



# Program guide

Solar for Low  
Income Households





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# Program overview

## What is the Solar for Low Income Households trial program?

We are trialling a new way to help people on low incomes reduce their electricity bills by installing 3 kilowatt solar systems on their homes. The program aims to improve energy affordability by helping households unlock long term savings on their electricity bills.

This program is only available to a limited number of households that live in selected regions and meet the eligibility criteria. This includes receiving the [Low Income Household Rebate](#) and holding a valid Pensioner Concession Card or Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card. Please see the full eligibility criteria on page 7.

This NSW Government initiative is run by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and is available for up to 3,000 eligible homeowners. The NSW Government has selected three solar installation companies to deliver this program.

## How to use this guide

For many people, solar is a great way to cut electricity bills, but it isn't the right choice for everyone. To participate in this program you need to meet the eligibility criteria and understand your role and responsibilities.

This guide will step you through everything you need to know to help you make an informed decision about whether the program is right for you.

Please read it carefully before you submit an eligibility application and keep a copy so that you can refer to it when necessary.

## Roles and responsibilities

### Your role

When you participate in this program you receive a free fully installed 3 kilowatt solar system. To receive a solar system you must agree to:

- 1. stop receiving the Low Income Household Rebate for 10 years (this means you will not receive the \$285 annual discount on your electricity bill)**
- 2. allow your electricity retailer to send your electricity bills to us**
- 3. take ownership of the solar system and be responsible for its maintenance**
- 4. notify us if you move house or change your electricity retailer in the next 10 years**
- 5. enter into a contract between you and the solar installer**
- 6. contact your electricity retailer to arrange for a smart meter and pay any associated costs.**

If you decide to apply for the program, you are responsible for ensuring the information you provide to the Department and the solar installer is accurate and not misleading.

## **The role of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment**

We are providing funding for up to 3,000 solar systems to successful NSW homeowners. We will:

### **1. Assess your eligibility for the program**

We use the information you and the solar installer provide in your application to decide if you and your home are eligible for the program.

For more information on how we collect, use and store your information please read our [privacy notice](#).

### **2. Pay for the solar system**

If you are successful with your application, we pay the solar installer for the solar system installed at your home. We then work with your electricity retailer so that you do not receive the Low Income Household Rebate for the next 10 years.

### **3. Evaluate the program**

We will use your electricity bills provided by your electricity retailer as well as any feedback you provide us directly to evaluate the program.

## **The role of the solar installers**

All solar system installations will be carried out by the three solar installers and these installers may engage sub-contractors to help carry out this work. No other solar companies have been authorised to carry out installations as part of this program. The solar installer will:

### **1. Assist you with your application and assess your home**

The installer is available to help you with questions about the application process and the solar system. Once your eligibility application has been accepted by the Department, the installer will contact you directly. They will assess your home for the application to determine if it is suitable for a solar system and eligible for the program.

### **2. Provide a customer contract**

Before your solar system is installed, you and the solar installer will enter into a contract. This contract is an important legal document with legally binding responsibilities that you need to carefully consider. This contract does not involve the Department.

### **3. Install your solar system**

The solar installer will install your solar system, connect it to the electricity network and ensure the system is providing electricity to your home. They will provide you with training on how the solar system works and who to contact if there are any issues.

#### 4. Provide warranties and accreditation

The solar installer will provide the solar system warranties and is responsible for maintaining a 10 year whole of system warranty for your solar system. The installer must meet all Clean Energy Council solar accreditations and comply with health and safety regulations.

If the solar system breaks down or stops working you should contact the solar installer who is responsible for assisting you. The terms of the warranty are in the contract between you and the installer.

#### 5. Installers for each region

The installers selected for the five regions are:

- North Coast – SAE Group Pty Ltd
- Central Coast – Origin Energy Electricity Limited
- Sydney – South – Origin Energy Electricity Limited
- Illawarra – Shoalhaven – Origin Energy Electricity Limited
- South Coast – Smart Renewables Pty Ltd trading as SolarHub



#### **Other solar installers**

If you have been contacted by a solar installation company that is not listed in this guide or on our website, they are not authorised to complete any work on behalf of the NSW Government as part of this program.

