

Darebin Solar Saver Bulk Buy Program

Thank you for your interest in Darebin Council's **Solar Saver Program**!

This document answers the most common questions that people ask about the Bulk Buy Program. If you are interested in participating, please read through this document carefully so you understand all the steps and processes involved.

If you still have questions, please contact the Solar Saver team from Monday to Friday, 8.30am-5pm.

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National relay service
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Glossary

Distributor = the company that distributes energy and maintains the powerlines and poles that carry your electricity. There are three in Darebin: AusNet, Jemena and CitiPower.

FIT = Feed-In Tariff = the money you are paid when you feed excess energy back into the grid. Currently, the minimum FIT in Victoria is 6 cents per kilowatt hour.

Inverter = the machine that changes the energy collected by your panels into energy you can use in your house.

kW(hr) = kilowatt (hour) = unit of measure for electricity use (per hour).

NMI = National Meter Identifier = the unique number of your home or business for electricity billing. You can find your NMI on any electricity bill.

Pitch = angle (of your roof) – this affects your solar panels because they need to be at a certain angle to the sun to be most efficient (can be adjusted using special mounts).

Solar PV = (Solar) Photo Voltaic (Panels) = Solar Panels.

Retailer = the company that sells you electricity (eg Origin, AGL, TruEnergy, Powershop, Diamond Energy etc etc).

Smart Meter = the device that records your electricity use. This is how your power company (retailer) knows how much to charge you. It also tells them how much energy you are putting back into the grid.

Special Charge Scheme = this allows Council to buy your solar system upfront and for you to pay back the cost over time. Council will charge you a small additional payment (a Special Charge) on your quarterly rates notice. You can repay the loan by making up to 40 instalments over 10 years.



General information on the Solar Saver program

What are the differences between the Rates and Bulk Buy Program?

Rates	Bulk Buy
Open to eligible Darebin homeowners and renters who meet specific criteria. Please note that there are limited positions for this program.	All Darebin homeowners, renters, organisations, and businesses are eligible.
There is no waiting list, but there are some steps you must take before your system is installed. This includes a declaration of your special charge rates.	There is no waiting list. Once you have arranged with the supplier you can get your system installed.
You are eligible for the Small-scale Technology Certificate (STC), which is applied at the point of sale. You may be eligible for a State Government rebate ($1,400[1]) through Solar Victoria.	You are eligible for the Small-scale Technology Certificate (STC), which is applied at the point of sale. You may be eligible for a State Government rebate ($1,400[1]) AND an interest free loan ($1,400[1]) through Solar Victoria.
You don't pay GST.	Includes GST.
Council pays the upfront cost of the system, which is capped at $6,000. You pay it back over 10 years, interest free. The cap applies after all rebates and excludes GST.	You pay the upfront cost of the system including GST.
Size varies from 3kW (9 panels) to 6.4kW (16 panels) depending on your needs.	Size varies from 3-10kW for residential and up to 100kW for commercial.
Choices are limited to set packages at set prices. Batteries are not included.	You have access to a range of other products and brands. Basic systems have fixed prices, any additions will need to be quoted. Batteries are not included[2]

[1] Solar Victoria rebates are subject to change.
[2] Batteries can be quoted by the installer and installed during the PV Solar installation. Please note that they are NOT part of the Solar Saver Program. Battery components have not gone through Council's procurement process and will NOT be audited.



Benefits of installing solar through Darebin Council

The Solar Saver program is designed to help Darebin households and businesses install solar power with confidence, both for their own benefit, and the benefit of the broader community. Many people in Darebin are interested in installing solar but are not sure where to get started.

1. We have a trusted solar installer
   - Council has carried out a competitive tendering process to find reliable providers who offer quality and value for money.
   - We guarantee 10-year product and installation warranties. The solar panels come with a 25-year performance warranty.
   - Our installers use best-practice safety measures.
   - Our installers are trustworthy and will not sell you anything you don't need.
   - Our installers will perform a site visit first to ensure the right system is designed for your home.

2. We have audited the quality of the systems
   - You don't need to understand all the technical details to choose the right product.
   - We ensure high quality and efficiency standards for the products in the Solar Saver program, and our installers will help you choose the right panel system size for your roof and for your needs.

3. We have audited the price of the systems
   - Council's tendering process ensures good value for money for our community.
   - The solar provider will give you an indication of how much you can expect to save.

How do we choose the installer and equipment?

- Price
- Quality
- Previous experience – includes company and key personnel
- Project Management Capability
- Capacity to deliver
- Customer Service
- Social and environmental policies
- Local presence

What about solar for business and other organisations?

