

SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS – PORTLAND VICTORIA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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1 - What is Keppel Prince Solar?

Portland's Keppel Prince Engineering conducts solar installations in Victoria to help local households install solar photovoltaic systems.

Keppel Prince Engineering employs approximately 280 Glenelg Shire residents, and has been operating in Portland since 1979. Since beginning to install solar systems in 2011, Keppel Prince has installed approximately 954 systems across Victoria, with over 394 in Southwest Victoria and 560 in the Goulburn Valley.



2 - What is a solar photovoltaic system, and how does it work?

Unlike solar hot water systems which take heat from the atmosphere to warm water, Solar PV systems convert the energy in light into electricity through a conversion reaction which occurs when light strikes the cells in a solar panel.

The cells are chemically treated slivers of a silicon crystal which release electrons when exposed to (sun) light. These electrons are 'captured' by the thin wires you can see embedded in the panel, from where they are carried to the inverter.



It is a relatively simple process that involves no moving parts and should be a reliable source of electricity for you for over 25 years.

The PV system's panels collect electrons as a Direct Current (DC), which is sent to a device known as an inverter that converts the DC electricity into a 240 volt Alternating Current (AC). This is identical to electricity from the Grid, and can be used directly, or sent (sold) to the Grid via a Smart Meter.



As an example:

On a clear and sunny day, if a house has a 3kW solar PV system generating at design capacity while the same house has a 1kW microwave oven running and 0.5kW of other assorted appliances, the PV system's output will be split with 1.5kW used in the house itself, and 1.5kW being sold to the Grid.

Conversely, when a solar PV system is not generating electricity and the building requires power, electricity will be drawn from the Grid for example if the above example was at a time of the day when the PV system was generating 1.2kW, all of this power would be consumed by the house and an additional 0.3kW would be drawn from the Grid at that time.

3 - Smart Meter Reprogramming

A grid connect solar system is connected to the electricity grid through the Smart Meter in your meter box. All Smart Meters are able to be configured to allow solar PV compatibility, but must be programmed to do so.

If you already have a Smart Meter you will still need it to be reprogrammed for solar. This is an unavoidable charge the cost of which ranges from \$30 to around \$400 depending on the type of Smart Meter that is currently installed at the premises.



If you are interested in installing a solar PV system KPE strongly advise you to contact your electricity retailer (Origin, AGL, Neighborhood, etc.) for a cost on the reprogramming of your Smart Meter. You will need to provide your NMI (meter) number to the supplier at the time of calling. You can find your NMI on your power bill.

4 - What kind of Equipment is being supplied?

Keppel Prince is supplying systems made up of the following components:

- Monocrystalline Photovoltaic panels.
- Transformerless solar PV power inverters
- Aluminium Mounting Frames
- Matched-metal (with your existing roofing material) or stainless-steel fixtures
- As-required cabling and switching

5 - Where are the system components made?

Panels: KPE's panels are sourced from one of China's most modern photovoltaic manufacturers – Sunlink PV, a company that undertakes almost all of the processes involved "in-house" in a single factory.



Also, Sunlink is located in Zhangjiagang, which is Portland's Chinese sister-city. KPE purposefully chose Sunlink as supplier due to the quality of their panels, along with the company's ethical working conditions and sister-city link, which ensures a solid and long term relationship between the two companies and KPE's customers which KPE is proud of.



Inverters: KPE sources inverters from Delta Energy Systems (Delta), a reputable Chinese company with a strong focus on support for their products. Delta has proven to be an excellent supplier who has a strong service and warranty focus.



Alternatively, KPE can source SMA inverters from Germany, or Fronius Inverters from Austria if required. SMA in particular are



widely used for educational installations as they offer well recognized monitoring equipment which can publish performance data to the internet in real-time.

Mounting Frames: The mounting frames supplied with your system are made from aluminium with stainless steel fittings. They are Chinese made and are designed to withstand wind loads of 60 metres per second (approx. 216kms per hour).

