

SOLAR RETAILER CODE OF CONDUCT – ANNUAL REPORT

CLEAN ENERGY COUNCIL
DECEMBER 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Solar Retailer Code of Conduct (the Code) was devised by the Clean Energy Council after calls from its members and the broader community for improved standards and integrity in the solar PV industry. The Clean Energy Council worked with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to develop what has become a respected code of conduct that serves to guide solar retailers in their business operations and to protect consumers. This is the third Annual Report on the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct, produced by the Clean Energy Council.

This year has seen a substantial increase in **compliance activity** - both signatories' compliance with the Code and the Code Administrator's compliance with requirements set under the ACCC authorisation. The significant number of onsite visits conducted by the Code Administrator revealed very high levels of compliance.

The Code Administrator provides regular **reporting**, including Quarterly Reports to inform stakeholders of statistics, developments in the Code and its administration, and promotional activities; and an Annual Report. All reports are published on the [Solar Accreditation website](#). The Code Administrator also reports alleged breaches of the Australian Consumer Law to the ACCC.

The Code Administrator continues to **protect the Approved Solar Retailer brand**. The process for addressing logo misuse appears to have resulted in swift rectification of alleged infringements but it cannot be shown to have prevented other businesses infringing.

Among its other efforts to **raise awareness of the Approved Solar Retailer brand** amongst consumers, the Clean Energy Council invested in digital advertising during the summer months at both ends of this year.

Building **relationships with procurement groups** in order to have the Code embedded in tender processes is a strategy that works well. The Code Administrator continually seeks to establish more of these relationships. The Clean Energy Council has written to Federal Environment and Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg explaining the objectives and administration of the Code and advocating for it to be mandatory for solar retailers.

Initiatives such as the **template solar sale and installation agreement** help to streamline and strengthen administrative processes. **Strategic partnerships** aid ongoing efforts to increase exposure and acceptance of the Code. Regular communication with Code signatories helps to keep the Code Administrator informed of relevant issues in the marketplace and signatories of new opportunities and developments in relevant laws and policy developments.

The number of applications to sign the Code increased by 57 per cent in 2016. The rejection rate remains just below 50 per cent and there is now a **total of 40 Approved Solar Retailers**. Approved Solar Retailers now account for an estimated **11 per cent of annual solar PV sales**. As recognition of and respect for the Code continues to grow, and a solid marketing strategy, the future of the Approved Solar Retailer program looks strong. The program continues to be overseen and directed by a distinguished independent panel. The Clean Energy Council looks forward to continuing to administer the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct to 2020 and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

The Solar Retailer Code of Conduct is a voluntary code that aims to promote best practice measures and activities for retailers of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems. It aims to protect consumers of solar PV and to improve industry integrity by addressing issues identified as negatively impacting the reputation of the solar industry. The ACCC authorised the Code in 2013 and has since re-authorised it with extended provisions. The Code is administered by the [Clean Energy Council](#), the peak body representing Australia's clean energy industry, and is overseen by an independent Code Review Panel. **It is the only solar industry code of conduct authorised by the ACCC.** The Code was launched in 2013 by Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt.

All solar PV retailers, including those selling PV to home-owners, small-, medium- and large-scale businesses, community groups and government, are eligible to apply to sign the Code. Signing onto the Code demonstrates a retailer's commitment to service its customers beyond what is required under the Australian Consumer Law (the ACL).

This is the third Annual Report of the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct. It is produced pursuant to section 3.8 of the Code. The Annual Report presents data and analysis on:

- applications to the Code
- compliance with the Code
- reporting obligations of the Code Administrator
- changes to the Code
- how the Code is promoted
- the effectiveness of the Code and its impact on the broader industry

If you would like further information on the Code or any of the data contained in this Annual Report, please contact the Code Administrator on 03 9929 4100 or at codeofconduct@cleanenergycouncil.org.au.

