



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Solar Homes and Communities Plan

Guidelines for Residential Applicants

May 2008

Published by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

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ISBN: 978-1-921297-58-8

These guidelines are available electronically at www.environment.gov.au/rebates

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Solar Homes and Communities Plan Guidelines for residential applicants

The program

The Solar Homes and Communities Plan encourages the long-term use of photovoltaic technology to generate electricity from sunlight and to increase the use of renewable energy in Australia.

The key objectives of the program are to:

- reduce greenhouse emissions;
- assist in the development of the Australian photovoltaic industry; and
- increase public awareness of renewable energy.

The program provides rebates to homeowners who install photovoltaic power systems on their principal place of residence, and grants to community organisations that install photovoltaic power systems for educational purposes.

Important information

A household income means test has been introduced (see page 4). The means test came into effect at midnight on 13 May 2008 as part of the 2008-09 Federal Budget.

Requirements for community buildings are detailed in separate *Guidelines for Community Buildings*.

The rebate

For new systems

Applicants who fully satisfy the conditions for residential photovoltaic systems will receive a rebate of \$8 per peak watt¹ of output of the new photovoltaic component of the system up to a maximum of \$8,000.

For extensions to existing systems

Applicants who have previously received a rebate from the Australian Government for a photovoltaic system that is smaller than one kilowatt can receive an extension rebate to bring the existing system up to a one kilowatt size.

Applicants with an existing photovoltaic system, who have never received an Australian Government rebate for that system, can receive a rebate for a one kilowatt extension to the existing system.

Applicants who fully satisfy these conditions can receive extension rebates of \$5 per peak watt of output of the new photovoltaic component of the system up to a maximum of \$5,000.

Eligibility requirements

In order to qualify for a photovoltaic rebate, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they can comply with all the following requirements:

Eligible systems

Residential rebates are for photovoltaic systems that are connected to a main-grid or are very close to a main-grid. Any system eligible for a rebate under the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program is ineligible for the Solar Homes and Communities Plan rebate. Applicants should discuss which rebate to apply for with an accredited designer and installer.

Rebates will only be granted for a single system on any given residence.

A system's rated peak watt of output will be used in assessing eligibility and calculating the rebate amount. The minimum eligible amount of new photovoltaic components to be installed is 450 watt peak output. There is no maximum amount, although total rebate amounts are capped.

Equipment which does not comprise a complete photovoltaic system (defined as including new panels, new regulator, new batteries where applicable, and new inverter) will be regarded as an extension to an existing system and will attract the lower level of rebate.

A rebate will NOT be paid for equipment installed without pre-approval being granted.

¹ A system's rated peak watt of output is based on the nominal peak watt rating of approved modules under standard test conditions as identified by IEC61215 or equivalent.

Means test

Households with a taxable family income of \$100,000 or more are ineligible for the rebate.

Taxable family income is determined by combining the taxable income of the applicant and any spouse in the most recently completed tax year prior to pre approval application receipt. For the purposes of the Solar Homes and Communities Plan, spouse and taxable income have the same meaning as in the Tax Assessment Act 1997. Taxable family income does not include income earned by any other person residing at the dwelling of the applicant(s), for example, children or boarders.

Although no documentation supporting your family income is required to make an application for the rebate, you may be required to provide suitable evidence of family taxable income at a future date. Suitable evidence of taxable family income may include the respective Notice of Assessment/s produced by the Australian Taxation Office.

Installation at owner's principal place of residence

The photovoltaic system must be installed at the applicant's (owner's) principal place of residence, as shown on the electoral roll. The Australian Government will only fund one rebate per residence. An applicant may qualify for a rebate for a new house under construction providing he/she can demonstrate that it will become their principal place of residence on completion.

Owner occupied houses and owner occupied units within a body corporate may be principle places of residence. An owner of a unit within an existing multi-unit development may be eligible for a rebate where he or she is the owner occupier of an individual unit and will be the owner of the entire photovoltaic system.

Only one rebate is available per residence. If someone buys a property which has an existing photovoltaic system for which the previous owner received a rebate for a system, the new owner will be considered the rebate recipient.

Competent designer and installer

To be eligible for a rebate the applicant must be able to demonstrate that the person who carries out the photovoltaic installation is accredited (full or provisional) for design and installation of photovoltaic systems by the Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy. Details of accredited designers and installers are available at www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/

A licensed electrical contractor must carry out the electrical work associated with the wiring in the building and in the power system, in compliance with regulations in the state or territory in which the installation is undertaken.

Rebates will not be paid for systems that are designed or installed by contractors who do not meet these requirements.

Equipment system design and installation requirements

The power system equipment must be permanently mounted in a robust manner and "hard-wired" into the building's electrical circuitry.

The dwelling, and any other structures on or in the place of residence on which the power system equipment will be installed, must be structures that satisfy the local government building requirements. Written evidence of compliance may be required.

To receive the rebate all the equipment in the system must be new and meet the relevant Australian Standards.

All systems, components and equipment must comply with, and be designed and installed in accordance with all relevant Australian Standards or, where such does not exist, with the relevant international standard. Australian Standards include, but are not limited to:

- AS/NZS 3000 – Electrical installations
- AS 4509 – Stand-alone power systems
- AS 4086 – Secondary batteries for use with stand-alone power systems
- AS 4777 – Grid connection of energy systems via inverters
- AS/NZS 5033 – Installation of photovoltaic (PV) arrays (currently under review)
- AS/NZS 1170 – Structural design actions; and
- any other standard called upon by the above or other relevant standards.

Photovoltaic modules must be tested and certified to IEC61215 or IEC61646 by a laboratory registered under the International Electrotechnical Commission's (IEC) CB scheme to test these standards.

