

The Australian Government Photovoltaic Rebate Programme

Guidelines for Applicants – Effective January 2006

The Programme

The Australian Government introduced the Photovoltaic Rebate Programme (PVRP) to encourage the long-term use of photovoltaic technology to generate electricity from sunlight and to increase the use of renewable energy in Australia.

Other key objectives are to:

- reduce greenhouse emissions;
- assist in the development of the Australian Photovoltaic (PV) industry; and
- increase public awareness of renewable energy.

The programme can provide rebates to homeowners who install PV on their principal place of residence, to community organisations and schools that provide an educational promotion through the installation, and to display home builders and housing estate developers who promote the uptake of PV. Different conditions, rebate levels and upper limits apply.

In the May 2005 Australian Government Budget, the programme was extended to June 2007 by an additional provision of \$11.4 million. Changes to the programme are being introduced to manage demand on the programme funds through rebate approvals over the two-year extension.

Other changes to the programme will affect the availability of rebates to display home builders and developers without the need for rounds of tenders, and the arrangements under which community buildings such as schools are eligible for rebates.

Specific requirements for developers and display home builders, and schools and community buildings are detailed in relevant additional guidelines and should be read in conjunction with this document.

The level of demand will determine if the programme closes before June 2007. Demand will be managed by progressively reducing the

rebate level by small amounts over time. It is expected that 10 cent steps will reduce the rebate level for households from \$4.00 to \$3.50 per peak watt (ppw), capped at \$3,500 (1 kW), in 2007.

The Australian Government retains the flexibility to adjust the size of the steps and their duration in response to demand on the programme funds.

The programme is administered in Victoria by Sustainability Victoria which acts on behalf of the Australian Government.

The rebate

In general, applicants may only apply for one PVRP rebate for a given property. Power ratings used in assessing eligibility and PVRP funding are based on the nominal peak watt rating of approved modules under standard test conditions as identified by IEC61215 or equivalent. The minimum amount of new PV to be installed is 450-watt peak output and there is no maximum amount although total rebate amounts are capped (see below). The rebate current at the time of receipt by Sustainability Victoria of a complete application for pre-approval will be the rate used to determine the total rebate value.

Equipment which does not comprise a new and complete PV system, (defined as including new panels, new regulator, new batteries where applicable, and new inverter), whether for a grid-connect or as a stand-alone system, will be regarded for the purposes of the PVRP as being an extension to an existing system and will attract the lower level of rebate.

A rebate will NOT be paid for equipment installed without pre-approval being granted.

The dwelling, and any other structures in or on the property on which the power system equipment will be installed, must be structures that satisfy the local government building

requirements for a residential building. Written evidence of compliance may be required.

For new systems

Applicants who fully satisfy the conditions for residential PV systems will receive a rebate based on the peak output of the new PV component of the system. New PV systems will receive rebates capped at 1.0kW. The level of residential rebates and associated caps will be adjusted downward over time. For further information on the timing of rebate level reductions, please check the DEH website at: <http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/renewable/pv/index.html>

or ring the PVRP information line 1300 138 122. Reductions in rebate level will be advertised on the website in advance of the date of effect.

For extensions to existing systems

Applicants who fully satisfy the conditions for extensions to existing PV systems will receive rebates of \$2.50 ppw capped at \$2,500 (1.0kW).

Eligibility requirements of the PVRP

In order to qualify for a rebate under the PVRP, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they can comply with all the conditions and procedures set out in these guidelines.

Applicants must comply with the following requirements:

Eligible systems

PVRP rebates will be available for residential or community building PV systems that are either grid connected or stand-alone.

Equipment requirements

Major equipment items included in the application (PV modules, inverters, battery regulators and batteries) must be new equipment and not second-hand. Applicants seeking to extend existing systems should check first with Sustainability Victoria to establish their eligibility.

Installation at owner's principal place of residence

For residential rebates the PV system must be installed at the applicant's (owner's) principal place of residence as shown on the electoral roll. The Australian Government will only fund one rebate per residence. An applicant may qualify for a rebate for a new house under construction providing they can demonstrate that it will become their principal place of residence on completion.

Rebates are payable on owner occupied houses and owner occupied units within a body

corporate. Rebates are also payable on owner occupied transportable homes, provided the owner occupier owns the land, or is a long term lessee of the site (minimum of five years). Ownership must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sustainability Victoria.