If you believe a solar installation company has been engaging in fraudulent or unethical activities relating to this program you may wish to lodge a complaint with NSW Fair Trading by calling 13 32 20 and report the scam to [ScamWatch](#).

# Making a choice

## Am I eligible?

To apply for the program you need to meet the eligibility criteria listed below. You must:



### **Live in one of the following NSW areas:**

- Central Coast
- North Coast
- Sydney - South
- Illawarra - Shoalhaven
- South Coast

Check your [postcode](#) to see if you are in an eligible location.



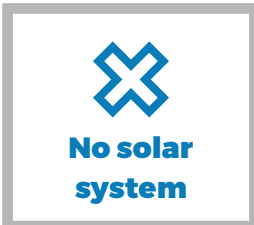
### **Have a concession card**

You must have a valid Pensioner Concession Card or a Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card.



### **Own your home**

You must live in and own your house.



### **Not own a solar system**

You can't already have a solar system. This doesn't include a solar hot water system.



### **Receive the rebate**

You must be receiving the Low Income Household Rebate.

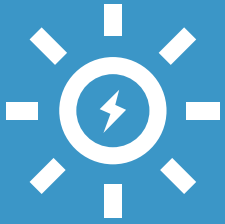
## Other things to consider

- If you are not the registered homeowner, but your spouse is, you may be considered eligible collectively as a household.
- If you are eligible, your approved installer will check that you use enough electricity to see bill savings after giving up your Low Income Household Rebate.
- If you live in a strata scheme, your approved installer will check that installing solar on your home is allowed and will not be too complex or costly.

## Is this program right for me?

Solar is a great way to cut your electricity bills and minimise your environmental footprint, but is not always the right choice for every household.

Consider the following questions before you apply to decide if this program is right for you.



### Are you happy not to receive your rebate?

To participate in this program you will agree not to receive your Low Income Household Rebate. You will not receive this rebate for 10 years.

This means you will no longer receive the \$285 annual discount on your electricity bill, but you could receive up to \$600 in savings per year from your new solar system.



### Do you use most of your electricity during daylight hours?

Solar power is generated during daylight hours, generally 10am – 3pm. To maximise your bill savings with solar you should use most of your electricity during this period.

The electricity that is not from your solar system will come from the electricity network (known as the grid) and you will be charged at your standard rate.



### Have you talked to your electricity retailer to understand how solar could affect your electricity bills?

You will need to contact your electricity retailer to discuss the change in contract when installing a solar system.

Your retailer may pay you for the electricity your solar system feeds back into the grid (this is called a solar feed-in tariff) but not all electricity retailers will do this, and the amount paid differs between retailers. To receive a solar feed-in tariff you may be required to change contracts with your retailer.



### Are you planning on staying in your house?

If you plan to move in the next 10 years, it is likely this program is not right for you. If you move house you will not receive the rebate.

The longer you stay in your house, the greater long-term savings you will get from your solar system.





**Have you discussed installing a smart meter with your electricity retailer?**

You must have a smart meter installed in your home as part of this program. This will measure the solar power fed back into the grid from your solar system.

Some electricity retailers provide smart meter installations at no charge. You will need to contact your retailer to discuss the potential cost and options.



**Do you agree to maintain your solar system?**

You may consider having your solar system inspected and cleaned periodically to ensure it continues to run efficiently and safely. This work will need to be undertaken at your own cost.



**Do you have home insurance?**

You may consider checking with your home insurance company if they cover the solar system and its installation works as part of your home insurance.



## Is my house right for solar?

As part of the application process your installer will check if your house is suitable for solar. This ensures the safe installation of solar and that the system makes enough energy to reduce your electricity bills. Consider the following questions to decide if your house is right for solar.



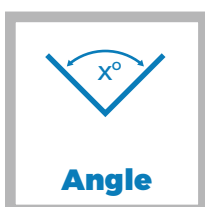
### **What is the condition of your roof?**

If your roof is damaged or will need replacing in the next few years, this program may not be right for you. There can be additional costs or damages when a solar system is taken down and then reinstalled as part of a roof restoration or replacement.