Businesses, NGOs, community groups and other organisations can participate in the Bulk Buy stream of the Solar Saver program for installations up to 100kW.



For larger installations you can access funding through an Environmental UpgradeAgreement (EUA). For more information on EUAs please visit: sustainableaustraliafund.com.au

Can I get the Federal Government rebate?

Small-scale Technology Certificate (STC) discounts are available to all and are applied for by the installer. You will be able to see this discount on your quote.

Can I also get the State Government rebate?

All Victorians can apply for the State Government Solar Homes rebate as a point-of-sale reduction to the total cost of your solar system. You may also be eligible to apply for a 4-year interest free loan with them.

To check your eligibility or for more information, please visit solar.vic.gov.au.

Solar panel rebates are available up to $1,400 (as of October 2022) plus the option of an interest-free loan ($1,400).

Please note that this changes from time to time. Keep up to date by visiting solar.vic.gov.au.

How do I get solar through the Bulk Buy Program?

Who can apply?

You can apply if:

- You are a household, business or other organisation.
- Your property is in Darebin.
- You are the property owner (or ratepayer) OR you are a renter but have permission from the owner (or ratepayer).

How do I apply?

- **Register on our website darebin.vic.gov.au/solar or over the phone.**

What are my next steps?

Step 1. **Register:** You register your interest in the Bulk Buy program.

Step 2. **First contact:** Council passes your details on to the solar provider and they contact you to arrange a quotation – they





may ask you for photos orneed to visit your home.

Step 3. **Quotation:** You receive the quotation and if you wish to proceed youarrange payment directly to the solar provider.

Step 4. **Installation:** Your solar system is installed.

Step 5. **Post install documentation, final approvals and invoicing:** Once the system has been installed, the solar provider with engage with your retailer for meter reconfiguration. It should also provide you with all documentation regarding warranties, electrical certifications, manuals and connection diagrams. Once all this has been provided, you can proceed to final payment. What if I change my mind?

Participation in our solar programs is completely voluntary - there is no obligation for you to go ahead with a quotation. If you decide to go ahead and enter into an agreement with the solar provider directly, you will need to negotiate with them ifyou want to change or withdraw your agreement.

When will my system be installed?

From registering for the Bulk Buy stream to getting your system may take a coupleof weeks to a few months, depending on demand and other factors.

The installation itself can usually be completed in a single day, or two days or morefor larger systems. Once your system is installed it may take some weeks for your retailer to connect your system to the grid (eight weeks is not uncommon). The installer will submit this request on your behalf once your system has been installed.

Will I need a permit? What about heritage status?

You do not need a planning permit to install solar unless you are in a heritage area or your property is a listed heritage building. Even if you are in a heritage area, you usually won't need a permit if your panels are not visible from the street or a public park. Generally, only about 5-10% of Darebin applicants need a permit. You will need to submit a planning permit if you reside in a heritage overlay area and want to proceed with an installation. You can contact us if you require assistance and we will happily guide you through the process.



Details of your solar installation

What size solar system will I need?

The solar installer will talk to you about suitable systems that fit on your roof and which best meet your needs.

Through this program we can offer systems up to 10kW for residentialproperties and up to 100kW for non-residential properties, which will suit most homes and smaller businesses and organizations.

What are the technical details of these systems?

This changes from time to time, please reach out to the Solar Saver team to know more.

Who will install the sysems?

This changes from time to time, please reach out to the Solar Saver team to know more.

Where are the panels and inverters made?

Council's tender specifications ensures that both panels and inverters are affordable and of high quality. Panels are sourced from Tier 1 manufacturers (the highest level in the Bloomberg ranking system), and inverters must meet the highest efficiency standards.

Warranty: How long will it last?

Solar panels:

- **25-year product warranty**
  Yingli Solar warrants that PV Modules when they are installed on the rooftops shall be free from defects in materials and workmanship under normal application, use and service conditions during a period of twenty-five (25) years.

- **25-year performance warranty**
  Yingli Solar further warrants that if, within twenty-five (25) years after the Warranty Start Date, the degradation of the power output in the first year shall not exceed 2% of the minimum labelled power output, which was originally stipulated on the label of PV Modules; the degradation in every subsequent year shall not exceed 0.55% of the minimum labelled power output.

Inverter:

- **10-year product warranty**



Sungrow warrants that the Inverters will be free from defects in materials and workmanship for a period of ten (10) years from the date of installation of the Inverter.

Mounting gear:

- **10 year limited Product Warranty, 5 year limited Finish Warranty**
  Clenergy Technology Co., Ltd. warrants to the original purchaser of product(s) that it manufactures at the original installation site that the Product shall be free from defects in material and workmanship for a period of ten (10) years, except for the anodised finish, which finish shall be free from visible peeling, or cracking or chalking under normal atmospheric conditions for a period of five (5) years.

