

Inquiry into Solar Panel Reuse and Recycling in Australia

Federal

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Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is a peak industry association representing more than 3,000 electrical contractors across Australia employing well over 10,000 electricians, majority of which are small and medium sized businesses. We are recognised by industry, government and the community as a leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. You can visit our website at www.masterelectricians.com.au

With the rapid adoption of solar panels in Australia, end-of-life management has often been overlooked. Given their average lifespan of 25–30 years,¹ it is essential for the government to establish a widespread system for safe recycling and disposal of panels before a surge of the existing 4.3 million installations² reach the end of their service life.

MEA recently contributed to a joint industry submission, led by the Smart Energy Council, on ‘Solar Stewardship’ and the responsible recycling of solar panels. The submission calls for a national mandatory product stewardship scheme for solar PV panels to prevent the mass disposal of decommissioned panels without recycling. The submission is attached for the Committee’s review.

We look forward to the development of the system and remain available for further discussion.

¹ Ryan Kennedy “How long do residential solar panels last?” *PV Magazine Australia* [06 August 2025] < [How long do residential solar panels last? – pv magazine Australia](#)>

² “Rooftop solar and storage report” *Clean Energy Regulator* [July – December 2025] <[rooftop-solar-and-storage-biannual-report_july-december-2025.pdf](#)>

JOINT STATEMENT

Mandatory product stewardship for solar photovoltaic (PV) panels



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

REUSE MARKET COLLAPSE Until October 2024, Australia exported up to 80% of its decommissioned solar panels for reuse due to rapid price deflation of new panels. Australia must now manage this growing domestic waste stream with insufficient capacity.

GROWING ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL COSTS Without a coordinated national solution, the consequences are escalating:

- Installers and households are stockpiling panels due to a lack of affordable and accessible disposal options.
- Reports of illegal dumping in regional and rural areas are increasing.
- Crude de-framing for small amounts of aluminium is occurring, leading to pollution and the loss of more valuable materials.

THE RECYCLING INDUSTRY IS ON THE BRINK Australia's recycling industry has invested in world-class technology capable of 95%+ material recovery, but it is at risk of decline.

- **A Logistics Trap:** The cost of transporting panels to a recycling facility is far greater than the cost of sending them to a local landfill, making the environmentally superior option uneconomic.
- **No Feedstock, No Future:** Without a steady, reliable supply of panels – which this pilot would provide – recyclers cannot achieve economies of scale. They may shut down, risking the permanent loss of jobs, sovereign capability, and investor confidence.

ALIGNMENT WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES A national stewardship scheme for solar PV panels is directly aligned to the Federal Government's core objectives.

- **"Future Made in Australia":** It protects and grows domestic capability in critical minerals recovery, supports local manufacturing with recovered materials, and alone, a pilot would leverage an \$830M resource recovery opportunity.
- **Net Zero & Circular Economy:** It ensures full lifecycle accountability for solar technologies and prevents pollution from improper disposal.
- **Environmental Protection:** It provides an immediate, practical solution to illegal dumping and stockpiling, protecting urban, regional, and rural landscapes.
- **Social License for Renewables:** It restores public trust in rooftop solar by guaranteeing a responsible end-of-life solution for their investment.

RESOURCES

- Partnership Call: Product Stewardship Scheme for Photovoltaic Systems. (2020) DCCEEW. Available at <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/product-stewardship/national-product-stewardship-investment-fund/partnership-call-product-stewardship-photovoltaic-systems>
- Wired for change: Regulation for small electrical products and solar photovoltaic system waste. (2023) DCCEEW. Available at <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/regulation-small-electrical-products-solar-pv>
- Australia's Circular Economy Framework. (2024) DCCEEW. Available at <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/australias-circular-economy-framework.pdf>
- Australia's circular economy: Unlocking the opportunities. (March 2025) Productivity Commission, Australian Government. Accessed Aug 2025. Available at <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/circular-economy/interim/circular-economy-interim.pdf>
- Future Made in Australia Supporting Paper. (2024) Treasury, Australian Government. Available at <https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-05/p2024-526942-fmia-nif.pdf>
- Retirement age renewables – delivering for Australian communities. (2024) RE-Alliance. Available at https://assets.nationbuilder.com/viewwind/pages/6956/attachments/original/1754903284/Retirement_age_renewables_report.pdf?1754903284
- Reclaimed PV Panels Market Assessment Industry Report (2023) CPVA Available at <https://www.circularpv.com.au/new-industry-report>