrative case-study. Australia has unique characteristics in terms of the transition to renewable energy here being driven - in the absence of political and private sector leadership - by energy 'prosumers' i.e. individuals producing electricity through rooftop solar which they consume themselves, and in some cases transferring excess energy back to the centralised grid. This contrasts with other countries, such as Scotland and Denmark, where the transition to renewables has been a much more centralised affair, and has implications for the optimal operation of law and regulation, as this presentation will outline.

Keywords: energy regulation, intellectual property, international trade, prosumers, renewables.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Angela Daly is Vice Chancellor's Research Fellow in QUT's Faculty of Law, a research associate in the Tilburg Institute for Law, Technology and Society and an adjunct research fellow in the Swinburne Institute for Social Research. She is a socio-legal scholar of technology and is the author of *Socio-Legal Aspects of the 3D Printing Revolution* (Palgrave 2016) and *Mind The Gap: Private Power, Online Information Flows and EU Law* (Hart 2016). At QUT, her main research project examines the legal and regulatory frameworks applicable to renewable energy technology.