

# Powerful start to solar campaign

THE push towards solar power took a step forward on the local and national front last week when community group Wodonga Albury Towards Climate Health (WATCH) joined the national Let's Build Big Solar campaign.

Members of the group met in front of the existing SP AusNet substation on Baranduda Drive, holding posters of a solar thermal plant in Spain which supplies a population similar to Albury-Wodonga.

"This is an ideal site to build a solar plant like the one in Spain, which operates day and night by storing the sun's energy in molten salt," WATCH chairperson Lauriston Muirhead said.

"Once it is built, the fuel for such a plant is free. This means that power costs go down instead of up. As long as we keep burning coal and gas, the price of what is left in the ground goes up and up.

"Everyone already knows that renewables do not create the pollu-



**THINKING SOLAR...** front row, Chris Sobey and Joy Grinham. Back row, Lizette Salmon, Paul Shelley, Lauriston Muirhead, John Salmon, Elizabeth Leathbridge, David Macilwain and Marian Steele.

tion and environmental damage of coal and gas. However, many people have not realised that our electricity bills will keep on rising until we move to renewable sources of energy. Australia is the sunniest country

on earth, so it is just commonsense to tap into this endless resource to provide us with large amounts of cheap, safe, clean electricity."

Also present at the launch was Paul Shelley, a commercial solar

installer, who visited the Gemasolar plant in Spain recently and supports the concept of building big solar plants in Australia.

"They are a long way ahead of us even in Spain and Australia needs to catch up," Mr Shelley said.

Mr Muirhead said a survey of 400 locals conducted by WATCH members last year showed more than 80 per cent of respondents wanted the government to do more on renewables.

"In the next two months WATCH and many other climate action groups across the country will conduct further surveys to determine the public's attitude to big solar plants," he said.

Mr Muirhead said WATCH would also be asking MPs Sussan Ley and Sophie Mirabella to show their support for big solar by ensuring that funds from the \$10 billion Clean Energy Fund were used for their construction.