Installation:

- **10-year workmanship Warranty**
  EnviroGroup offers a 10-year workmanship installation warranty for its grid connected PV systems. EnviroGroup is not responsible for grid/retailer related issues.

  This warranty does not include site internet or WiFi connection to devices or software. A servicing fee will apply for fixing internet connectivity issues including faulty modem, connections or reset passwords etc.

  In the event of genuine installation failure or component failure, EnviroGroup will attend to the service as soon as practicable. EnviroGroup and the Customer are subject to product supplier exclusions. We do not provide after-hours emergency hours service capability.

  The workmanship (10 yrs.) or 'operation and performance' (5 yrs.) warranties do not include non-essential servicing, panel cleaning or external impacts such as damage, unauthorised alterations, or changes to installation, warranty work & environmental conditions. If the callout does not relate to installation failure or component failure, a service fee may be charged.[3]

What about insurance?

We recommend that you check with your insurance provider to ensure that your panels are insured in case something happens that is not within the terms of the warranty, especially while you are still paying them back.

[3] For more information on the Solar Panel Product Warranty, Solar Panel Performance Warranty and the Inverter Product Warranty please see the manufacturers data sheet on the last page of your quote. For more information on the Mounting Gear Product Warranty please contact your Solar Designer. For more information on EnviroGroup's Workmanship Warranty please see the Terms and Conditions on your Quote or contact your Solar Designer for more information.



Many insurance providers consider permanent fixtures like solar panels to be part of your building, so they include them in their home insurance policies. But you should always check the policy documents just to be sure.

How much will it cost?

For estimated costs, please reach out to the Solar Saver team as this changes from time to time.

The exact cost of your solar system depends on:

- The size of your system (i.e. how many solar panels you install)
- The type of roof and property you have. There are extra charges for:
    - Double storey properties
    - Steep roofs
    - Properties needing extra equipment or specific access methods such as scaffolding, scissor lifts, etc.
    - Tilt frames for flat roofs and brackets for tiled roofs
    - Split arrays – when panels cannot all fit on one section of the roof and must be split across more than one
    - Tiled roofs
    - Unconventional roof types
    - Optimisers if your roof has some shading or the configuration is split
    - Three-phase power.
- Potential additional costs outside of the Solar Program
    - You will need to install a smart meter if you don't have one. Our provider will organise this for you.
    - If you have two meters, you must consolidate them. This could cost around $500. If you are in this situation, we will include any relevant costs into your Special Charge.
- If your switchboard needs to be upgraded or replaced to safely accommodate a solar system, this can cost an additional $800-1,000.
- If your house needs to be rewired to safely install solar, you will need to pay for this. You should ask the electrician for an assessment and a quote before installation as rewiring can be very costly.
- If your property needs repairs or asbestos removal to accommodate solar, you will need to arrange and pay for this yourself.
- If your roof needs to be fixed to install solar safely, you will need to pay for this. You should a ask a qualified roofer for an assessment and quote before installation.
- If your property has a tile roof, you must have at least 20-30 spare tiles available. The installer will replace any damaged tiles during the installation, but it is your responsibility to get them. If you don't have spare tiles, and do not know where to get them, talk to us.



Our solar provider will give you a quotation after they visit and assess your property. They will check if any of the above upgrades apply to your property and if required, they will explain them to you and it will also be reflected in your quote.

How much money will I save?

Your quote will include an estimate of how much savings you will enjoy for your system. This program is meant to save you money on your electricity bills. Most people will see a decrease in their electricity bills of 30-70%. The exact amount will be different for each participant and depends on:

- The size of the solar panel system you choose - larger systems usually result in bigger savings.
- How much electricity you use and what time of day you use it. You save more when you use the power that your system makes during the day, instead of exporting it to the grid.
- How much you pay for your electricity.
- Your feed-in tariff. This is the price you are paid when you export power to the grid. The minimum flat rate feed-in-tariff (FiT) is 5.2c/kWh.[4]
- If you want us to have a look at your system, contact us after the first year of installation for a case study and to better understand your savings. We will need your old and new energy bills as well as your solar generation to carry out the study.

Important note on savings:

Your power bill will not show you how much money you have saved by using your own solar power, it only shows how much electricity you sold back to the grid (exported) and how much you bought from the grid. This means that most of your savings are not seen on your bill because you simply use the power from your solar system and didn't need to buy it. But you should see a significant drop in your electricity bills. Your inverter records how much power you produce overall and will give you a live reading of your current power output.

