

10 TIPS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY AT HOME

1 Do your homework on government incentives

Rebates and government incentives on solar systems are constantly changing. Check www.resourcesmart.vic.gov.au and www.ata.org.au for up-to-date information on eligibility rules and rebate amounts.

2 What size (size matters)?

Deciding on the size of a solar system depends on your household. Consider the number of people living in the house, but also when you would use the electricity. If you don't use much electricity during the day, then you'll end up exporting most of it to the grid where it's not likely to be worth as much as if you powered your own appliances with it. If this is the case, then a smaller system is the way to go. Also be energy efficient first - no point in spending lots on solar electricity generation if you're running an inefficient household! Think: 'Conservation before creation'.

3 Photovoltaic : Matching inverter with panels

The capacity of your inverter should match the output by the panels. You can also decide on a larger inverter, which allows for an increase of panels later on.

4 Is your house suitable? Have an inspection done in case extra install cost

Always request an inspection by the solar installer, prior to signing on the dotted line. This way you will get a quote that takes into consideration the suitability of your home and roof space, and any other unforeseen installation costs.

5 The type of panels you want / need

Monocrystalline, polycrystalline, or amorphous / thin film? Each solar technology comes with a different efficiency and a different price tag. To help you make a decision, go to ATA's solar panel buyer's guide for independent advice.

6 Quality / efficiency of panels (brand)

Solar panels might look alike, but there can be a vast difference in their quality and efficiency. It is often a case of you get what you pay for, and the 'deal ending soon' is likely the one you want to stay away from. Always do your homework!

7 Quality / efficiency of inverter

Never skimp on the quality of the inverter. Their quality determines how much of the generated electricity you will actually have for use in the house or export to the grid. Check the warranty and lifespan of your chosen inverter. It should last 10 - 15 years.

8 Check what's in the warranty

The warranty of a solar system is as good as the company behind it. Look for a reputable Australian based solar company and pick a system made by a well-known manufacturer. And look for good levels of warranty over the panel performance (at least 25 years), inverter (5 - 10 years minimum) and installation / workmanship (minimum 5 years). If a supplier can't give you this level of warranties, ask them why they aren't willing to back their own product.

9 Recommendations from neighbours / friends / family

Before deciding on a solar system, it pays to get a reference from people around you. It's a great way to learn about their experiences with solar installers, the solar products they have and the performance of systems in the field.

10 Don't settle for one quote

With the competition in renewable technologies running hot, you should always get more than one quote. Keep in mind however, always to compare quotes for the same systems, including installation, panels and inverter.

