

Before you buy solar panels – what you need to know about panel installation and output

Harnessing solar energy to produce power is an important tool in the arsenal against global warming and is rising in popularity in Australia. But before you get on the road to generating your own electricity at home, there are a few things you should consider.

Things to Ask Your Installer

- **Are they a Clean Energy Council (CEC) accredited installer? Check online at:**
www.solaraccreditation.com.au/accecc/consumers/findaninstaller.html
- **Are they using CEC approved products? Go to:**
www.solaraccreditation.com.au/accecc/approvedproducts.html
- **Is the inverter the right size for the number of panels?**
The kW rating of the inverter should be equal to or greater than the solar array output in kW.
- **Will all the panels they are selling you fit on the north-facing roof of your house?**
This should be assessed by a designer before any work is done.
- **How much warranty will you have?**
You could have anywhere between 1 to 5 years on inverters and up to 25 years on panels (however the output rating may decrease by up to 25% over this time)

Things That Will Affect Your Maximum Power Output

- **Location and orientation of the panels**
Panels should ideally be installed on a north-facing roof to help achieve the maximum output. Panels can still be installed facing ENE, NE, N,NW, WNW and be angled to gain maximum benefit.
- **Weather conditions**
Your theoretical maximum power output is calculated on the sunniest of days. Different locations will have different power outputs. For example, Brisbane is based upon an average daily value of 5.6 hours. Long periods of cloud cover also reduce output.
- **Shading from trees or other buildings**
This should be determined by an on-site inspection by a designer before work is commenced.
- **Dust or dirt build-up on the panels**
This will affect output so regular maintenance is required by a qualified tradesperson.

For more information visit www.masterelectricians.com.au

A joint initiative by Master Electricians Australia and the Electrical Contractors Association.

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