THE CODE ADMINISTRATOR

The Code Administrator is defined in the Code as the Clean Energy Council. Pursuant to section 3.1 of the Code, the Code Administrator is responsible for:

- managing the administration process relating to Code signatories
- monitoring Code compliance
- determining when breaches of the Code have occurred and determining appropriate action
- enforcing sanctions
- referring cases to the Code Review Panel as required

- overseeing promotion of the Code and
- developing training and supporting material on the Code.

The recent independent review of Code administration found that:

The Clean Energy Council's administration of the Code is effective, with rigorous review of applications to become a signatory to the Code, the use of the renewal process to obtain appropriate updating information, a well-structured and well-executed audit process and an appropriate process to investigate and resolve complaints about Code signatories that raise the possibility of a breach of the Code.

The minutes of a meeting of the Code Review Panel in February this year record that the Code Review Panel recognised resourcing constraints and asked that those constraints be noted by Clean Energy Council leadership. Towards the end of 2016 the Clean Energy Council realigned its staffing resources and, as a result, the Code Administrator now has additional staffing. Planning for 2017 is well under way, with marketing and engagement, and compliance auditing plans in place.

THE CODE REVIEW PANEL

The Code Review Panel is an integral part of ensuring the Code is effectively managed with independent oversight. Establishment and engagement of such a panel was a requirement for ACCC authorisation and provides assurance that the Clean Energy Council is not conflicted in administering the Code.

The Code Review Panel consists of [three members](#) who bring industry, technical and consumer expertise. The Panel and each of its members is highly committed to the success of the Code and supports the Code Administrator in a manner that helps ensure the Code's integrity.

The Panel is eminently credentialed to deal with issues that the Code aims to address. It meets four times each year to ensure the Code is operating effectively and is meeting the identified objectives and community expectations. The Panel Chair and members also give generously of their time and knowledge outside of scheduled meeting times to ensure the Code Administrator is well supported in making technical and strategic decisions.

| Code Review Panel meeting dates | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 2016 | 2017 |
| 12 February | 23 February |
| 13 May | 25 May |
| 21 August | 17 August |
| 1 December | 23 November |

The responsibilities of the Code Review Panel include:

- determining cases referred to it by the Code Administrator
- arbitrating appeals against sanctions imposed by the Code Administrator in accordance with section 3.7 of the Code and
- conducting inquiries into Code compliance

The full [terms of reference](#) of the Code Review Panel are available on the Solar Accreditation website.

The recent independent review of the Code Review Panel found that:

The Code Review Panel is fulfilling its Code responsibilities to oversight the breach investigation and resolution process and to undertake reporting. Its Terms of Reference are appropriate.

CHANGES TO THE CODE

In 2015, following an application from the Code Administrator, the ACCC revoked the original Solar PV Retailer Code of Conduct and authorised the current Solar Retailer Code of Conduct (see *Clean Energy Council Limited application for revocation and substitution A91495 – A91496* on the [ACCC website](#)). The Code Administrator and Code Review Panel are confident that the changes made to the Code at that time ensured its relevance at least for the time of the authorisation.

Making changes to the Code requires significant investment of time and money by the Code Administrator. The Code Administrator records recommendations for changes made by the Code Review Panel and other stakeholders. Recommendations made as a result of the recent independent review of the Code are also being considered. When a significant number of changes, or a single imperative change, has been recommended, the Code Administrator will seek authorisation from the ACCC for those changes to be made. Otherwise, the recommended changes will be consolidated in an application for re-authorisation just prior to 2020.

The current version of the Code is always available on the Clean Energy Council's [website](#).

Changes to the Code administration

As forecast in the 2015 Annual Report, the following changes to the application process were introduced on January 1 this year:

- An increase in the application fee to \$200 (ex. GST)
- Introduction of a review fee of \$200 (ex. GST) to be paid by the applicant when submitting documents to the Code Administrator for a third review and for each subsequent review
- Introduction of a six-week time limit for the applicant to respond to a request from the Code Administrator for amendments or further information.