Cabling and switching: The cables and isolating switches supplied by installers are all designed specifically to carry either DC or AC currents depending on where they are installed in the system. These components are sourced from multiple suppliers.

6 - What kinds of rebates are available to me?

Small scale solar rebates currently come in two forms:

- An upfront cost reduction rebate known as **Solar Credits**
- An ongoing payment for exporting electricity to the Grid know as a **Feed in Tariff (FiT)**

Solar Credits

Solar credits are certificates tied to Australia's Renewable Energy Target, and are sold to liable entities such as coal power station operators. The price of each certificate will fluctuate with market demand.



Australian Government
**Department of Climate Change
and Energy Efficiency**

KPE currently pays \$39.00 for each certificate generated. This is higher than the current market rate of approximately \$38 per certificate. In practical terms, KPE's purchase of certificates simply reduces the cost of the system, and KPE administers the generation and sale of certificates. There is no action required by the solar PV system purchaser.

In real-terms this equates to a discount of approximately:

- \$2,106 from a 3kW system
- \$3,342 from a 5kW system

Systems are required to be physically installed but are not required to be operating to qualify for Solar Credits.

Feed in Tariff

A Feed in Tariff (FiT) is the rate of money you get for of selling electricity back to the Grid, and each State of Australia has its own FiT system and value. The current Victorian FiT is a net-based system of 5c per kWh, meaning you only receive the FiT for exported surplus.



Notes:

- The Victorian FiT from Jan 1 2016 was set at a minimum of 5c per kWh.
- The value of payment means that exporting surplus is less worthwhile than reducing imported power at approximately 30c per kWh. Because of this, systems should be configured to either be customized to be sized to rarely produce an export surplus, or have energy storage capacity in the form of batteries. See FAQ 7 (page 5) for more information on battery systems.

Systems are required to be physically installed and FULLY operational to access the Victorian FiT.

7 - What will happen to rebates in the future?

Solar Credits

While the Commonwealth Government retains the Renewable Energy Target (RET) it is anticipated that no further reductions are planned. However, in the unlikely event of a change to the RET policy that reduces or removes the scheme, the installed cost of a solar PV system would increase by approximately \$700 per installed kW.

Victorian Feed in Tariff

The Victorian FiT has already been lowered to what the Victorian Government considers a base average wholesale price of 5c per kWh, and is not expected to be lowered again.

The actual wholesale price of electricity is very variable, ranging in price from 0c per kWh (on some windy nights), up to over \$10 per kWh during peak periods on hot summer afternoons. This peak load is a problem for the State's electrical supply system as it can result in brown-out in extreme circumstances, and several proposals have been presented to Government for the FiT to be linked to the real-time wholesale price, which would be advantageous to solar PV as generation occurs during periods of higher demand and therefore warrant a higher value.

8 – Should I get batteries?

An opportunity and in some cases a need has arisen for storing surplus energy rather than selling de-valued electricity to the Grid. A well designed Distributed Energy Storage System (DESS) will allow surplus energy to be used in the evening to ensure a much higher value on the energy created. This is an exciting development as it will ensure that solar system owners get the best returns possible from their system without relying on government policies.

At this time Keppel Prince Engineering's analysis, which is also supported by the highly reputable Alternative Energy Association, is that while a grid connect solar PV system will reduce electricity costs a grid connect solar with battery storage, or a standalone solar and battery storage system, won't reduce electricity costs below current grid prices. In other words, a battery storage system won't save you money and it won't cost you money (in the long term) either. A solar PV and battery storage system will however further reduce your reliance on fossil fuel generated electricity.

