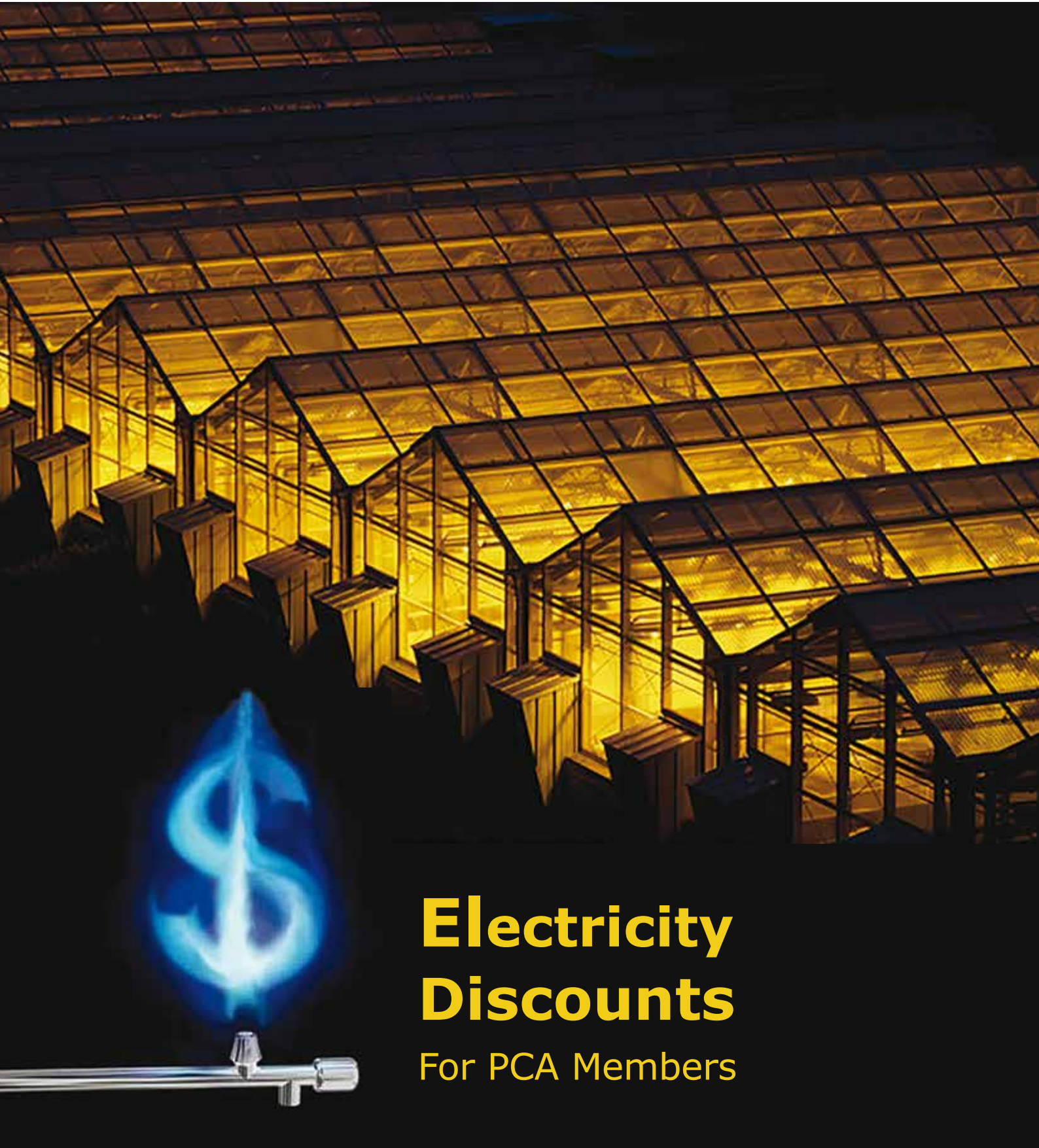




SOILLESS AUSTRALIA

Official Newsletter of the Australian Protected Cropping Industry
Volume 1 / 2014 Autumn www.protectedcroppingaustralia.com



Electricity Discounts

For PCA Members

- **Special Growers Pricing**
- **Local Service Facility,**
- **Telephone Technical Back-up**



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Front Cover:

Australian greenhouse growers already have the advantage of our long days and bright sunny climate. In the Netherlands, they have to use much more supplemental lighting and literally glow on dark winter afternoons.

