

Australia leads the world in Residential Solar Systems





In 2011, Australia installed more residential PV systems than any other country. While a number of other countries installed more PV in capacity terms – more Australian households than any other country embraced solar PV.

The Clean Energy Regulator released data in July showing that 753,844 PV systems with a capacity of 1,671 MW had been installed and created renewable energy certificates (RECs) in Australia to 30 June 2012. Of these around 104,000 installations are in Western Australia. Queensland has the largest amount of installed solar in the country totalling more than 209,000 installations and a capacity of over 475MW.

The REC Agents Association released a media release recently showing that more than 14% of owner occupied separate or semi-detached houses had a solar photovoltaic (PV) system. While the aggregate figures are impressive, the figures for 2011 installations paint an even more interesting picture. For 2011, 357,222 PV systems were installed and created RECs in Australia (with a total capacity of 861 MW).

It is expected that this number will increase slightly as RECs can be created up to 12 months after date of installation. The overwhelming proportion of these systems will be residential, with commercial installations (greater than 10 kW) amounting to less than 5%.

More than 340,000 residential PV systems were installed in 2011, which makes the proportion of residential PV installations in Australia the largest of any country. This was initially a surprise as



many people expected Germany, Italy, US, China or Japan, which installed significant levels of PV in 2011, to be the largest. All of these countries have significant levels of residential systems but, as it happens, less than Australia. Japan had more installed residential PV capacity than Australia at 1,166 MW. However, as the average system size in Japan is 4 kW, only 292,000 systems were installed (some 48,000 less than in Australia which had an average system size of 2.4 kW).Based on existing growth trends, the Sustainable Energy Association of Australia (SEA) projects more than 10 per cent of Australian homes will have installed solar panels by September this year. And by July 2013 Australia will have over 2300 MW in installed capacity of small scale solar.

The cost of solar power installations has dramatically come down in the past two years. Regen Power has installed around 5000 roof top solar installations in Australia – the majority being in Western Australia. Electricity prices in Australia have risen in the past couple of years. For example, Synergy's commercial R3 tariff has gone up from 31 cents to 37 cents per kilowatt-hour in 2011. With the newly introduced Carbon Tax, the price will go up further from July 2012. It is in this context that the investment in solar becoming safe and very attractive.