KPE is closely monitoring the development and pricing of battery storage options and will advertise, sell and install them when they become economically viable. When it is viable KPE energy storage equipment will be available to all systems as a retro-fitted option

Alternatives to Batteries

Due to the current low Feed in Tariff (5 cents), your solar system will be most efficient when all of the generated electricity is used on site. If you have an electrically heated/boosted Hot Water System it is possible to fit a device that diverts any surplus generated electricity (power not required by appliances and devices on the premises) to a hot water system, instead of exporting that electricity to the grid i.e. your solar system heats the water for free instead of you paying the off-peak or peak tariff rates to heat the water. These devices only divert excess generated electricity to the hot water system while the water temperature remains below the pre-set maximum. As the power required to heat water is typically high, these devices are an excellent way to reduce the carbon footprint of your home or business. For further information and costs for these devices please contact Keppel Prince Solar on 5523 8888.

9 - What size solar system should I purchase?

The size of a solar PV system is decided from a number of factors:

- Existing (and predicted) daytime energy consumption
- Budget
- Useable roof space
- Motivation (financial, environmental, or varying combinations of both)



The most pragmatic system size for households today is between one third and two thirds of the property's overall energy consumption.

Expected payback periods in years (Retired Couples – paid for with savings)

Size	Small consumption household - 10kWh/day	Medium consumption household – 25kWh/day	Large consumption household – 50kWh/day
3kW	9	7	6
5kW	8	6	5

Expected payback periods in years (Families – system cost added to mortgage)

Size	Small consumption household - 10kWh/day	Medium consumption household – 25kWh/day	Large consumption household – 50kWh/day
3kW	15	10	8
5kW	11	8	6

Note that while the above table shows typical sizes, actual situations may vary considerably when personal situations are taken into account.

10 - How much money will the system save or make me?

With a 5c Feed in Tariff, this really depends on how much of the solar electricity is used for real-time savings versus selling surplus to the Grid.

A poorly sized and designed system will not achieve a worthwhile financial benefit, so it is essential that care be used to ensure the system matches consumption levels as accurately as possible.

Assuming correct sizing and under expected system performance, over a 10 year period the average annual amount of savings/earning per year will be:

Expected benefit per year (Retired Couples – paid for with savings)

Size	Small consumption household - 10kWh	Medium consumption household – 25kWh	Large consumption household – 50kWh
3kW	\$630	\$920	\$1,150
5kW	\$930	\$1,300	\$1,730

Expected benefit per year (Families – system cost added to mortgage)

Size	Small consumption household - 10kWh	Medium consumption household – 25kWh	Large consumption household – 50kWh
3kW	\$320	\$590	\$890
5kW	\$600	\$970	\$1,380

Note that the annual benefit will build over time. So the first year may be less than annual benefit, but a combination of rising energy costs coupled with reducing finance costs will increase benefits considerably.

11 - How well will the system perform?

Your solar PV system's performance compared to its rated power capacity can be affected by a number of factors:

- The amount of solar radiation and ambient temperature on any given day;
- The deviation of the direction your roof faces away from true north;
- The inclination (or slope angle) of your roof and/or the panels;
- Shading of your solar array during peak production times;
- Efficiency losses in the inverter and system wiring; and/or
- Mismatched electrical performance of panels in the system.



KPE has designed your system wherever possible to minimize the factors which might otherwise cause poorer performance than ought to be achieved:

- Our panel manufacturers guarantee panel performance of -0/+3 % of rated power;
- The inverters we use have efficiencies ranging from 95.5% to 98%; and
- System wiring designs minimize voltage losses in wiring.

The effect that angle and orientation will have on your system's performance is also estimated and noted on the quotation sent to you before you confirm your purchase.

In real terms that should equate to Portland-based north facing systems producing an average of 3.5 to 4.0kWh of electricity per day for each installed kW over a 12 month period. Keep in mind that power production will be higher than average during the summer half of the year and lower than average during the winter half of the year.

Nominal Size	Ave daily kWh production – Annual (winter - summer)*	Expected average annual total electricity production (kWh)*
3kW	11.4 (6.6 – 16.5)	~4,100
5kW	19 (11.0 – 27.5)	~6,900

*Where roof is angled away from true north, power production may vary by the solar efficiency nominated on your system quote.

12 – Do I still have electricity if there is a Grid power outage?