System installation must also meet all relevant codes of practice, building codes, local government and legislative requirements.

For upgrades to existing systems, the entire system must comply with all current safety and installation requirements.

Warranty

The supplier must provide a performance statement setting out agreed load and other system parameters. A minimum ten-year performance warranty must be

offered on solar panels installed as part of the system. The onus is on the new owner of the photovoltaic system to obtain a warranty from the supplier.

It is in the applicant's interest, wherever possible, to seek more than one quote for the supply and installation of the system, and obtain details of the equipment in relation to the assessed load, warranty and maintenance contracts offered.

It is essential for stand alone systems, that a detailed load assessment is undertaken and the appliances to be connected are agreed in writing. Where a generator is part of the system design, the expected run time must be stated.

Metering and notices

The benefits of the program will be enhanced by the installation of metering inside the living area of the residences concerned, where occupants and visitors can readily see the impact on electricity consumption of the photovoltaic system and the appliances being used.

Installers are encouraged to offer householders the option of such metering with sensing connected to the inverter and/or the incoming mains.

Notices at the entrance to the dwelling are also recommended, advising visitors that the house is powered by solar electricity.

Rights reserved by the Australian Government

Applicants should not assume that they will receive a rebate on submitting an application.

The Program Manager has sole and absolute discretion whether an applicant is eligible for a rebate and, in particular, whether the applicant complies with the conditions and procedures set out in these guidelines.

Changes to program guidelines

The Australian Government reserves the right, at its sole and absolute discretion, and at any time, to change any or all of these guidelines, including to remove all or any of the guidelines or to introduce new or additional guidelines.

If the Australian Government changes or discontinues this rebate program, all applicants whose complete applications have been received before the date of change or discontinuation will be entitled to receive the rebate at the rate applicable on that date if they are assessed as eligible.

The Australian Government retains the flexibility to adjust the size of rebate in response to demand for the program funds.

Application procedure

Who can apply?

The rebate applicant must be the owner of the photovoltaic system (after installation), unless otherwise agreed with the Program Manager in writing.

When should the application be lodged?

The *Residential application for pre-approval* must be submitted to and approved by the Program Manager before the system installation commences.

A rebate will NOT be paid for equipment installed without pre-approval being granted.

Pre-approval details

The rebate applicant should complete an *Residential application for pre-approval* and send it, with all supporting documentation to:

Solar Homes and Communities Plan Manager
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601

The accredited system designer is also required to sign the application.

As noted above, it is recommended that applicants seek more than one quote for the design, supply and installation of the system.

Notification of pre-approval

Applicants will be notified in writing if the pre-approval has been granted or not within six weeks from receipt of the complete application.

The notification of pre-approval will set out any additional compliance requirements. The pre-approval will expire nine months after the date it is granted.

On receipt of pre-approval, successful applicants should immediately notify their installer so that materials can be ordered and installation commenced.

System installation

Systems must be commissioned and all required rebate application documentation received by the Program Manager before the expiration of pre-approval. Extensions of time for installations will not be granted.

If pre-approval expires, the applicant will be required to re-apply under the guidelines current at the time.

Installation reporting

A copy of the *Residential installation report* will be sent to the applicant with the notification of pre-approval. When the system has been installed, the applicant must forward to the Program Manager the completed *Residential installation report*, including the attachments and at least three photographs clearly showing:

- the position of the solar panel array including the building on which it is mounted;
- mounting and external cabling;
- the battery positioning, cabling and fusing (where batteries are used); and
- the inverter and control system layout.

The report shall also include:

- a basic diagram of the installation clearly showing the location of the modules, inverter and batteries with respect to the buildings, and clearly labelling each building and showing the direction of north; and
- the agreed load assessment and expected system output.

The *Residential installation report* and associated rebate claim must be signed by both the applicant and the accredited installer.

Payment

Payment of a rebate will be made on receipt, by the Program Manager, of a fully and correctly completed *Residential installation report*. Applicants can generally expect to receive their rebate within six weeks of the receipt of the *Residential installation report*. The Program Manager will forward the rebate to the applicant or, where requested in writing by the applicant, to a relevant third party (e.g. the installer).

Applicant's rights and responsibilities

The photovoltaic system installed is to operate on the proposed building for a minimum of five years and may be inspected (upon reasonable request) by an approved representative of the Program Manager.

During this five year period, the owner of the system, may be asked by the Program Manager or authorised agent for information on the system's output and performance.

The rebate provided shall be repaid by the applicant if any of the conditions in the guidelines are found to have been breached during the first five years after installation of the photovoltaic equipment,

It would be prudent for an owner of a system to take out appropriate insurance to cover any damage to the system (e.g. lightning strikes), as a second rebate is not payable in such instances.

No Commonwealth warranty

There is no warranty given or implied by the Commonwealth on any aspect of photovoltaic systems funded through the Solar Homes and Communities Plan and the Commonwealth accepts no representations or responsibility whatsoever for the quality of any other feature of photovoltaic systems for which rebates or grants are approved.

Indemnity

The applicant acknowledges that neither the Commonwealth nor any of their authorised representatives accept any liability in respect of any claim or cause of action arising out of, or in relation to any photovoltaic system or any system that is the subject of funding assistance. The applicant agrees that he/she will indemnify and keep indemnified the Commonwealth for any claim or liability arising out of or in relation to the photovoltaic system that is the subject of this application.

Financial and legal impacts

Applicants are advised to seek independent professional legal and financial advice regarding the potential impact of the rebate on their own individual circumstances.

Further information

Further information on the Solar Homes and Communities Plan is available at www.environment.gov.au/rebates or by calling the information line on **1800 808 571**.