The independent review of the Code conducted this year found that the fees associated with

being a signatory to the Code are reasonable and represent good value. The report states:

Direct costs for Code signatories are carefully contained. The application fee is only \$200 and the annual fee between \$600 and \$6,000 depending on the size of the retailer's business. The CEC is also mindful of indirect costs for Code signatories and, for example, undertakes its auditing of Code signatories in a focused way that aims to minimise the time disruption cost for Code signatories, whilst still delivering assurance as to compliance with the Code.

These changes are designed to maintain the fees at a level that represents excellent value for applicants while incentivising them to properly consider compliance with the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct and the Australian Consumer Law before submitting their documentation. The changes have eased the considerable pressure on the resources of the Code Administrator.

REPORTING

The Code Administrator adopts a number of reporting protocols in order to meet its obligations to the ACCC, the Code Review Panel and Approved Solar Retailers, and to ensure that information is readily available to stakeholders and the public. These include:

- reporting to the ACCC on breaches of the Code and potential breaches of Australian Consumer Law
- quarterly reporting to Approved Solar Retailers
- annual reporting to stakeholders
- reporting to regulators and ombudsmen as required

Section 3.8.6 of the Code states that systemic concerns identified during Code reviews will be referred to the relevant regulators, as will any breach of laws and regulations.

Breaches of the Australian Consumer Law

The Code includes provisions that are consistent with existing state and federal consumer protection legislation. The Code also includes monitoring and enforcement provisions to encourage compliance with the Code. Specifically, section 3.6 of the Code states that the Code Administrator and/or the Code Review Panel will investigate all breaches of the Code, including those which may also breach Australian Consumer Law, and that sanctions imposed in the event of non-compliance will vary depending on the severity of the breach. In addition to these requirements, section 3.6.2 of the Code states that the relevant regulator and ombudsman will be notified of any breach of the Australian Consumer Law.

In 2016 the Code Administrator reported one breach of the Australian Consumer Law by an Approved Solar Retailer and reported a further two breaches of the Australian Consumer Law by solar retailers who are not signatories to the Code to the ACCC.

Breaches of the Code

The Code Administrator investigated four reported breaches of the Code this year. Of those, three were found not to be in breach of the Code and one breach was rectified at the Code

Administrator's request. Previously complaints have been made only by Approved Solar Retailers but this year one complaint was submitted directly from a consumer. This demonstrates an increased awareness of the Code and an understanding of its objective.

The Code Administrator relies heavily on the public and stakeholders to provide information, including evidence, about potential breaches of the Code. When the Code Administrator receives complaints, supported by evidence, about the actions of an Approved Solar Retailer, it investigates to the full extent of its powers.

In 2016 the Code Administrator reported one breach of the Code. The Code Administrator's decision to record the breach was not challenged, so there was no need for the Code Review Panel to review the matter.

Quarterly reporting to signatories

Quarterly Reports are produced by the Code Administrator. They are published on [the Solar Accreditation website](#), presented to the Code Review Panel, the Clean Energy Council's Solar PV Leadership Committee and solar PV directorates, and emailed to all Approved Solar Retailers. The data presented in the Quarterly Reports is also used in meeting other reporting obligations and to support marketing efforts.

The Quarterly Report includes:

- statistics on Code applications and rejections
- changes to the Code
- ancillary changes
- breaches
- list of current signatories

Annual Report

The primary purposes of the Annual Report are to:

1. inform stakeholders of the year's activity in more detail than that provided in Quarterly Reports, and
2. report to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on progress towards achieving the objectives of the Code.

To fulfil the second purpose of the Annual Report, improvements are needed to the methodology for collecting solar industry complaints data. This will require further efforts and collaboration between the Clean Energy Council, consumer affairs agencies and other regulators. More sophisticated complaints data collection will enable useful analysis and recommendations to solar industry participants. This is a priority for the Code Administrator in 2017.