Only one rebate will be applicable per home, and per owner, unless the original rebated residence has been sold with the PV system transferring to the new owner. In this case, evidence that ownership has passed to the new owner must be shown, covering details of the transferred rebate obligations.

If someone buys a property which has an existing PV system for which the previous owner received a rebate, the new owner will be considered the rebate recipient, and as such will be ineligible for an extension rebate on that property.

Competent designer and installer

To be eligible for a rebate the applicant must be able to show that the person who will carry out the PV installation is suitably qualified and experienced in accordance with this condition. Such a person must be a "competent person" as defined in the relevant Australian Standards, and is expected to be accredited (full or provisional) for design and installation by the Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE). Applicants should check this with the relevant Administering Agency.

A licensed electrical contractor must carry out the electrical work associated with the low voltage (240V AC) wiring in the building and in the power system, in compliance with regulations in the state or territory concerned. Sustainability Victoria may have further specific requirements regarding the standard of installation in their jurisdiction.

Rebates will not be paid for systems that are designed or installed by contractors who do not meet these requirements.

System design and installation requirements

The power system equipment must be permanently mounted in a robust manner and "hard-wired" into the building's electrical circuitry.

All systems, components and equipment must comply with, and be designed and installed in accordance with all relevant Australian Standards or, where such does not exist, with the relevant international standard. Australian Standards include, but are not limited to:

- AS/NZS 3000 – Electrical installations
- AS 4509 – Stand-alone power systems

- AS 4086 – Secondary batteries for use with stand-alone power systems
- AS 4777 – Grid connection of energy systems via inverters
- AS/NZS 5033 – Installation of photovoltaic (PV) arrays
- AS/NZS 1170 – Structural design actions; and
- any other standard called upon by the above or other relevant standards.

PV modules must be certified to IEC61215 or equivalent.

System installation must also meet all relevant codes of practice, building codes, local government and legislative requirements.

For upgrades to existing systems, the entire system must comply with all current safety and installation requirements.

Warranty

The supplier must provide a performance statement setting out agreed load and other system parameters. A minimum ten-year performance warranty must be offered on solar panels installed as part of the system. A minimum two-year maintenance contract should also be offered. The onus is on the new owner of the PV system to obtain a warranty from the supplier.

It is in the applicant's interest, wherever possible, to seek more than one quote for the supply and installation of the system, and obtain details of the equipment in relation to the assessed load and maintenance contracts offered.

It is essential for stand alone systems, and for grid connected systems with batteries, that a detailed load assessment is provided and the appliances to be connected are agreed in writing. Where a generator is part of the system design, the expected run time must be stated.

Special residential provisions

In special cases PVRP rebates may be available for residential developments or individual display houses where the usual requirement regarding the owner's principal place of residence does not need to apply. This provision replaces the previous rounds of tenders for developers and display home builders. Rebates are set lower to reflect the economies of scale and new construction compared with installation arranged by owner occupiers on predominantly existing homes. For such applications, *Additional PVRP Guidelines for Developers and Display Home*

Builders must be read in conjunction with these guidelines.

Developers and Display Home Builders

Housing estate developers and builders can apply for PVRP rebates for new homes under construction or about to be started, where PV will be installed in conjunction with the roof construction, providing certain conditions are met. These conditions include energy efficient house design (5 star NatHERS or AccuRate rating or equivalent), promotion of the PV as a selling feature and reporting on the outcome.

Rebates will be initially available at \$3.50 ppw, up to a maximum of \$3,500 (1kW) per dwelling, and \$50,000 per application (equivalent to 14 systems of approximately 1kW each). Further applications for the same development or subsequent stages in adjoining locations will only be considered after the systems in the initial application are installed and the rebates acquitted. The limit is imposed to avoid large blocks of programme funding being tied up for long periods.

As residential rebates are progressively reduced under the programme, rebates for builders and developers will be reduced by the same amount. For example, if the residential rebate is reduced from \$4.00 to \$3.90 ppw, the builders and developers rebate would reduce at the same time from \$3.50 to \$3.40 ppw. The maximum limit of \$50,000 per application would remain.

