

Switched-on Xenophon gets expert help for his party's energy plan



SA Best leader Nick Xenophon. Picture: AAP

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Prominent economist Ross Garnaut has helped former federal senator Nick Xenophon compile his party's energy plan ahead of the South Australian election, with the SA Best leader calling the state's electricity system "unreliable" and "patched up by dirty diesel generators".

Mr Xenophon confirmed Professor Garnaut, who advised Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard on climate change, had given SA Best advice on energy issues, but would not provide specifics.

"To use a Ross Garnaut line, we take input from many sources," Mr Xenophon said.

Professor Garnaut, president of renewable company Zen Energy, which has several large-scale projects in the pipeline alongside Sanjeev Gupta's GFG Alliance, said with the right policies South Australia was well-placed to "set itself up for the future" using its rich resources.

“I talk to the Prime Minister, I talk to Nick Xenophon, anyone who wants to talk to me about energy policy I’m happy to talk to if they’re thinking seriously about how to set the country and the state up for the future,” Professor Garnaut said.

He said he was advising the Energy Security Board on how best to implement the national energy guarantee, proposed by Malcolm Turnbull in October and slammed by the South Australian government as a “coal energy target”.

Mr Xenophon said his policy, to be released “within days”, would include “tougher regulations” and address the control of “gentailers”, an energy generator and retailer.

Energy affordability and security are major issues ahead of the March 17 election, with each party positioning itself as best equipped to negate power blackouts and bring down soaring power bills.

The Weatherill government yesterday pledged \$7.1 million for a 44MW solar project near Snowtown, 160km north of Adelaide.