Report on independent review

Under the terms of the ACCC's authorisation of the Code, the Code Administrator is required every three years to arrange for an independent review of the Code, the Code Review Panel

and the Code Review Panel's Terms of Reference. In June this year the Code Administrator appointed a consultancy with governance expertise and particular experience in reviewing codes of practice to conduct the first such review. The Code Administrator extended the terms of reference to include a review of the Code Administrator's complaints handling procedures.

The review concluded that the Code is being effectively administered by the Clean Energy Council and properly overseen by the Code Review Panel. It made seven recommendations for further improvements. The final report on the review, along with the Clean Energy Council's response to it, will be available on the [Solar Accreditation website](#) in the first quarter of 2017.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT NON-SIGNATORY SOLAR RETAILERS

From November 2015 to December 2016 the Code Administrator responded to 16 complaints about solar companies claiming to "approved by the CEC", claiming to "comply with the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct", misusing the Approved Retailer and Approved Solar Retailer logos, and various other forms of misrepresentation. Of the 16 complaints investigated, nine of the companies are based in Western Australia, which suggests a more aggressive strategy may be required to deal with the Perth market.

On receiving notification of these behaviours the Code Administrator takes swift action. Where appropriate and within the relevant policies and guidelines, the Clean Energy Council uses its website and social media channels to identify offending solar companies and/or dubious practices in the industry. It sends occasional social media and email alerts for people to check the list of Approved Solar Retailers on its website to ensure a solar company is approved.

Under an arrangement which commenced in 2015, the ACCC provides the Code Administrator with data on complaints made to state consumer affairs agencies and to the ACCC about solar. The data is raw and broad and the task of determining relevance and then analysing it is immense. Used properly, this data will provide useful insights to signatories and will inform improvements to Code administration. It will also help the Code Administrator meet its obligation to assess and report on the impact of the Code. Complaints data analysis will be a priority for the Code Administrator in 2017.

APPLYING TO SIGN THE CODE

Who applies?

All solar PV retailers, including those selling PV to home owners, small-, medium- and large-scale businesses, community groups and government, are eligible to apply to the Code. Signing onto the Code demonstrates a retailer's commitment to provide service beyond what is required by law.

Applications come from very small solar retailers through to large solar retailers with national operations. Most Approved Solar Retailers operate in both the residential and commercial markets. Some Approved Solar Retailers are long-established businesses that have moved into solar, some are purely solar and have been operating for five years or more and others are emerging solar retailers who see the value in signing an industry code of conduct. It is a

requirement of the Code that applicants have been operating in the solar industry for a minimum of 12 months.

This year 100 per cent of signatories who were due and eligible for renewal of their Approved Solar Retailer status did renew. The renewal process forms an important part of the compliance program, as the Code Administrator requests and assesses current documentation, installation statistics and answers to questions about retailers' complaints.

Why the Code is good for retailers

For a concise summary of how the Code benefits solar retailers, see the [Solar PV Retailer Code of Conduct flyer for businesses](#).

Why the Code is good for consumers

For a concise summary of how the Code benefits consumers of solar PV systems, see the [Solar PV Retailer Code of Conduct flyer for consumers](#).

How many retailers have applied?

In November 2013, at its launch, the Code had five founding signatories. Since then, the Code Administrator has received a further 83 applications. The following table reveals that approximately 45 per cent of the applications have been rejected.

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Applications received | 88 |
| Applications approved | 46 |
| Applications rejected | 39 |
| Applications pending | 3 |

Who are the Approved Solar Retailers?