Producing your own solar power is like growing your own veggies. It means you need to buy less groceries, and you could sell the extra. But your groceries bill will only show how much you sold back to the grocer, not how many veggies you grew and ate yourself.

[4] Pricing is accurate for 2023 and can change.



What is the feed-in-tariff? What will I see on my bills?

When your solar system makes more electricity than you are using in your home, excess power is exported to the grid and you get credits on your bill for that amount.

It is rare for people to export so much that their bill goes below zero, but in theory it is possible, and your retailer would have to pay you the difference (or probably give you a credit for a future bill).

How much you are credited for the electricity you export to the grid is called the 'feed-in-tariff' (FiT). To find out the current feed-in-tariff rates, see: https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/victorian-feed-in-tariff/current-feed-in-tariff

The power made by your solar system will always be used in your home before it is exported to the grid. This is always the best business case. If you don't see much export, do not worry, this means you are using most of the energy in your home.

You may have limited ability to export electricity to the grid, but this is rare on residential systems. Your installer will handle your network approval and will advise you if you need to limit the amount of power you send to the grid. This may also cause extra charges.

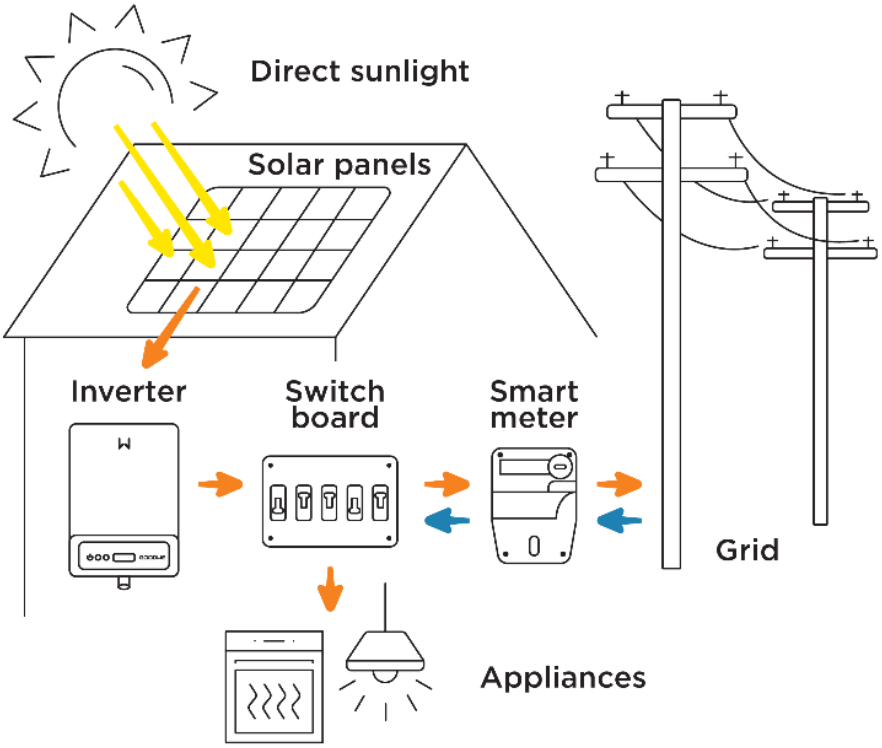
General information about solar power

Why go solar?

- By making your own solar power, you will save on your electricity bills.
- By installing clean energy, you help keep our air clean and our climate safe.

How does solar power work?

- Solar panels turn energy from sunlight into direct current (DC) electricity, and the inverter then changes the DC electricity into alternating current (AC), which is used in your house or exported to the grid.
- Whenever you make more solar power than you use at home, the balance is exported (sold) to the grid.
- Your smart meter records electricity that is exported and imported to and from the grid, and you get credited on your bill for the electricity you export to the grid.
- The amount you are paid for your electricity exports is called the *feed-in tariff*.
- Usually, you pay more for what you import than what you export. This means that the more your daily power usage happens during the day, the more financial benefit you will get from solar.



How do I get the most benefit from my system?

Getting the most benefit out of your solar system isn't hard work. It just needs small behavioural changes.

The power your system makes during the day must also be used during the day. Basically, use your appliances during the day when the sun is shining.

A battery can store excess energy during the day that you can use at night-time, but batteries are still very expensive and not currently offered through our program.

Here are some tips to help you get the most benefit from your system:

- Charge mobiles, laptops and other devices during daylight hours and unplug them in the evening
- Turn on or set a time for your dishwasher and washing machine to run during the day (most have a delayed start function of about 2 hours). Pack them both at night.





