



Northern Solar Pty Ltd
Solar Power Systems & Electrical

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How to Avoid the Pitfalls of Purchasing Solar

We've been in the solar power industry for some years and during that time, we've heard countless horror stories from customers regarding some vendors and solar installers; everything from leaking roofs after installations have been performed to householders going into debt for decades.

Following is a list of useful questions to ask that will help you avoid the many pitfalls when deciding upon the solar power system that's right for you.

Questions about Solar Power Systems

Q: What makes up a solar power system?

A: A system consists of solar panels and an inverter. The size of the system is determined by the maximum KW per hour generated by the panels. Example: You may have a 5KW inverter with only 3KW worth of panels to deliver a 3KW system. Having a larger inverter can be of benefit as you may be able to add more panels at a later date.

Q: What size system do I need?

A: This is largely determined by your power usage. It is rare that a household will get greater benefit from installing anything larger than a 5KW system. Providing an estimate of your quarterly power costs will help reputable vendors to understand what will best suit your needs.

Q: How much can I expect to save?

A: A couple may expect to save between ½ AND 1/3 of their power costs with a 2kw system whilst a larger family including 3 children might expect similar with a 5KW system. This is typical of what a household can expect to save with a good quality system.

Businesses however, can save more because they mainly operate through the day. This is when solar power systems are working at capacity and delivering direct savings.



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Other Aspects to consider

Choosing Solar Panels

- What is the panel size v's output to maximise my roof space?
- Are my panels certified independently? Example: TUV IEC denotes independent certification that panels perform to advertised specifications.
- What are the wind and cyclone ratings for my solar panel mounting?
- How long is the manufacturer's warranty?
- How long has the manufacturer been in business? Can I trust that the warranty will be honoured?

Choosing a Solar Inverter

- Can I add more panels at a later date?
- Is my inverter certified in Australia allowing me to claim the Solar Credits Rebate?
- What is the efficiency rating of my inverter?
- How long is the manufacturer's warranty?
- How long has the manufacturer been in business? Can I trust that the warranty will be honoured?

Choosing a Solar Installer

- Does my installer have full CEC accreditation allowing me to claim the Solar Credits Rebate?
- Does my installer use good quality components?
- Is my installer local, giving me access to after sales service, maintenance and upgrades?
- Does my installer offer guarantees on their workmanship?

Choosing Finance

- Is my finance vendor independent of financial institutions and solar companies?
- Is my finance secured or unsecured?
- Do I need a deposit?
- What repayments can I afford and what are the repayment terms?



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Additional Costs

Does my quotation include all costs for design and installation of my solar power system?

What additional are included?

(This can differ as roof types vary and lifting and access equipment may be required)

Additional Tips and Useful Questions

Ask friends, family neighbours or colleagues who have had solar systems installed; they'll be able to tell you about their experiences and perhaps alert you to any problems they experienced - ones that you'll be able to avoid.

Investigate energy efficiency solutions with your solar installer. Replacing inefficient lighting with compact fluorescent or LED lighting can potentially save you thousands of dollars in solar panels cost.

Never let a solar company rush you into a decision. If you are not getting satisfactory responses to your questions then this raises concerns over their lack of transparency and the level of ongoing service you might expect from them. Many unhappy customers have succumbed to the high pressure sales tactics of fast talking sales people only to be disappointed in a number of key areas. It is not uncommon for this to occur under the guise of providing home assessments and can include issues such as:

- Inflated performance claims.

- Low quality components (Cheap panels and inverters often deliver poor performance and degrade far more quickly)

- Shade tolerance claims. (No solar panel is truly shade tolerant)

- Component substitution (Check you've received what you've bought)

- Grey marketing and counterfeit products (Warranty becomes invalid)

- Installing uncertified components (Cannot claim Solar Credits Rebate)

- Installers that are not fully CEC accredited (Cannot claim Solar Credits Rebate)

- Collusion with related industries such as roofers and plumbers

- Demand for high deposits

- Gimmicks, gadgets and bonuses

- Fine print contracts (seek legal advice if you are unsure of your rights)