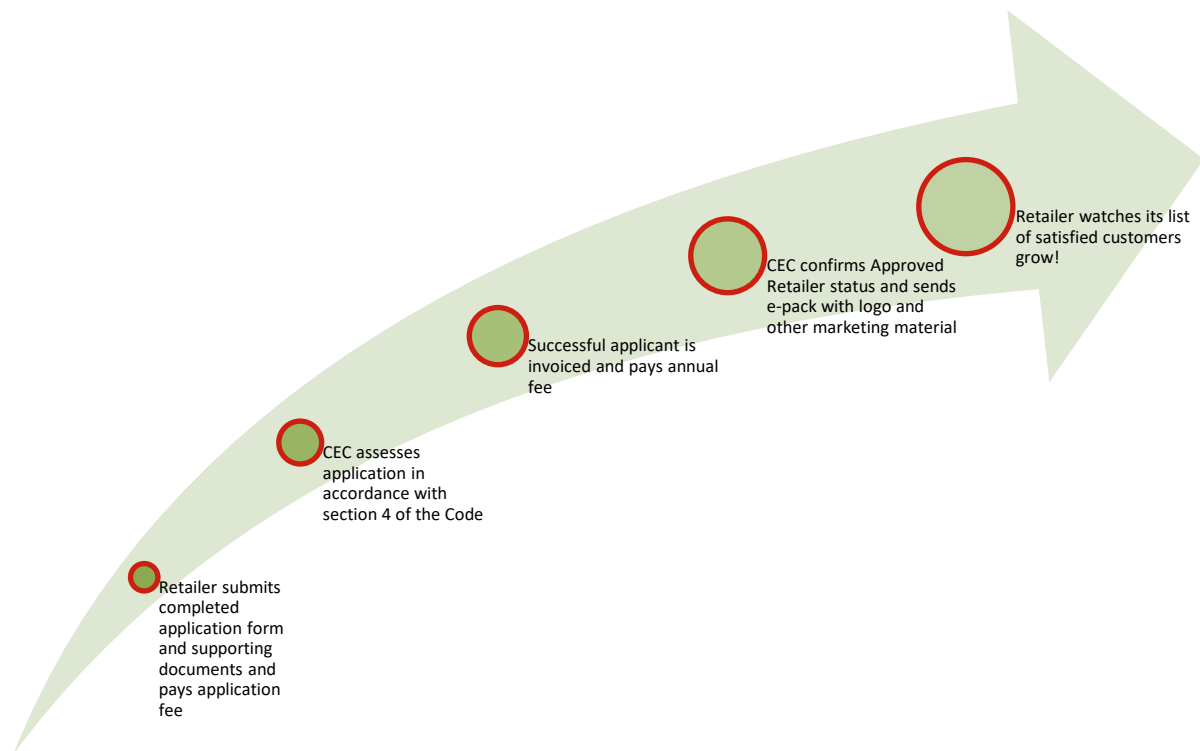
Current Signatories (in order of date approved):

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Springers Solar | Metro Solar |
| Suntrix | Century Solar Energy |
| Bradford Solar | Infinite Energy |
| Evolve Energy | Clean NRG |
| Skyline Solar | EnviroGroup |
| RoofJuice | SolarHub |
| United Solar Energy | Renew Energy |
| West Australian Alternative Energy | Ecoelectric |
| Clean Energy Solar | ActewAGL Retail |
| EcoLogic Estates | MC Solar & Electrical |
| Coffs Solar Energy | Epho |
| Perdaman Advanced Energy (formerly Enigin WA) | Energy Reductions |
| | City to Surf Solar + |

MPower Projects
ITP Renewables
Next Generation Electrical
Total Solar Solutions Australia
Solgen Energy Group
Energis
Nuvo Group
Solar Man

Photon Energy
EcoSmart Solar
Cherry Energy Solutions
Smart Commercial Solar
Gem Energy Australia
Off-Grid Energy Australia
Keppel Prince Engineering

The application process



Applying to become an Approved Solar Retailer under the Code is a comprehensive process that requires the applicant to examine and document its business practices. The applicant is required to make binding declarations about its operations and disclosures about previous business in the solar industry. In assessing an application, the Code Administrator may request further documents or information and seek clarification of responses. The rigour of the application process serves to maintain the integrity of the Code by keeping the benchmark for entry at a suitably high level.