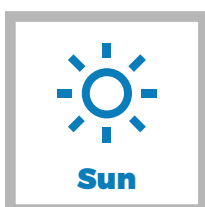
### **What direction does your roof face?**

The direction your roof faces impacts the amount of electricity your solar system can produce. North-facing roofs are the most suitable for solar as they catch the most sunlight and produce the most electricity. South-facing roofs are usually not suitable for solar.



### **What is the angle of your roof?**

Solar panels are generally mounted with the angle of your roof. This means the tilt of your roof can impact the amount of sunlight on the panels. If you have a roof that is flat, or close to flat, it could affect the amount of electricity produced and reduce your bill savings.



### **Does your roof get full sun?**

When a shadow covers a solar panel, it reduces the amount of electricity produced. The installer will analyse your roof surroundings to identify any items, such as buildings or trees, that may cause shading on your roof now or in the future.



### **Do you have enough rooftop space?**

There needs to be enough space on your roof to accommodate around 10 solar panels. This means you will require between 17 - 20m<sup>2</sup> of roof space.



### **How much weight can your roof hold?**

Solar panels will add weight onto your roof. The installer will check whether your roof structure is strong enough to support the additional weight of the solar system.



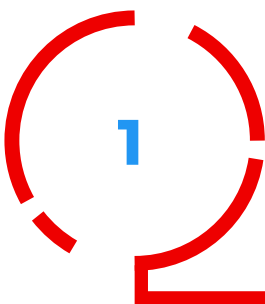
### **Is your current electrical wiring safe?**

The installer will check the current condition of electrical wiring at your home to make sure it is safe to install a solar system.

# Applying

## How do I apply?

There are four steps in the application and installation process. Review the following steps and timeframes before you begin your application.

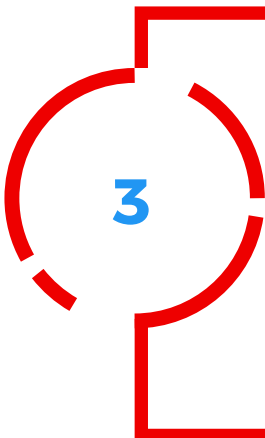
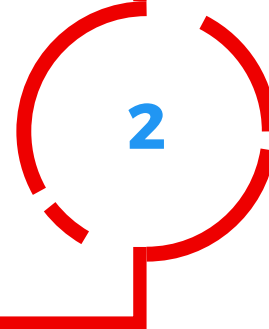


### **Eligibility application**

Submit an eligibility application to confirm you meet the program's eligibility criteria. If your eligibility application is approved, we will notify you and send your information to the installer in your area. To complete your application visit our [website](#). **Timing: Please allow 2 - 3 weeks for eligibility checks.**

### **Solar system application**

An approved installer will contact you to begin your solar system application, which includes a house suitability assessment. They will also send you a consent form to complete if we approve the house suitability assessment. The house suitability application and consent form are sent back to us to complete your application. **Timing: Please allow 3 - 4 weeks for processing.**

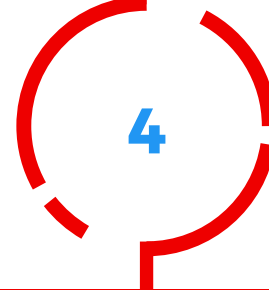


### **Installation organised**

If your solar system application is accepted, the installer will contact you to discuss the contract and to organise a date when you will be at home for the installation. At this time, you will also need to contact your electricity retailer to organise a smart meter installation. You don't need to have the smart meter installed before the solar installation can proceed. If your application is not accepted the installer will contact you. **Timing: Please allow 2 - 3 weeks to be contacted.**

### **Solar installed**

Your solar system will be installed and the installer will provide you with training on how to use the system. You will be asked to sign a form with the installer to confirm the installation and training is complete. **Timing: Please allow 2 - 3 months for your system to be installed.**



**[Apply here!](#)**

Please see the [privacy notice](#) to learn how we treat your personal information.

## Can I upsize the solar system?

When you participate in this program you receive a free fully installed 3 kilowatt solar system. You can choose to upsize your system to a maximum of 6 kilowatt, but you must pay for all costs associated with upsizing.

