

7 EASY STEPS FOR SOLAR FOR STRATA

Rooftop solar provides many benefits for business. It makes great sense financially and environmentally, so here are some guides, tips and a checklist to help with your decision to install a solar photovoltaic (PV) system.

GUIDES TO HELP

- **THE CLEAN ENERGY COUNCIL (CEC)**
Guide to Installing Solar PV for Business and Industry
assets.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/documents/consumers/solar-guide-for-business.pdf
- **SOLAR QUOTES**
Solar for Your Business '101': A Beginner's Guide
www.solarquotes.com.au/commercial-solar-guide.html

7 STEPS ON YOUR SOLAR JOURNEY

1 Understand the electricity consumption of your business and choose the right size system for your needs

Your consumption profile will determine the viability of solar PV for your business and help you decide what size system is appropriate. Understanding your energy consumption is the first step in determining if this is a viable investment.

2 Understand your electricity tariffs and how they might change

What electricity tariffs do you pay and how might these change once your solar system is installed? Find out this information from your electricity retailer.

Your solar installer should provide modelling to use to negotiate with your retailer. It is strongly recommended you receive written confirmation from your electricity retailer on what, if any, changes will occur to your tariffs under the proposed new arrangements.

3 Finding a solar PV installer

Get three quotes and make sure they only use CEC-accredited installers with experience in commercial systems.

Finding the right person or company to manage the design and installation of your solar PV system is important as installation and inverter requirements for commercial properties can be quite different. Ensure your installer has the relevant experience for your system size.

A comprehensive, on-site solar and load analysis and two-way interview can help ensure a thoughtfully-designed and well planned installation. We strongly recommend you do your due diligence and select a reputable solar PV installer who will use a CEC-accredited installer/designer. To find an accredited installer near you, visit solaraccreditation.com.au/consumers/find-an-installer

4 Do your due diligence on technology, products, warranties and guarantees

Ask the hard questions of your installers! Products on the market vary in price and quality. Do your homework on the products you purchase and workmanship guarantees.

Your designer/installer will help you choose the type of panels and inverter that best suit your needs.

Check if the installation includes WiFi/app monitoring of performance and installation and monitoring costs. This is not expensive and is very handy to view your solar in action.

5 Engage with your electricity distributor early to understand grid connection requirements

Connection to the grid should be discussed with your electricity distributor very early in the process so they are aware of the project, and you (or your accredited installer) are aware of any technical requirements that have to be met.

A Connection Agreement with your Distribution Network Service Provider (DNSP) is mandatory to connect a solar system to the grid. This agreement is a contract outlining the terms of your connection and must be understood and signed by the person responsible for the system post-installation (i.e. you, the business owner). Your installer should assist you with this process.

If you are planning to export electricity generated by your system to the grid, you will also need to negotiate an Export Agreement with your DNSP as there are technical and commercial conditions that you will need to satisfy.

6 Financing the project

Do your homework on the financing options. These are either a capital expenditure or an operational expenditure. You will need to include your recommended financing option in the resolution going to the Body Corporate management committee or residents.

If your Body Corporate committee chooses to finance the solar installation rather than using existing sinking funds, you will need the paperwork from the finance company ready to be signed by certain committee members. It is best to have all this ready for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) or Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) when all are present – this will save time and lost documents to get the finance approved (which is separate to the approval for the solar installation). Note – there are limited financial institution options for strata so research this with your solar installer.

7 Approval by residents

Once you have a proposal ready, both the proposed system and financing will need to be approved according to your Body Corporate rules. Make sure you understand whether all residents or just the committee need to approve, and the percentage of votes required for approval. It is likely that approval will be required via an AGM or EGM.

For more information or assistance please visit the **Zero Emissions Noosa** website zeroemissionsnoosa.com.au

For any further information please contact **Juanita Terry-Bloomfield** at Tourism Noosa: 0407 533 479 or juanita@tourismnoosa.com.au

SOLAR CHECK LIST

1. Have you performed due diligence checks on your installer/supplier?

- Is your solar PV retailer reputable - have you checked their track record, backers and complaints forums?
- Does your installer/designer have CEC accreditation, current electrical licences and OH&S certification?
- Is the company a member of the industry association?
- Is the company a CEC Approved Solar Retailer?
- Have you checked ASIC to ensure they are legitimate and currently registered?
- What experience do they have in commercial installations?
- How long have they been in the solar industry?
- How many systems similar to yours has the designer/installer completed?
- Are they up-to-date on the newest products, the latest regulatory issues and connection requirements?
- How well does the designer/installer know your local distribution network service provider (DNSP)?
- Will they conduct the work themselves or subcontract parts out? If so, what contractual agreements are in place to protect you?

2. The quotation and contract

- Is it professional and sufficiently detailed?
- Are the prices typical of industry benchmarks?
- What is explicitly included and excluded?
- If comparing quotations, am I comparing like for like?
- Are all obligations, responsibilities and liabilities clear?

3. The financial calculations

- Have they provided a detailed analysis of load and generation?
- Are the returns consistent with CEC guidelines?
- If financed, have you had independent tax depreciation advice?
- What, if any, performance guarantees are provided?
- Have you considered alternative methods of finance?

4. The products and services

- Have you been offered quality products that are well backed in case of warranty support?
- Have you reviewed the warranty terms and conditions?
- What written service obligations have been included?
- Have you been offered workmanship guarantees?
- Has system monitoring been included to allow ongoing performance checks and who is responsible?
- Are the products listed by the CEC as approved for use in Australia?
- Do you understand the limitations to support and service that are offered?

5. The grid connection and approvals

- Has your DNSP been contacted and approved connection?
- Are there connection costs and limitations?
- Has your retailer been contacted and agreed in writing to any tariff impacts and/or export tariffs?
- Do you require building approvals and if so have they been sought and approved?
- Have metering and connection costs been calculated and agreed?

6. Information and support

- Have you received a detailed final contract including all relevant approvals?
- Do you understand exactly what products, services, support and maintenance you are getting and from whom?
- Have you been advised who or where to go to if you are unsatisfied?
- Have you received training on system operation and a detailed operations manual?
- During installation, did you monitor the general performance, behaviour and installation quality of the installers?
- Is the system performing as expected?