

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Committee, CCFEW \(REPS\)](#)  
**Subject:** submission: Inquiry into solar panel reuse and recycling in Australia  
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To the committee,

It's not economical. The aluminium can be stripped for recycling. The rest of the panel has some plastic on the back, a sheet of glass on the front and a bead of silicone. Some copperwire and a tiny bit of silver and indium.

Have you seen the price of corflute at bunnings? That rigid plastic sheet backing is worth its weight in gold. As a formed sheet. Not so much as recycled pellets.

There's not one single kind of solar panel silicon. The solar cells are doped using different processes resulting in vastly dissimilar materials. This makes it difficult to process between batches and results in a more expensive to produce cell when accounting for logistics and overheads and a lower quality cell.

The most valuable immediate product is the 5mm glass sheet and the recovery of intact glass should be the primary focus of solar panel recycling. If I could buy that glass for \$5 a panel I'd double glaze every window in the house. That's a better price than what a solar farm would get with the cost of freight and crushing it to make beer bottles.

In a broader scope, electronics -with the exception of sensitive electronics like avionics or military- have greater immediate value if they can be repaired or repurposed without being shredded for raw materials. As a consumer I buy a lot of broken electronics from Japanese recycling centres. The EESS is the worst thing to happen to electronics recycling because it made it illegal to replace a 5c capacitor in a very low voltage system. Something powered by a AA battery is treated as being as dangerous to self repair as working on high voltage power lines. Hide the potatoes. Try to get a quote for repairing a TV remote -not that electricians receive any electronics repair training but the ill considered legislation requires it anyway- from an electrician like the EESS requires and you'll quickly understand why the framework for electrical and electronics recycling is broken.

Australian landfills should be required to recover electrical goods, appliances, solar panels and electronics to attempt to be sold as scrap or junk intact. A lot of them have policies explicitly forbidding them from doing so.

A levy, fine or guarantee could be imposed on solar installers and importers that is refunded if the solar panels last for a period of time. This would deter them from offering cheap panels that fail within a short period of time and incentivize reliability, reducing the need for recycling.

To tackle the problem of e-waste requires a rethink of the scope of the EESS, the role of waste recovery and landfills and recycling. There should also be limitations on the wholesale shredding for raw materials. Additionally instead of funding R&D -As an expert I suggest that I get to eat all the money- funding should be diverted to developing sustainable professional pathways for the reuse and repair of e-waste instead of simple shredding.

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