

Solar Buyers Guide

Everything you want to know about investing in the solar PV system you need.



UNDERSTANDING SOLAR

- System basics- what's included and how it works
- The four steps to buying solar
- Components of a basic solar system
- Variables in quotes
- Finding the system that suits your needs
- Paperwork and fees associated with an installation

FOUR STEPS TO SOLAR INSTALLATION

Step 1 Get Quotes

- Use reputable companies
- Compare apples with apples
- Research your options

Step 2 Site Inspection

- Check and get photo of meter box
- Take photos of roof and any hazards for installers

Step 3 Contract

- Sign and return contract and copy of electricity bill
- Pay Deposit
- Schedule Install

Step 4 Install

- Usually takes one day
- You will need to be present at the beginning or end to sign paperwork
- Final payment due on day of install

SYSTEM COMPONENTS

What's Included?

There are THREE main components in any solar system- the inverter, the panels and the racking/mounting. Below is a brief breakdown of what they do and what to look for when buying a system.

The Inverter- the heart of your solar system, it converts the DC current produced by the panels into usable 240V AC electricity. We can supply a good budget inverter, but are often more comfortable recommending a premium inverter, as it is the hardest working component. Our premium range of inverters also have better Wi-Fi monitoring capabilities. All inverters come with a 5 year warranty as standard, but have the option to have that extended.

The panels- we mainly supply monocrystalline (mono) panels. Mono panels are slightly more efficient, and therefore are considered an important part of our standard and premium ranges. These are highly recommended for installs across the country. Poly panels are still a great choice and can help reduce the price of a system, which is why we use them in our Home Saver Range.

Racking and Mounting system- we only use fully engineered, cyclone rated aluminum roof mounting systems.

VARIABLES IN QUOTING A SYSTEM

Having these details and photos of your meter box ready will speed up your quote process!

- Your electricity usage and expectations from a system- the size, monitoring options and price range of the products you want/need
- Roof Type- different racking is needed for tin, tile, clip-lock etc.
- Roof Size and Aspect- North? East? West? What will fit and where can affect inverter choice
- Single or Three Phase Supply- different supplies need different inverters
- Meter box- if your meter box is not up to the network regulators' standard for connection (this can be quite expensive, but necessary)
- The current STC Rebate price- we use this rebate to help discount the price of your system. This rebate is determined by system size, installation date and location
- Location- we employ our own electricians and have to pay them for the travel, this is included in your quote



CHOOSING THE RIGHT SYSTEM FOR YOUR NEEDS

There are many variables to consider when deciding what system to buy, here's a brief breakdown and guide to work with.

System size-

- These days a standard, single phase residential install is a 5 kW inverter with around 6 kW in panels. This puts a great dent in the average families' electricity bill.
- As a rule of thumb, 1 kW per \$100 on your bill will see the best results, however, this does not take into account your circumstances, how and when you use electricity, your roof space, or what your plans are for the future (kids, pool, air conditioning, retirement, etc.).
- Chat with our team for a more personalized analysis.

SYSTEM RANGES

Essentially all solar systems do the same thing- they convert UV rays into electricity. Most have comparable standard warranties. What matters the most, is whether the company will still be around to honour those warranties.

You can break the entire industry down into three levels of quality

- Home Saver- these usually include polycrystalline panels coupled with a Chinese manufactured inverter, these are at the more affordable end of the price spectrum. (Canadian, JA, Seraphim, Sungrow, Sola X)
- Premium System- A quality electrical company will generally recommend a system of this level (Trina, REC, Phono, Longi, SMA, Fronius)
- Ultra Premium- These systems contain components that are usually European made, manufactured by well established companies within the industry. (Solar Watt, LG, Hyundai Heavy Industries, Fronius, SMA)
- If you're comparing quotes, please ask your rep about the country of manufacture and quality of the system, you're comparing it to so that you can be sure they're similar.

PAPERWORK AND FEES ASSOCIATED WITH INSTALLATION OF A SOLAR SYSTEM

Applications

- Network connection- approval from your network provider to install your system.
- Electrical Works Request, aka EWR- request for your meter to be changed, this is sent to your network provider who forwards it to your electricity retailer.
- STC Rebate- this rebate is used to discount the price of your system, we will need you to sign a form and provide proof of address.

All of these applications are handled by our staff in head office.

Fees

- A good company, who have completed a site inspection of your property, will not charge variations for additional work on the day of installation. Looks out for clauses in contracts such as "is your home system ready?" as these can lead to costly variations charged on the day.
- In almost all cases, the only "hidden" fee associated with this process comes from your electricity retailer, for the meter exchange. In QLD this sits around the \$400 mark, in TAS it's about \$180, give or take, and will show up in your next electricity bill.
- Cleaning your system- we offer system service and cleaning at \$249 for all clients who buy their system from us. We recommend this is done yearly, but is only mandatory once every 5 years to ensure your 10 year workmanship warranty remains valid.

SOLAR MYTHS

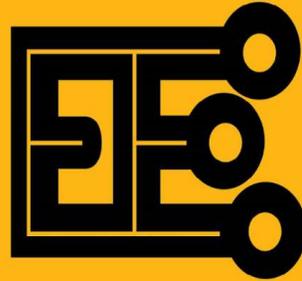
One of the biggest arguments we come up against quite often when discussing the benefits of investing in solar is that the reduction in feed in tariffs from the \$0.50 mark makes it a waste of money.

What most people don't realise is the lucky few who are still on those feed in tariffs generally paid a LOT more for their system, which are usually quite small (a 6 kW system on the \$0.50 tariff would have cost close to \$20 000)

On a 6.5 kW system, the average minimum projected saving is approximately \$300 per quarter, and an approximate maximum around \$600. Of course this all depends on your electricity usage habits, and the feed in tariff offered by your electricity retailer. In QLD, Origin is currently offering \$0.20 feed in tariff for single phase systems, and Energy Australia is offering \$0.161 for three-phase systems.

Electricity is something we use every day of our lives, it's not a bill that will ever stop- but by investing in solar, by installing your own roof top power plant, you can reduce the future impact on your bank account from rising electricity costs.

The next biggest myth would be that the STC Rebate (used by most installers to discount the price of a system) is going to disappear or reduce rapidly if you don't sign up here and now.... The truth is it can fluctuate from week to week, but only drops majorly once a year, on January 1st, hence the lead up to Christmas is a very busy time for anyone in the solar business, with everyone trying to get in before the drop.



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