



Fact Sheet

Quick guide to installing solar photovoltaic (PV) panels

Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels are a great way for people to play their part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and help Australia make the transformation to a lower carbon economy.

PVs convert sunlight into electricity. They are a good choice for city areas as they do not make noise and are usually out of the way on your roof.

PVs have no moving parts, require little maintenance and can be expected to last more than 20 years. However, if you are considering getting a solar PV panel, it is important that you choose the system that is right for your needs. It also needs to be installed properly so as to maximise its performance and ensure that it is safe.

Please see below for a few simple steps that you should take before you take the decision to have a solar panel installed.

1. **Do your research:** Is the installation of solar PV panel likely to suit your individual circumstances? What system size would be appropriate for your needs?

A 1.5 kilowatt system would provide about 25% of the electricity needs for a family of four with average energy consumption. Is your roof suitable? Ideally solar panels are installed in a north-facing position with minimal shading.

2. **Obtain quotes and understand the installation contract:** Talk to several Clean Energy Council (CEC) accredited installers to obtain quotes.¹ Ask questions about the amount of sunshine in your area, temperature performance ratings for panels, warranties and any hidden costs such as installation of a new meter. You should also ask about the pay back period for your investment in the solar panel in terms of savings on your electricity bills. Installation can be more difficult and costly depending on the construction and design of your roof. Make sure you read the fine print on any contract document carefully and are clear about how long you may have to wait before your panel is installed.
3. **Choose a system:** Choose the quoted system that best suits your needs. The CEC accredited installer will then design a PV system to meet your requirements. Make sure to ask whether the solar PV panels, inverter and design (lay out) meet the relevant Australian standards.

A list of approved panels and inverters is available on the CEC website at www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au.

The CEC also advises that you ask about the installer's accreditation and experience and check whether they offer any performance guarantees or service agreements.

4. **Obtain approval for connection:** You will need to speak to your electricity retailer and electricity distributor about connection and approval of your solar PV system.

The CEC has flowcharts showing the 'Connection Procedures of each State and Territory, available at www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au.

5. **Install the system and connect to the grid:** If you are planning to connect your system to the grid be aware that this should only be done by a CEC accredited installer who is also a licensed electrician. Your state government electrical regulator will also have specific requirements for your system to be connected to the grid.

6. **Apply for rebates/Solar Credits:** You may be eligible for Solar Credits, feed-in tariffs or other government rebates or support. In some cases, your installer will be able to advise you on these.

For Solar Credits advice you can contact the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator at <http://www.orer.gov.au>

7. **Post installation:** If you are connecting to the grid your solar PV system may be inspected by your local electricity authority, depending on the state or territory you are located in. If you have any concerns that your system does not meet the relevant Australian standards or has not been installed correctly you can file a complaint against the installer with the CEC.

For all complaints of a commercial nature, you should contact the Office of Fair Trading or the equivalent body in your state or territory.

Further information:

The Clean Energy Council 'Consumer Guide to Buying Solar Panels'

www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/cec/resourcecentre/Consumer-Info/solarPV-guide

The 'Install Solar Power' guide at Living Greener (Government website maintained by DCCEE)

<http://www.livinggreener.gov.au/take-action/save-energy/install-solar-power>

For Solar Credits information contact the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator

<http://www.orer.gov.au>

ⁱ The Australian Government does not accredit or license installers – the Clean Energy Council accredits installers who are also licensed electricians and who must install solar systems which meet Australian and international standards. Warranties for the quality of installations remain the responsibility of installers.