

Before you ring for help – tips for checking out problems with your solar panels

Harnessing solar energy to generate power is an important tool in the arsenal against global warming and is rising in popularity in Australia. But while thousands of home owners are happily saving money on electricity bills while saving the environment, there are a few who are not reaping the benefits they should be. This fact sheet was designed to help those people determine what the problem is, whether it's related to incorrect installation, over-use or natural elements.

If your solar panels aren't saving you as much money as you expected, there are a few questions you should be asking:

Did you get what you paid for?

Make sure the number of panels supplied is what you discussed as most appropriate for your energy needs.

Are the panels facing the right way?

Panels should face ENE, NE, N, NW, WNW and be angled to gain maximum benefit.

Have you received a smart meter (multi-function meter) from your electrical retailer?

If your meter hasn't been upgraded you won't receive the maximum benefit and be paid a feed-in tariff for power you put back into the grid.

Are you maximising your "feed in"?

Most states and territories provide a net feed-in tariff. This means you will only get paid a bonus for the unused portion of your solar power. If you use it all, there will be no rebate. For more information on feed-in tariffs contact your relevant state government department

Are you being energy efficient?

Check that your lights, appliances, computers and TVs are as energy efficient as possible. You may be running your pool pump or air conditioning too much and using up the solar power during the day.

System not producing power?

Check your user manual for instructions on how to reset the system, contact your installer and ask them to come back and inspect the system, or call a Master Electrician or CEC accredited electrical contractor to ensure your system has been installed properly and is working.

Safety information

Even on a cloudy day, your solar panels are producing electricity.

- DO NOT climb on to the roof to check their operation
- DO NOT wash them with your hose
- DO engage a Master Electrician or CEC accredited electrical contractor to clean and inspect panels.

For more information visit www.masterelectricians.com.au

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

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