

For Distribution 16 May 2022

Reclaim PV Recycling & Circular PV Alliance sign milestone MOU to drive the reuse and resale of solar panels and enhance the solar energy circular economy

Reclaim PV Recycling (Reclaim PV) and The Circular PV Alliance (CPVA) are proud to announce the signing of a milestone Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as the two organisations collectively work together to develop standards and testing procedures to support the reuse and resale of solar panels.

Both organisations strongly believe in the mantra of 'Repair, Reuse and Recycle' and that solar panels should be tested for potential safe reuse rather than going straight to recycling.

According to Clive Fleming, Director of Reclaim PV, "As there is no legislation in place in Australia to govern the reuse of panels, we believe this agreement is the first step in establishing a second-hand PV market in Australia with the appropriate certification to keep the industry to a high standard when it comes to the testing and verification of panels for reuse."

Co-founder of CPVA, Megan Jones also acknowledges that the Australian solar energy circular economy is largely in its infancy, saying "An industry-led approach to facilitate the transition to a circular economy is one of the core tenets of CPVA and is the basis for this principles-based MOU with Reclaim PV which we hope will set the pathway for industry to get on board."

In 2021 both Reclaim PV and CPVA (with PV Lab) undertook separate used solar panel testing projects in response to the increasing prevalence of functional solar panels being dumped at waste stations.

According to Mr Fleming, "Reclaim PV has already been incorporating a series of performance and safety evaluation tests across our Australian solar panel recycling sites with success. For example, recent figures from the testing of around 1,450 solar panels at the Rockhampton Council collection site, has revealed that more than 31% could be considered for reuse instead of going through the recycling process."

Rockhampton Region Waste and Recycling Councilor Shane Latcham said Rockhampton Regional Council are proud to be involved with such a great recycling initiative. "At Council we are always looking for new ways to be proactive in this space. This initiative aligns with our broader Waste Strategy, which outlines our plan to achieve zero waste by 2050, diverting 90% of waste from landfill."

At the same time, Reclaim PV is increasingly seeing thousands of used solar panels being exported without any testing for safety or performance, creating a potential problem, according to Mr Fleming. "Our testing has shown that a significant percentage of solar panels being made available for recycling suffer from electricity leakage and if these were to be shipped overseas for reuse, they may pose a danger to installers and users in overseas markets. That is why testing the solar panels is very important."

The MOU aligns with Reclaim PV's goal to obtain as much value from solar panels through repair and reuse before recycling them, with CPVA's aim to develop a certification standard for reused solar panels to drive consumer trust around the performance, safety and quality of reused panels. According to Ms Jones, CPVA sees its role as providing independent certification of panels for resale and reuse, where CPVA certification is recognised as the industry's 'gold standard', in order to provide a high level of integrity and credibility to the emerging solar panel reuse market."

To avoid the dumping of panels overseas, tested and certified solar panels that are fit for reuse will be made available for supply to Australian domestic consumers and installers. Ms Jones said, "CPVA is working to enable a robust commercial market for reused solar panels as an attractive option for consumers looking to install solar. We are a not-for-profit and want to see everyone succeed as we move to more circular business practices in solar. CPVA is currently developing certifications for reused solar panels and certification options for affiliated solar industry businesses. Being a CPVA certified business demonstrates leadership around environmental stewardship and the solar circular economy and will act as an important market differentiator and provide value-add opportunities. The different industry stakeholders we have worked with so far are very supportive and see this as the future for solar in Australia."

CPVA and Reclaim PV will combine their collective skills and experience garnered through each organisation's individual efforts to date, to play an integral role in identifying and developing best practice test and reuse standards through cooperative knowledge sharing. For example, Reclaim PV already has testing procedures in place and arrangements with charities such as SolarBuddy and commercial trader Solar Shift to provide low-cost reused panels to communities that are living in energy poverty.

According to Ms Jones, "While the primary aim is to stop all panels from entering landfill, the long-term view for the solar circular economy includes the realisation of community benefits around employment and training and creating the 'jobs of the future'. This aligns with the broader values of CPVA and its affiliates, such as Reclaim PV, that are paving the way for this important initiative as part of the emerging circular industry paradigm."

For more information please visit www.reclaimpv.com or www.circularpv.com.au

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About Reclaim PV

Reclaim PV Recycling is Australia's first and leading solar panel collection and recycling company that uses innovative solutions to re-use or recycle solar panel materials so that no material is dumped in landfill. Reclaim PV has multiple facilities in both South Australia and Queensland and continues to drive innovation in solar panel recycling through its in-house research programs.

Reclaim's robust recycling process utilises Pyrolysis - a well-known thermal deconstruction technique - to break down and pull apart PV panels into their component parts by passing them through a high-temperature furnace. The recovered components are then sorted and available for re-use.

About the Circular PV Alliance (CPVA)

The Circular PV Alliance was formed in 2021 with a mission to realise the full environmental, economic and social benefits of solar energy by supporting the Australian solar energy sector transition to a circular economy. CPVA supports the self-determination of all solar energy industry stakeholders as the circular economy emerges.

CPVA comprises a highly credentialled board of directors and technical advisory board and is collaborating with PV Lab on its first pilot project. This project involves collecting, testing and reinstalling used solar panels as proof of concept that solar panels are fit for reuse if handled and processed effectively. The testing is now complete and an installation site is currently being negotiated and will be installed by early CPVA supporter, Macquarie Energy.