Multi-unit and strata title residential installations

New multi-unit or strata titled developments which meet the five star energy efficiency standards will be eligible under the Housing Builder and Developer component of the programme where the PV systems are individually metered on individual dwellings or units, or are owned by the body corporate and thereby contribute to common light and power, with any excess energy sold being offset against body corporate fees incurred by dwelling or unit owners.

Owners of existing multi-unit developments may be eligible for rebates under the programme as follows:

- a) where the applicant will be the owner of the entire PV system, and they meet residential requirements ie they are the owner occupier of an individual unit, they may apply for a PVRP residential rebate under the normal provisions of the programme at the householder rate.
- b) where equipment will be owned by the Body Corporate or equivalent and the output of the system benefits residents collectively through feeding common light and power circuits or is exported and thereby reduces the fees

applicable to residents, the body corporate may apply under the housing builders and developer provisions of the programme at the developer rate.

Non-residential provisions

The programme also encourages the installation of PV systems on community buildings where a community benefit and an associated educational and interpretive programme is provided. The level of rebate for non-residential buildings is expected to remain constant for the remaining life of the programme to encourage community and school participation in the educational aspects of PVRP. For such applications, *Additional PVRP Guidelines for Schools and Community Buildings* must be read in conjunction with these guidelines.

Community Buildings

Community organisations and owners of community facilities may apply for rebates at \$4.00 ppw up to a limit of \$4,000.

Schools Programmes

Individual schools or groups of schools may also apply for rebates at \$4.00 ppw up to a limit of \$4,000 per school.

Metering and notices

The continued benefits of the programme will be enhanced by the installation of metering inside the living area of the houses concerned, where occupants and visitors can readily see the impact on electricity consumption of the PV system and the appliances being used.

Installers are encouraged to offer householders the option of such metering with sensing connected to the inverter and/or the incoming mains.

Notices at the entrance to the dwelling are also recommended, advising visitors that the house is powered by solar electricity.

Rights reserved by the Australian Government and the states

Applicants should not assume that they will receive a rebate on submitting an application.

Administering Agencies acting on behalf of the Department of the Environment and Heritage may decide in their sole and absolute discretion whether an applicant is eligible for a PVRP rebate and in particular, whether the applicant complies with the conditions and procedures set out in these guidelines.

Changes to programme guidelines

The Australian Government reserves the right, at its sole and absolute discretion and at any time, to change any or all of these PVRP guidelines, including to remove all or any of the guidelines or to introduce new or additional guidelines.

If the Australian Government does change or discontinue the PVRP, all applicants whose complete applications have been received at the date the PVRP is changed or discontinued, will still be entitled to receive the rebate at the rate applicable on that date if they are assessed as eligible.

Application procedure for rebate approval

Who can apply?

The rebate recipient must be the owner of the PV system (after installation), unless the owner has assigned the rebate to the installer in writing. Developers and builders and multi-unit and strata title owners who comply with the relevant provisions of these guidelines will be regarded as the owner even though some of the dwellings concerned may be sold by the time they acquit the rebate requirements.

Community organisations must be the owner of the building or have a long-term lease or occupancy agreement of at least 5 years.

When should the application be lodged?

The application for pre-approval must be submitted to and approved by Sustainability Victoria before the system is installed. System installation should not commence prior to notification of approval. You can contact Sustainability Victoria by calling the information line on 1300 138 122.

Application details

Applications for pre-approval of a PVRP rebate can be made by completing an *Application Form* and sending it plus all supporting documentation to Sustainability Victoria, Ground Floor, 215 Spring Street, Melbourne 3000. The system installer is also required to sign the application.

As noted above, it is recommended that applicants seek more than one quote for the supply and installation of the system.

Notification of approval

Applicants will be notified in writing if the application has been accepted within four weeks from receipt of the complete application.

The notification of approval will set out any additional compliance requirements, together with the approval expiration date which will be

no longer than six months from the date approval is granted.

On receipt of this notification, successful applicants should immediately notify their preferred installer so that materials can be ordered and installation commenced.

System installation

Systems must be commissioned and all required rebate application documentation received by Sustainability Victoria before the expiration of approval. Generally extensions will not be granted, and the applicant may be required to re-apply under the guidelines current at that time. Any request for an extension to the original application must be made in writing stating extenuating circumstances and be received by Sustainability Victoria no later than two weeks prior to approval expiring.

