



**ALGA**

Australian Local  
Government Association

# Inquiry into solar panel reuse and recycling in Australia

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water

4 March 2026

## Introduction

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is the voice of local government in Australia, representing 538 councils across the nation.

ALGA was established in 1947 and throughout its history has been actively involved in issues of national significance affecting local government and local communities.

In structure, ALGA is a federation of state and territory local government associations. This submission should be read in conjunction with any separate submissions received from state and territory associations as well as individual councils.

ALGA is an observer to Environment Minister's Meeting and Energy and Climate Ministerial Council.

## Communities need a national approach to solar panel recycling

Local governments are closest to communities and have an end-to-end view of the risks and opportunities associated with changing industries in their region. They hold ongoing relationships with their communities, undertake planning, and provide infrastructure, services and advice which enables prosperity.

Local governments are key national partners in both resource management and in renewables transition. Councils are enthusiastic to see a proactive and coordinated approach to solar panel circularity, to prevent valuable resources consuming scarce landfill space. They also want to leverage the economic and environmental opportunities associated with recycling and reusing solar panels. Councils are uniquely positioned to leverage the opportunities of a more circular supply chain at local and community level, as evidenced in [ALGA's submission](#) to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry on Circular Economy in Australia.

With the rollout of renewables constituting one of Australia's most significant industrial transformations, the opportunities and risks associated with decommissioning of renewables assets like solar panels are similarly significant.

As [ReAlliance states](#), Australia currently does not have a national system in place to take advantage of the opportunities – while solar panels are 95 percent recyclable, only 17 percent of household solar panels are currently being recycled. While the scope of this inquiry pertains to recycling, there are also significant opportunities for encouraging repowering and refurbishment. Repowering and refurbishment can reduce waste, leverage existing grid connections, and lower environmental and land impacts derived from reusing the same sites.

Local government has consistently recognised the opportunities associated with solar panel circularity. Councils at ALGA's National General Assembly (NGA) in 2025 carried the following resolution advanced by the City of Mitcham (SA): *"This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to establish a National Solar Panel and Battery Recycling System."*

In 2024, the NGA resolved the following, advanced by Narrabri Shire Council (NSW): *"This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to: a. Prioritise research and investment in recycling products from renewable industry in recognition of its status as a key national environmental priority; and b. Develop a national legal framework to address end of life of solar panels and lithium batteries."*

Councils have been active in the national effort to join up resource recovery and energy transition objectives for good community outcomes. For example, ALGA has convened a local government lived experience panel to inform the design of the renewable energy [Developer Rating Scheme](#). This panel has advocated for solar panel (and other renewables) decommissioning to be included in the methodology for assessing the conduct of renewable energy developers. From the experiences of local governments on this panel, good conduct by renewable energy companies is constituted by:

- Engaging with the relevant local government/s for the project prior to decommissioning commencing, including planning and delivering context-appropriate community benefits through the decommissioning process
- Undertaking comprehensive community engagement in respect to decommissioning, prior to and during the process
- Having established plans, policies and financial arrangements for decommissioning established in project governance
- Having decommissioning plans and adequate, independently costed financial arrangements and mechanisms into project agreements with landholders.

While the Developer Rating Scheme could support and guide continuous improvement in developer conduct once launched; in the long term, clear regulatory settings are required.

The Commonwealth should also consider how it can use its powers to ensure that solar panel producers and importers are bringing assets to market that are designed for recycling and reuse. For example, the Commonwealth could consider banning cadmium-based panels that are toxic and difficult to recycle.

## **Mandatory national product stewardship is fundamental**

[ALGA was pleased](#) to see the Australian Government's recent announcement to establish a solar panel recycling pilot. Since announcement of the pilot, ALGA has heard enthusiasm from councils to participate as a collection point and we will continue to work with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to help facilitate connections with the local government sector for this purpose.

Commonwealth co-investment could be extended through existing investment vehicles beyond this pilot. For example, [ALGA advocates](#) for emerging circular industries to be included in the scope for Government support through, for example, the Future Made in Australia agenda.

It will be critical that government planning and investment be put into regional infrastructure. Given the transport logistics and the regional, rural and remote location of solar farms, localised solutions or reverse logistics are going to be necessary to make recycling viable. Some local governments are already proposing locally relevant solutions. For example, [Dubbo Regional Council \(DRC\) has proposed](#) a processing facility in its LGA given that DRC expects to receive a predicted 9,000 tonnes of panel waste by 2035 – additional to existing high volumes already being received.

**ALGA advocates for waste avoidance, mandatory product stewardship, and greater national and ongoing support for community education and awareness around resource recovery, its use, and waste – including for solar panels.**

**Local government wants a full, national product stewardship scheme, mandated by the Commonwealth Government, for solar panels.** A national product stewardship scheme should require

that a percentage of solar panels be recovered from regional and remote locations, to avoid targets being met only in metropolitan areas where recovery is easier and cheaper.

A full, national and mandatory product stewardship scheme would:

- Reduce the volume of solar panels going to landfills on a national scale, supporting the financial and operational sustainability of all councils in Australia
- Power-up end market development, research and development at scale
- Prevent the possibility of free riding which commonly occurs in voluntary product stewardship schemes
- Create one system that industry is asked to comply with, making implementation and compliance most efficient and effective, and
- Support the social license for renewables transition more broadly.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue. Please contact Eleanor Robson (Policy Director – Environment) for any further information you may require.

Sincerely,



**Mayor Matt Burnett**  
ALGA President

## Contact details

Dr. Eleanor Robson  
Policy Director – Environment, Climate and Waste