The Code Administrator comprehensively assesses each application to ensure the applicant's sales practices, contract documents, advertising material and warranties comply with the Code. This is a resource-intensive exercise that requires the Code Administrator to evaluate each contract term and the entire suite of documents presented to consumers. This year the Code Administrator referred a number of applications to lawyers for assessment. Use of lawyers for application assessment helped the Code Administrator comply with stated timeframes during a temporary diminishment

The Code Administrator advises applicants to allow up to eight weeks for processing but the turnaround time is usually considerably shorter than that.

Why do applications get rejected?

Under the data collection and reporting obligations of the Code, the Code Administrator is required to record reasons for rejecting applications. In many cases, it is clear that the applicant has not read the Code and has therefore not been able to check whether its documentation meets the requirements of the Code. A common reason for an application being rejected is that the applicant cannot demonstrate that the terms and conditions of its customer contract comply with Australian Consumer Law.

The Code Administrator liaises with applicants during the application process to provide feedback on which elements of its customer documentation do not meet the requirements of the Code. The applicant is given an opportunity to make necessary amendments and re-submit its documentation. Where extensive changes are required, an application may be rejected on the basis that the documentation submitted was grossly inadequate in terms of compliance with the Code. In such cases the Code Administrator provides the applicant with examples of non-compliance and recommends the applicant seeks independent advice on improving its documentation.

Summary of reasons for rejecting applications

- Terms and conditions of sales contract not meeting requirements of the Code, particularly the finance provisions of the Code
- Not providing consumers with a whole-of-system 5 year warranty
- Not providing site specific performance estimate

AUDITING

Ensuring signatories remain compliant with the Code is fundamental to the integrity of the Approved Solar Retailer program. By signing the Code, signatories agree to be subject to regular monitoring and to allow audits on their compliance with the Code (see section 3.4 of the Code).

This year the Code Administrator conducted onsite audits of 11 Code signatories. The audit process involves the Code Administrator arranging a suitable time with the signatory and providing the audit documentation in advance, attending the signatory's premises and working through the audit document with the signatory, then sending a report and any follow-up material and information to the signatory. This aspect of the compliance program revealed a high level of compliance with the Code. It did, however, expose a considerable level of confusion with the finance provisions of the Code. The Code Administrator has worked to address this throughout the year and will continue to clarify the requirements and ensure compliance with the finance provisions in 2017.

In addition to the onsite audits, the Code Administrator has continued to execute other elements of its compliance program, including investigating alleged breaches, monitoring signatories' websites, assessing information provided at renewal as discussed above and ensuring rigor in

the assessment of applications.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Clean Energy Council communications and events

The Clean Energy Council has continued to use social media, member communications, events and collateral (eg the [Guide to installing solar on households](#)) to promote the Code. Reinforcing the value of the Code amongst industry members and stakeholders remains an important and worthwhile strategy.

This year the Clean Energy Council has promoted the Code at events including the [Australian Clean Energy Summit](#), information sessions for Accredited Installers, and the [All-Energy](#) exhibition and conference at which representatives from Consumer Action Law Centre and Baker and McKenzie Lawyers delivered a whole session on consumer concerns that can be avoided by using an Approved Solar Retailer.

The Clean Energy Council's Solar Accreditation website continues to be a valuable source of consumer referrals for signatories, with the [list of Approved Solar Retailers](#) linking to the website of each Approved Solar Retailer's website. This year the Code Administrator changed the format of the Approved Solar Retailer list so that all logos appear on one page, without the need to click through pages. Listing remains ordered by the date on which each retailer was approved as a Code signatory.