Nevertheless in Australia, rising electricity costs means greenhouse growers must do everything they can to maintain profitability.

PCA membership is here to help.

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Any correspondence concerning the newsletter should be sent direct to the editor.



Electricity Discounts For PCA Members

PROTECTED Cropping Australia (PCA) strives to find out what greenhouse grower members really need, and to give solid returns on PCA membership.

For over 12 months, PCA Deputy Chairman Michael Mifsud has been scrutinising and personally trialling the exclusive energy deal below from Progressive Green (PG) and Utilacor, to save each member thousands of dollars off their electricity bill.

The first 20 PCA full and affiliate members that approach PG/Utilacor, get a **FREE \$1,500 analysis of how to improve their power usage.**

All subsequent members pay only \$500 for the comparative report, which normally costs \$1,500.

If then you choose to sign up with PG/Utilacor, you will potentially save 1,000's of dollars each year.

Michael Mifsud paid full price for the PG service and now saves more than \$5,000 pa. He was able to negotiate an exclusive deal for PCA members.

When And How

Progressive Green is set up to respond to price fluctuations in the wholesale electricity market.

They analyse and monitor each client's individual operation to optimise thier power consumption, according to cost variability.

PG will use a variety of methods to help PCA members avoid the price peaks in electricity, including advice on;

- One's ability to control how and when they use power; whether it be partial or complete load shedding.
- Alternative purchasing strategies and hedging structures to cover load that can't be controlled with fixed price options.
- When and how to switch over to backup generation.
- Integration technology to control & monitor remotely.

All you have to do is be either a PCA full or affiliate member and contact PG/Luke Murnane on 1 300 080 608.

If you need to double check or renew your PCA membership number or status, ring PCA / Saskia phone 0414 333 996 or 02 9907 6633.

Luke Murnane at PG will need your last six months of power bills to give you feedback on how to start saving. It is completely confidential and the system tweaks that lead to economic benefits will be laid out for you in black and white.

If you decide to switch over to PG, they and Utilacor will continue to analyse your usage and offer on-going feedback about how to minimise power costs by efficient use of the wholesale electricity market.

PCA Director's Case Study

For the last 12 months Michael Mifsud has put PG to the test and taken more than \$5,000 off his annual power costs, and he now wholeheartedly endorses PG to PCA members.

Michael is in the large consumption category using over 160 Mega Watt Hour (MWhr) pa.

He now purchases his electricity from the wholesale spot market which, for the majority of time is generally between 4-6c/MWhr (plus network and market charges).

For short periods of peak demand (which is historically less than 20 hours pa or 0.3% of the year) PG prompts Michael to switch off mains power over to his generator.

Michael gets 24 hours' notice by text, before prices per kilowatt hour increase at peak periods, to move to his alternate power supply.

This is called 'Wholesale Pool Purchasing' and he gets lots of text prompts and the system works very smoothly.



PCA Deputy Chairman's 2nd property 'Glasshouse Farms' is next in line to get the Progressive Green energy supply make over, after more than \$5,000 savings pa at his Paulmar Hydroponics site

Electricity Discounts

Progressive Green recommends rent-to-buy generators as another cost-effective way to achieve alternative power supply in peak periods and blackouts.

Michael has two sites where he grows NFT lettuce, and the 2013 PG trial and case study was done at his low-tech site where he achieved more than \$5,000 pa saving.

It goes without saying that Michael is now in the process of switching his high-tech *Glasshouse Farms* site over to PG.

Glasshouse Farms has an automated movable bench system designed by Michael and his father which allows their labour costs to be halved. At this site they grow Symphony Lettuce that is exclusive to Coles.

