



Installing solar panels in your home

This Regulatory Guide contains information home owners should read before getting solar panels installed on a property. The information is about photovoltaic solar panel systems which provide power to your home. It is not about solar hot water systems.

Installing solar panels involves building and electrical work.

Installing solar panels - electrical work

- Electrical work for all solar panel installations must be undertaken by a licensed electrician. Search for a licensed electrician at www.cbos.tas.gov.au
- In order to be eligible for Federal Government Rebates, solar panels must be installed by an electrician that has Clean Energy Council accreditation. Search for an accredited installer at www.solaraccreditation.com.au

Installing solar panels - building work

As an owner, you can contract a **‘competent person’** to do the building work for a solar panel installation. For example, this could be attaching the panels to a roof or a support structure. However, a licensed electrician must supervise the work. The electrician can also do the building work if they are competent.

What does ‘competent person’ mean?

A **‘competent person’** is someone who has enough training, experience or knowledge to allow them to do the work safely as well as working with any technical requirements.

Getting planning and building approval

You might need to get planning and building approval before anything is installed.

An owner or their agent can apply for planning and building approval. An **agent** is someone acting on behalf of an owner. This might be the solar company, the electrician or someone else. Everyone involved in the project should discuss who will ask about and apply for planning and building approval before any work starts. That way, everyone knows who is responsible for what.

For planning approval requirements, talk to your local council.

Building approval is different to planning approval. Building approval requirements depend on whether the work is **low** risk, notifiable (**medium** risk) or permit (**high** risk). This depends on factors like the size of the panels and whether they will be flat on your roof. Your installer should be able to tell you if you need approval from a building surveyor or council permit authority. **Make sure you talk to your installer about this before any work starts.**

Unlicensed / illegal / defective work

There are penalties for installing solar panels without the required approvals in place. Local council can give the option of applying for retrospective approval but they can also make home owners remove the installation. You don't want to take this risk. So, it is extremely important that, **before work starts**, everyone involved discusses and decides who will ask about and apply for approval.

A licensed electrician must inspect and fix any unlicensed electrical work done previously. CBOS may take action against anyone undertaking unlicensed, illegal or defective work.

Getting connection approval

Before installing solar panels, your installer needs to get connection approval from the energy network provider and retailer. You should check with your installer to make sure they have done this. In Tasmania the energy network provider is TasNetworks. However if you live on the Bass Strait Islands contact Hydro Tasmania.

Insurance

Check with your insurance company to make sure your home insurance covers the solar panel system.

Contracts

Depending on the price of the work, the person arranging the installation may need to have a written contract with you, before the project starts. This applies if the installation is on a residential property and:

- is costing over \$20,000 or
- is part of a bigger project costing over \$20,000

You **must** be provided with a copy of:

- the signed contract and
- the *Residential Building Consumer Guide* available from CBOS website at www.cbos.tas.gov.au

For installations under \$20,000 where you don't have a written contract, at the very minimum ask for a written quote from the installer.

Keeping records

You should keep copies of documents relating to the solar panel installation in case issues arise. These can include:

- ☐ The contract or written quote from installer/solar company
- ☐ Any manuals and warranty information for the system
- ☐ Planning information from the local council
- ☐ Building approval documents from the installer, the local council and the building surveyor (if you have one)

- Solar panel system documents - the electrician performing the installation will provide you with a complete set of documents

Disputes

You have rights under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL). It depends on the problem as to what action you can take:

- **Faults with the solar panel system** – contact the retailer or manufacturer
- **Defective electrical work** – contact the electrician who installed the system
- **Defective building work** – contact the person who did the building work (this could be the electrician) and the building surveyor (if there was one).

If you can't resolve the issue yourself, send details to CBOS using the online Contact Us form at www.cbos.tas.gov.au. An officer will contact you to discuss options. Be aware you may need to get your own legal advice. More information about the ACL is available at www.consumerlaw.gov.au

Solar panel repairs

If a solar panel installation is damaged (for example in a storm) contact your insurer if you have insurance.

If you don't have insurance, contact a qualified person to discuss repairing or replacing the system.

Important

- All **electrical work** must be done by a licensed electrician
- A competent person can do the **building work** on solar panel repairs/replacements (this may be the electrician).

Contact details

Local council

Your local council can give advice on planning requirements and building approvals for solar panel installations.

You can find the contact details for your local council on their website or at www.lgat.tas.gov.au

Clean Energy Council

The Clean Energy Council accredits solar panel installers in Australia and provides information to consumers about purchasing solar panels. They have a database of accredited installers on their website.

Website: www.solaraccreditation.com.au

Phone: 03 9929 4141

Email: CEC have an online enquiry form

Clean Energy Regulator

The Clean Energy Regulator is a Federal Government body who administers the rebates for solar installations under the Small-Scale Renewable Energy Scheme.

Website: www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au

Phone: 1300 553 542

Email: enquiries@cleanenergyregulator.gov.au

TasNetworks

TasNetworks is one of Tasmania's electricity distributors.

Website: www.tasnetworks.com.au

Phone: 1300 137 008 (general enquiries on solar connections)

Email: TasNetworks have an online enquiry form

Hydro Tasmania

Hydro Tasmania is one of Tasmania's electricity distributors for the Bass Strait Islands.

Website: www.hydro.com.au

Phone: 1300 360 411

Email: contactus@hydro.com.au

Document Development History

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