Other media and events

Following on from a reference to the Code in a [Choice magazine article](#) and an opinion piece in [The Climate Spectator](#) outlining the value of the Code towards the end of last year, the Code Administrator issued a media release titled *Expanded Solar Retailer Code of Conduct shines light on service and quality with tick from ACCC*. Communications on this media release were sent to Approved Solar Retailers.

The Code Administrator's Code of Conduct Manager accepted an invitation from Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) NSW to address SEIA's members, who are primarily small retailers/designers/installers of solar PV, at an event in Sydney in March this year. The audience was engaged, giving praise and making criticisms of the Code and asking questions.

Approved Solar Retailers have a responsibility to promote the Code. Many continue to publish blogs and articles about the benefits to consumers of purchasing solar from an Approved Solar Retailer. In 2017 the Code Administrator will liaise with Approved Solar Retailers about some more collaborative and co-ordinated promotion of the Code, starting with a survey of how each retailer currently promotes the Code, what their promotional plans are for the year and how the Code Administrator can assist.

In April this year a full-page story on the benefits of the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct was published in *Ecogeneration* (April 2016, p70). Shortly after, the Clean Energy Council was approached by the Sunday Times in Western Australia. The Code Administrator liaised with Approved Solar Retailers regarding participating in a 'Green Energy Feature' in the Sunday

Times. There was insufficient interest to proceed with a collaborative promotion of Approved Solar Retailers but the Code Administrator will continue to explore similar opportunities as they arise.

[Arron Wood](#), City of Melbourne councilor and environmental activist, [blogged](#) about buying solar for the home. His article detailed the process, explained STCs and referred to the Clean Energy Council's [Guide to Installing Solar](#). His follow up article on Twitter – [A Better Retailer Solar Industry](#) - promoted the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct. The Code Administrator forwarded this to stakeholders and suggested retweeting.

Building relationships to secure exclusive tender opportunities

Having the Code embedded in the procurement processes of local and state governments and community organisations means Approved Solar Retailers get exclusive tender opportunities. This is an appealing process for procurement groups, as they can select their contractors from a pool of quality solar providers who have already been through an independent and rigorous screening process and who provide a minimum 5-year whole of system warranty on products and workmanship.

Last year the Victorian state government released a Renewable Energy Roadmap that states any government programs that support solar PV will require the solar panel provider to be a signatory to the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct. Early this year the Victorian government ran a highly successful program which saw 42 Victorian Surf Life Saving clubs have solar PV installed on their roofs by Approved Solar Retailers.

The Code Administrator liaised with Moreland Energy Foundation and announced to Approved Solar Retailers an exclusive opportunity to partner with MEFL on Positive Charge program. This is a continuation of a valued and valuable relationship between the Clean Energy Council and Moreland Energy Foundation.

In continued advocacy for the Code, the Clean Energy Council wrote to Federal Environment and Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg, explaining the objectives and administration of the Code and advocating for it to be mandatory for solar retailers.

Early this year South Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Inc (SSROC) contacted the Code Administrator regarding a second community solar purchase through Our Solar Future, demonstrating the value of the relationship built during preparation for SSROC's first community solar purchase. SSROC provided positive feedback to the Code Administrator about amendments made to the Code since SSROC's last community solar purchase, which strengthen consumer protection where credit is provided for purchasing solar.

The Code Administrator devoted considerable resources this year to building its relationship with the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage. The Code of Conduct Manager attended meetings on the implementation of OEH's Government Resource Efficiency Policy and related draft documents, providing briefings on the Code, feedback on draft documents and the tender process, and participating in a stakeholder forum.

Building relationships to raise awareness of the Code

Chair of the [Code Review Panel](#), Gerard Brody, also chairs the [Consumers' Federation of Australia](#) (CFA). The CFA represents a diverse range of consumer organisations and advocates in the interests of Australian consumers. Among other actions that support its objectives, the CFA develops policy on important consumer issues and facilitates consumer participation in the development of Australian and international standards for goods and services. Gerard recently reported to the CFA on the Solar Retailer Code of Conduct and the work of the Code Review Panel and an article titled [Protecting Consumers in the Australian Solar Market](#) was posted on the CFA website. These actions will contribute significantly to raising awareness of the Code amongst consumers of solar PV.

