New Rules for Small-Scale Solar and Battery Integration

WA

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04 November 2025

MASTER ELECTRICIANS AUSTRALIA

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The majority of small-scale solar and battery (CER) installations are carried out by small electrical contractors, who face mounting challenges in navigating fragmented and inconsistent regulatory frameworks. MEA therefore supports greater consistency in installation requirements to reduce administrative burden on small businesses and minimise the risk of inadvertent non-compliance caused by differing jurisdictional rules.

MEA also supports measures that enhance consumer flexibility and enable households and businesses to maximise the value and performance of their CER investments.

MEA commends Energy Policy WA for its efforts to streamline CER installation requirements and deliver meaningful reductions in red tape for installers.

Offline Default

MEA commends Energy Policy WA for addressing the risk of CER devices unknowingly falling offline through the proposal for systems to default to a lower static export limit after a defined period. This represents a sensible minimum safeguard to protect consumers and maintain system stability.

To build on this, MEA recommends introducing a communications monitoring mechanism to ensure consumers are notified promptly when their assets go offline, allowing them to maximise system performance and avoid unexpected costs. For example, in Victoria, consumers receive email notifications when their system disconnects, providing a practical model for consideration.

Common Smart Inverter Profile – Australia (CSIP-Aus)

MEA supports the CSIP-Aus, a process that streamlines administrative procedures for installers and ensures consistency across installations.

The benefits of the CSIP-AUS being implemented includes:

- *Reduced Unnecessary Red Tape* – A harmonised approach ensures that installers are not exposed to additional and unnecessary accreditation and testing requirements. This prevents extra administrative and training costs for licensed electrical workers, streamlining compliance across the State. If separate rules and communication protocols exist, small-to-medium electrical contractors would face increased costs in obtaining multiple accreditations and meeting different testing requirements.

- *Reduced Administration* – The portal's pre-automated information capability reduces time for installers completing the application and will simplify processes for installers by collecting all the information required about an installation in one place.

- *Standardised Installation Process* - Consistent communication protocols and technical standards simplify the installation and commissioning of inverters, making the process more predictable and reducing errors. This allows licensed electrical workers to apply the same knowledge and skills across different networks, reducing complexity on-site.

- *Enhanced Consumer Confidence* - A uniform framework ensures that all CER installations meet the same security and performance standards, increasing consumer trust in solar and battery systems. This helps maintain grid stability by ensuring that the backstop mechanism is applied consistently across jurisdictions.

Implementation Pathway

MEA acknowledges that only new installations and system upgrades will be required to comply with the proposed CER installation requirements. While MEA supports this approach, we urge Energy Policy WA to carefully consider scenarios where new panels are added alongside existing systems on the same rooftop (i.e. extensions of existing generation capacity).

For example, in Victoria, pre-existing solar systems are not required to comply with new Emergency Backstop Mechanism (EBM) requirements (which CSIP-Aus falls under). However, where an additional system is installed on a building with pre-existing panels, all inverters (both old and new) must be upgraded to meet the EBM standard. MEA considers this approach impractical, unnecessary, and potentially prohibitively costly for consumers. We therefore recommend that only the newly installed systems be required to comply with the proposed rules, and that existing systems on the same site remain unaffected.

Conclusion

MEA supports the proposed CER installation rules, provided existing systems are not retrospectively captured and extended consumer protections against assets falling offline are implemented. A practical and proportionate approach will ensure that consumers can continue to expand their systems affordably, while installers maintain confidence and clarity in applying the new requirements.