Another technique that Michael will test soon for more savings, will allow PG and Utilacor to remotely start and stop mains supply to his site, on his behalf.

Being a farmer himself, Michael knows what PCA grower members need and that one of our biggest costs is electricity bills. If PCA can help members in their hip pocket, then it will justify their Full or Affiliate Membership. Win : Win

Energy Management Masterminds

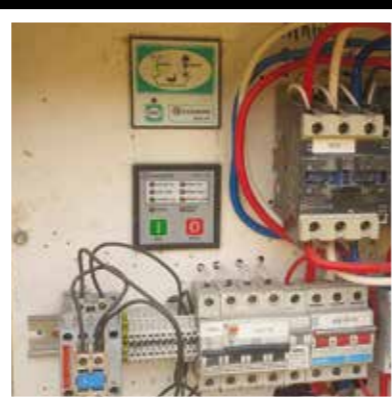
Progressive Green is the electricity retailer and Utilacor is a related company acting as an advisor and energy broker per se.

Retail energy contracts are complex and Utilacor assists your business by sourcing market competitive prices, utilising the unique kWatch® system to present a detailed analysis of all offers available.

They do the hard work for you, identifying the best offer for your business regardless of the complexity of supply available.



A close-up of Michael's powerboard indicating whether mains or generator power is in use



kWatch® analyses all the different power pricing offers and provides a range of options on the suitability of each to meet your farm's specific energy needs.

You can then easily and thoroughly review the benefits of each offer in line with your business's usage patterns.

Large vs. Small Farms

A large greenhouse operation spends around \$3,000 pm on electricity, or 160 MWhr pa.

PG generally look after those in the greater than 160 MWhr category, while Utilacor will negotiate and help find better deals with retailers for PCA members who use less than 160 MWhr/pa.

Jump in quick to be one of the first 20 PCA members to get the initial comprehensive comparative report, for free.



Generators are useful when electricity prices peak

Rising Input Costs Threaten Australian Growers

RISING input costs are the biggest threat to the future of Australian vegetable growers, according to grower responses released by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES).

A staggering 80 per cent of vegetable growers have reported that increasing costs of production are the largest threat to their future viability.

"These results come as no surprise to the vegetable industry. Australian vegetable growers have been suffering due to rising input costs, especially electricity prices, for some time," said Mr Kurt Hermann, AUSVEG, spokesperson.

In 2012-13, hired labour is estimated to have been the largest production cost, followed by contracts paid, fertiliser, seed, **and fuel**, oil and grease. **Moreover, it is estimated that electricity prices will increase by 13 per cent from 2011-12.**



"Many vegetable growers have already implemented and exhausted potential productivity improvements. As such, reducing operating costs, which are generally out of growers' control, is essential to ensuring the future viability of the vegetable industry," said Mr Hermann.

SOURCE: AusVeg 11/2/14

Apply Now: Progressive Green Electricity Discounts for PCA Members

** Discount offer is exclusively available for PCA Full & Affiliate members, in every state except NT.

Name PCA Membership #

Address

Phone Email

Approx Current Power Consumption (MW/hr pa or \$/pm)

Current Supply Mechanisms (Mains power, Generator, Solar etc)

For more information

Progressive Green Luke Murnane Ph 1300 080 608 Luke.Murnane@progressivegreen.com.au www.progressivegreen.com.au

Utilacor Steve Mackenzie Ph 03 8832 0355 steve.mackenzie@utilacor.com.au www.utilacor.com.au

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Richard, Technical Advisor

Over the past twenty years, the landscape of greenhouse horticulture has seen radical changes. But a lot more change is yet to come. Increasingly, producers and growers want to be in control. They have to operate on a knife-edge. AIS-Greenworks works in close cooperation with technical consultants from Grodan to provide tailor-made advice, through grower seminars as well as personal site visits, geared towards Precision Growing. Precision Growing yields higher returns at lower costs and fits perfectly within the sustainable management strategies of the future.

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