Policy work

The Clean Energy Council's Policy team has this year been working on promoting solar packages to landlords. Approved Solar Retailers were consulted and the Code Administrator will keep them informed of progress in this area.

Digital advertising

Early this year, while the weather was still hot, the Clean Energy Council ran a month-long digital advertising campaign designed to increase awareness of the Approved Solar Retailer scheme amongst consumers. The digital display advertising targeted people who have already shown an interest in purchasing solar. The key message of the 'solar made simple' campaign was that consumers should choose an Approved Solar Retailer when buying solar. The objective of the campaign was to drive traffic to www.approvedsolarretailer.com.au with the aim of getting more potential customers viewing the list of Approved Solar Retailers and clicking through to their websites. The campaign finished with 2,223,627 impressions (ie the gif appeared more than 2.2 million times) and 5,053 conversions (ie more than 5,000 people clicked through to the Approved Solar Retailer website).

Following this campaign, the Clean Energy Council's Google Analytics report showed a big spike in traffic to the Approved Solar Retailer web page – it received 34% more traffic than in the next highest month. Google analytics for March 2016 shows an 86% increase in traffic compared to the same time last year. The 'Guide to installing solar PV for households', which recommends consumers use an Approved Solar Retailer, was the highest downloaded document this quarter with 910 downloads.

The Clean Energy Council marked the start of summer this year by launching a campaign on 1 December encouraging consumers to buy from Approved Solar Retailers. The objective of the campaign was again to raise awareness of the Approved Solar Retailer branding and program amongst consumers. The message is that the purchase of solar PV can be made safe and simple by using an Approved Solar Retailer.

While analysis suggests the campaigns were successful, feedback on lead origins from signatories would help to provide a more accurate measure the success of the campaigns.

The Clean Energy Council joined with leading consumer groups – Energy Consumers Australia, the Alternative Technology Association and Consumer Action Law Centre - to issue a media release containing advice on how to avoid the potential pitfalls of buying a solar PV system and

promoting Approved Solar Retailers. The Clean Energy Council used its social media channels to promote this campaign and encouraged Approved Solar Retailers to do the same. The campaign will conclude in February 2017.

Template solar sale and installation agreement

Earlier this year the Code Administrator engaged a leading law firm with extensive industry expertise to develop a **template solar sale and installation agreement**. The terms and conditions of the agreement demonstrate a real appreciation of the solar PV business while ensuring compliance with the Code and the Australian Consumer Law. A number of businesses applying to sign the Code, as well as current signatories, have purchased the agreement. This initiative supports the Code in achieving its objective to raise the standard of sales and marketing practices in the solar industry, while also streamlining the process of assessing Code applications.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

With the revised and extended Solar Retailer Code of Conduct having been operating for just over a year now, and the report on the first independent review of the Code having been completed in recent weeks, now is a time for moving forward with a strong marketing strategy and consolidating the processes that have led to the success of the Code so far. Increased recognition of the value of the Code is reflected in the increase in applications to sign the Code and in the number of organisations approaching the Code Administrator before going to tender.

In 2017 the Code Administrator will build on its strengths, continue to foster strategic relationships, aim to increase the number of Approved Solar Retailers to a point at which they account for a significant percentage of total solar installations, improve service levels for Approved Solar Retailers and other stakeholders, and communicate successes effectively.

The Code Administrator will draw on feedback provided during this year's independent review and will work towards implementing the recommendations made in the final report. It will continue to request and respond to feedback from Approved Solar Retailers in an effort to further improve the program and ensure its relevance and longevity.

If you would like further information on the Code or any of the data contained in this Annual Report, please contact the Code Administrator on 03 9929 4100 or at codeofconduct@cleanenergycouncil.org.au.