- Heat and cool your home during daylight hours and switch it off when the sun goes down. Remember to set to temperatures that don't make your appliances work too hard. For cooling set it to 26 and for heating set it to 20.
- Use a slow cooker
- Look for appliances with rechargeable batteries
- Consider upgrading to efficient electrical appliances when your old ones stop working.
- Switch from gas appliances to electric appliances when you can

For more tips, visit the links below:

https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/how-get-most-out-solar

https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/helpful-hints-your-solar-pv-system

Is my roof suitable for solar? Which orientation is best?

When you apply, our solar provider will first do a desktop assessment using satellite imagery to see if solar is suitable for your roof.

While due North is the best orientation for maximum solar energy production, West and East are also fine. They are a little less efficient than North-facing, but for most homes it will still be very good. Here are some tips:

- **North-facing panels** are the most efficient installation and have maximum generation between 10am and 2pm.
- **East-facing panels** are most efficient for those at home during morning hours and have maximum generation between 9am and 1pm.
- **West-facing panels** are most efficient for those at home during afternoon hours and have maximum generation between 12pm and 4pm.

The angle of your solar panels will be the same as your roof (unless your roof is flat). The optimum angle is 20–25 degrees, but a little more or less is not a problem. If you have a flat roof, an adjustable tilt frame can be used to bring the panels up to the right angle.

Should I switch my appliances to electric instead of gas?

In short, yes. For homes with gas, your solar cannot offset your gas consumption. Changing from gas to electricity is an example of fuel switching.

I the future, you may choose efficient all-electric appliances instead of gas-fired hot water, heating, and cooking. The economics of efficient solar all-electric homes means there are no gas bills to pay, and you're making the most of your solar system.

To read more on this, please visit: https://environmentvictoria.org.au/our-campaigns/safe-climate/getting-off-gas-what-you-can-do-at-home/



Will there be a lot of changes to my home?

No. Solar PV systems are usually installed with minimal changes to the house. The frames for the solar panels are built on your existing roof, and the cables are put inside the roof and walls when possible. On a flat roof, a special kind of mounting called a tilt-frame is needed, which will add to the cost but will not impact your roof.

For a tiled roof, some of the tiles will be removed, brackets attached to the rafters in the roof, and then the tiles will be put back. It's good to have some spare roof tiles during installation because old tiles easily break during installation. The recommendation is to buy 20-30 roof tiles before installation day. For a tin roof it is easier to install solar, because the panels are fixed directly on the roof.

Every roof material is fine for solar, except for slate. Because slate is so fragile, most installers don't want to work on it.

Are there any reasons why I cannot get solar?

Yes, unfortunately solar does not work for all properties. Some of the possible problems are:

- If your roof does not have enough bright open space to fit our smallest solar system, then we cannot install a system for you.
- Your switchboard and wiring need to be up to standard and able to accommodate solar power safely. If your switchboard or wiring are old, they may not be suitable and may need to be changed before the installation can continue. This can be expensive so you need to decide if it is worth the benefit and price.
- If asbestos is in your house and/or your switchboard, our installer may not carry out the necessary works. You will need to pay for asbestos removal before installation.
- If you are in a heritage area, and if your system can be seen from the street or a public park, you will need to apply for a planning permit. If you do not get the permit, we cannot continue with the installation.
- If your roof is made from decramastic roof sheets or slate, our installer may not be able to do the necessary works. Decramastic roof sheets is a kind of pressed metal roof sheeting that looks like roof tiles.
- If your roof has a pitch greater than 35 degrees, our installer may not be able to install solar panels.
- If your roof is very difficult to access safely then our installer may not be able to do the necessary works.
- If we think that your financial benefits may be very low, we will let you know so you can make a better decision for yourself.



Can my smart meter be used with solar power?

Yes, all smart meters can be used with rooftop solar systems. Smart meters track how much power you use from the electricity grid (import) and how much is sent back to the grid from your panels (export).

When your solar system is installed, your Electricity Distributor Network (CitiPower, Jemena or AusNet) will reprogram your meter so that the smart meter knows you have a solar system. There will be a small, one-off fee for this service – usually between $50-100, which will be added to your next electricity bill. If you would like to know more about this fee, please talk to us.

If you don't have a smart meter yet, you will need to get this before the solar system can be turned on.

What about batteries?

Many people are interested in batteries; but batteries are not yet as financially beneficial as solar panels alone. For this reason, Council recommends that you install solar power now, so you can start getting the benefits, instead of waiting for battery prices to become lower.

To find out more about batteries, visit https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/solar-battery-buyers-guide.