It is important to understand that an upsized system does not always guarantee more savings. The amount of savings you are likely to see from a larger system will depend on your lifestyle and electricity use. A larger system will work for you if you consume most of the electricity produced during daylight hours. Solar electricity not consumed will be fed back to the electricity grid. While you may receive a solar feed-in tariff for this electricity, this is generally much less than the amount you pay for the electricity you draw from the grid.

### **The process for upsizing your solar system**

Installers for this program are not allowed to actively upsell you to a larger system. If you are interested in upsizing, you will need to request further information from your installer when you complete your solar system application.

If you choose this option the installer will issue a \$0 quote for the Solar for Low Income Households funded 3 kilowatt system, and a separate quote for the upsized option. The installer is required to ensure all upsized systems meet the same criteria as the program supported system, including warranties but you will need to ensure they comply with this.

Once installation is complete you will receive an invoice payable directly to the installer for your share of the installation. A copy of the customer payable invoice is also supplied to us.



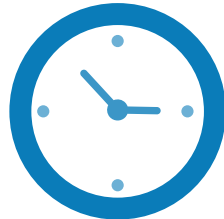
# Ways to save

Once your solar system has been installed, consider the following ways to get the most out of your solar and maximise your electricity savings.

## Saving with your solar



Monitor your daily electricity use using your inverter and smart meter and try to adjust your appliance usage to maximise your use of solar.



Use your major appliances during the hours of 10am – 3pm to ensure you use the electricity generated by your solar system.

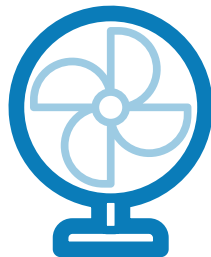


Where possible, try to reduce the use of appliances on cloudy days, as your solar system will not produce as much electricity when it is overcast.

## Saving with your heating and cooling

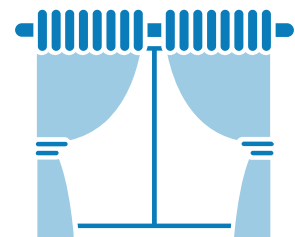


Set your air conditioning to 23°C - 26°C in summer and 18°C - 21°C in winter.



Use your fan in summer rather than your air conditioner when you can.

Ceiling fans can move warm air around your home in winter and cool air around your home in summer.



Close your curtains and blinds to keep the summer heat out and winter heat in.

## Saving with your appliances



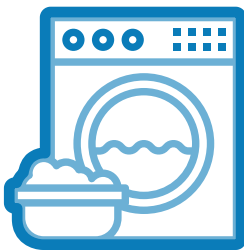
Turn off lights when you leave a room.



Install energy efficient light bulbs such as LEDs



Check the energy ratings on new appliances. The more stars, the cheaper it is to run.



Use cold water for washing your clothes.



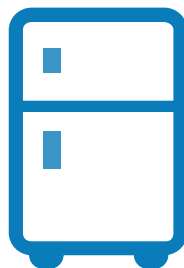
Turn TVs and home entertainment systems off at the wall. Do not leave them on stand-by.



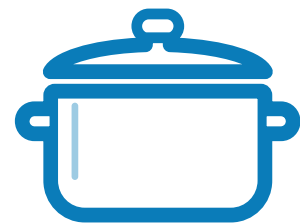
Only use the dishwasher once it is full and use the energy-saving setting.



Hang clothes to dry instead of using the dryer.



Set your fridge to 3°C and freezer to -15°C. Clean or replace worn seals.



Use lids to speed up cooking times.

# Further information

## Need more information?

For further information visit our [website](#).

If you have questions please contact us via email at:  
[solarforlowincome.program@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:solarforlowincome.program@planning.nsw.gov.au)

Or you can talk to someone at Service NSW by calling 13 77 88.



## Other offers and discounts

If this program isn't the right choice for you there are other programs and rebates for energy bill savings that you could be eligible for.

Consider if any of the [following rebates](#) are the right option for you:

- Low income household rebate
- Family energy rebate
- Gas rebate
- Medical energy rebate
- Life support rebate
- Energy accounts payment assistance

There are also other programs that you could be eligible for. Consider if any of the following programs are the right option for you:

- [Appliance replacement offer](#)
- [Discounted energy efficient lighting](#)



If you have any questions regarding the program, please email [solarforlowincome.program@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:solarforlowincome.program@planning.nsw.gov.au)