Installation reporting

A copy of the *Installation Report* form will be sent to the applicant with the notice of pre-approval acceptance. When the system has been installed, the applicant must forward to Sustainability Victoria, the completed installation report form including the attachments and at least three photographs clearly showing:

- the array positioning including the building on which it is mounted;
- mounting and external cabling;
- the battery positioning, cabling and fusing (where batteries are used); and
- the inverter and control system layout.

The report shall also include:

- a basic diagram of the installation clearly showing the location of the modules, inverter and batteries with respect to the buildings, and clearly labelling each building and showing the direction of north; and
- the agreed load assessment and expected system output.

The *Installation Report* and associated rebate claim must be signed by the both the applicant and the installer.

Payment

Payment of rebate will be made on receipt by Sustainability Victoria of the fully and correctly completed *Installation Report*, pending any inspection. Approved applicants can generally expect to receive their rebate within four weeks of the receipt of the *Installation Report* but should note that payments under the Programme may sometimes be delayed for reasons outside the control of Sustainability Victoria. Sustainability Victoria will forward the

rebate to the applicant or, where requested by the applicant, to the supplier/installer.

Applicant's rights and responsibilities

The PV system installed is to operate on the proposed building for a minimum of 5 years and may be inspected (upon reasonable request) by an approved representative of the Department of the Environment and Heritage or Sustainability Victoria.

During this five year period the owner of the system may be asked by Sustainability Victoria or Department of the Environment and Heritage (in writing and with reasonable notice) for a information on the system's output (an estimate in kWh, or impact on their electricity bills if applicable) and describing any equipment failures experienced by the system.

In full compliance with privacy provisions, the rebate recipient consents to the publication by Sustainability Victoria or the Department of the Environment and Heritage of personal information provided in application forms and supporting documentation.

The rebate provided shall be repaid by the applicant if any of the conditions in the guidelines are found to have been breached during the first five years after installation of the PV equipment, or the PV system is sold (unless the property is sold and the PV system retained by the new owner). This does not apply to batteries that are replaced at the end of their useful life. The applicant must notify Sustainability Victoria in writing if the property is sold and provide details of the new owner and the advice provided regarding transfer of obligations.

It would be prudent for an owner of a system to take out appropriate insurance to cover "acts of God" event/s (eg lightning strikes), as a second rebate is not payable in such instances.

No Commonwealth warranty

There is no warranty given or implied by the Commonwealth or Sustainability Victoria on any aspect of PV systems funded through the PVRP and the Commonwealth or Sustainability Victoria accepts no representations whatsoever for the quality of any other feature of PV systems for which rebates are approved.

Indemnity

The applicant acknowledges that neither the Commonwealth nor Sustainability Victoria nor any of their authorised representatives accept any liability in respect of any claim or cause of action arising out of, or in relation to any PV system or any system that is the subject of funding assistance. The applicant agrees that

he/she will indemnify and keep indemnified the Commonwealth and Sustainability Victoria for any claim or liability arising out of or in relation to the PV system that is the subject of this application.

Financial and legal impacts

Applicants are advised to seek independent professional legal and financial advice regarding the potential impact of the rebate on their own individual circumstances.

Definitions and abbreviations

AC Alternating Current (as in 240V AC)

Sustainability Victoria	The agency administering the programme in Victoria
AGO	Australian Greenhouse Office, Department of the Environment and Heritage, which administers the programme nationally
BCSE	The Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy
DC	Direct Current (as in 12V DC)
PV	Photovoltaic
PVRP	Photovoltaic Rebate Programme
SPS	Stand-alone Power System (also known as RAPS)

Further information is available by contacting the PVRP information line on 1300 138 122

Information Privacy Act

Sustainability Victoria collects your personal information for the purpose of administering the photovoltaic rebate program. We only disclose your personal information if it is necessary for the performance of our functions. If you wish to seek access to the personal information which Sustainability Victoria holds about you please contact us by writing to:

Functional Leader, Corporate Services,
Sustainability Victoria, Ground Floor,
215 Spring Street, Melbourne 3000, or email
Privacy@sustainability.vic.gov.au,
Sustainability Victoria's privacy policy is
available on www.sustainability.vic.gov.au