



Tasmanian Renewable Energy Alliance

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Renewable energy group welcomes red-tape reduction

The newly formed Tasmanian Renewable Energy Alliance (TREA) today welcomed the proposed changes to the building regulations covering installation of solar panels by the Minister for Workplace Relations, David O'Byrne MP.

Following the changes to the feed-in tariff in September this year there is a backlog of over 6000 solar PV systems to be installed in Tasmania over the next few months.

The guidelines recently released by Workplace Standards Tasmania (WST) would have added millions of dollars to the cost of installing these systems without any compelling information that there is a problem that needs addressing. *"There are over 16,000 solar PV installations in Tasmania and we are not aware of any structural failures caused by these installations, even in recent high wind events."* said Jack Gilding, Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Alliance.

The revised guidelines proposed by Minister O'Byrne will allow most household and small commercial solar panel installations to proceed without the expense and delay of requiring certification from a building surveyor, who might in turn require a report from a structural engineer.

"We welcome the Minister's sensible approach to avoiding red-tape. This will avoid millions of dollars of unnecessary cost being added to the vast majority of straight forward solar panel installations. The solar industry will continue to work positively with Workplace Standards and the Minister to identify situations where additional measures may be necessary to address structural issues." said Mr Gilding.

The solar PV industry works to high professional standards and is already heavily regulated to ensure that solar installation are safe.

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Background – proposed changes

On 20 September Workplace Standards Tasmania released "Building Regulation Advisory Note No. 3" setting out how they intended to treat solar installations over 18m², following the introduction in November 2012 of an exemption from the requirement for building permits for installation under this size. Almost all of the 6000 pending installations are over 18m² (about 2.5kW).

The WST guidelines would require either a full building permit process or a certificate of minor works from a building surveyor who might in turn require certification from a structural engineer.

In response to representations from the industry, the Minister is proposing to introduce amendments in Parliament which would extend the existing exemption to cover solar panels when installed under the following conditions:

- Installed by an accredited installer,
- Installed parallel with the pitch of the roof,
- Must not overhang the roof surface or be within 200mm of the edge of a roof,
- The dead load is distributed so that it does not exceed 100kg at any point of attachment to the roof, and
- Not more than 38m² on any one roof plane.

Background – Existing regulation of solar PV installations in Tasmania

Every solar installation* has to be supervised by a licenced electrician who has also completed solar specific training courses and is accredited by the Clean Energy Council (CEC). Installers are required to complete ongoing professional development to maintain their accreditation. They sign a Code of Conduct, are bound by the CEC accreditation terms and conditions and must follow CEC guidelines.

All grid connect systems must also meet the following Standards:

- AS/NZS 5033 Installation of photovoltaic (PV) arrays
- AS/NZS 3000 Electrical Wiring Rules
- AS 1768 Lightning Protection
- AS/NZS 1170.2 Wind Loads
- AS4777 Grid Connections of Energy Systems via Inverters

In addition all the framing components which are used to attach the panels to the roof have been rigorously tested by engineering firms to ensure that they will meet Tasmanian conditions, in particular the wind load.

At the completion of installation, the installer is required to give the home owner a package of instructions and documentation which includes a statement of the fact that the installation complies with all relevant standards. This documentation includes engineering certificates to ensure that frames and mounting rails comply with the wind-loading standard.

Every grid connected solar installation is inspected by independent inspectors engaged by Workplace Standards Tasmania. In addition a random sample of installations is also inspected by separate inspectors engaged by the Australian Energy Regulator.

Reports on the results of these inspections are regularly passed to Workplace Standards Tasmania and the CEC. Installers can lose their solar accreditation and/or their electrician licence if they consistently fail to meet the required standards.

* Some of these requirements relate to grid-connected systems only or are a consequence of applying for small scale technology certificates (STC) under the national Renewable Energy Target. As the upfront sale of STCs results in a significant reduction in the cost of a solar PV system, nearly all household solar PV installation are covered by these requirements.