Only if you have batteries. For grid-only systems, your solar PV inverter is designed to stop the generation of AC power to your house whenever the main supply grid fails. This is a standard feature of systems so that maintenance workers attempting to fix the grid (or even electricians working on your house wiring) are not exposed to electricity generated locally from your solar PV system.

If you require backup power there are two options:

- Get batteries for your solar system, which also allow your house to be safely “islanded” from the grid.
- Use a petroleum fueled power generator

13 - How much CO2 is used to create the system – how much CO2 will it save me?

In most cases, solar PV systems take between 12 and 36 months to generate as much energy as was required to create them, including all components, transport, and installation.

In terms of lowering your household's CO2 footprint, each installed kW will save approximately 1.9 tonnes per year when compared to coal powered electricity.

Nominal Size	Approximate annual CO2 saving compared to coal powered electricity
2500W	5.7 tonnes
4500W	9.5 tonnes

14 - How long is the system warranted for?

KPE Solar Photovoltaic Small Generating Systems are covered by the following warranties and performance guarantees from the date when installation is completed:

- A 5 year warranty against poor workmanship on the installation of your system. This warranty resides with KPE
- A 5 year warranty on the Inverter. This warranty resides with the manufacturer through KPE. Contact KPE if you have problems with your inverter and we will arrange a service call on behalf of the inverter manufacturer. KPE has registered your inverter with your manufacturer. This warranty does not cover any loss in power production.
- A 10 year warranty against manufacturing defects on the solar PV panels. This warranty resides with the manufacturer through KPE. Contact KPE if you have problems with your panels and we will arrange repair/replacement on behalf of the inverter manufacturer. This warranty does no cover any loss in power production.
- A system performance guarantee of 12 years (90% of nominal design capacity) and 25 years (80% of nominal design capacity) measured under standard test conditions from the solar PV panel manufacturers. These guarantees reside with the manufacturer through KPE. Contact KPE if you have problems with system performance and we will arrange appropriate measures on behalf of the panel manufacturer.

If tests confirm there is a problem, the manufacturer may choose to replace panels or to provide extra panel(s) to bring the overall system performance to within the guarantee limits at the time. The decision to install extra panels in this circumstance is made with the consent of client.

15 - What do I need to do to maintain the system?

Fixed-panel solar PV systems have no moving parts and require very little maintenance. In almost all cases the panels are self-cleaning through normal weather conditions.

An annual visual inspection is recommended to check for system damage and to see if panels need cleaning.

A quarterly system performance check via the Inverter's data output can also be used as an indicator of maintenance requirements i.e. if the system is performing below expectations, cleaning or other maintenance may be required.

16 - Do I need to pay tax on any money that the system earns me?

If fitted to a primary residence, no. The Commonwealth Government considers that income generated from small solar PV systems on primary residences is not considered to be income, so any profit does not need to be declared and no tax is payable.

This also means that the systems are not eligible as a tax deduction, either outright or as a depreciating item.

If the system is larger and fitted on a business or investment property, the tax office may regard any profits as income, and depreciation may be available. In this case KPE recommends you seek independent advice from your financial advisor.

17 - How can I monitor how well my system is performing?

The PV System's Inverter stores data and displays data through a digital display on the inverter itself.

The data displayed includes:

- Real-time power generation
- Daily power generation
- Total power generation



The inverter brands chosen by KPE also have the ability to communicate with most computers as an optional extra purchase.

Various third party devices can also measure and report system performance, as well as the building's energy consumption.

18 - Will I lose my off-peak or Climate Saver tariff?

Off Peak Tariff

If you have an appliance that consumes a lot of night-time electricity such as a traditional electric water system (including Solar Hot Water with electric boost) or have electric slab heating, then you will not lose your off-peak tariff.

If you do not have either of those appliances but have an off-peak tariff, you may lose your off-peak tariff. In this circumstance a single rate tariff will probably be more economical for you.

Climate Saver Tariff

Households with Climate Saver accounts WILL lose this account in order to obtain a FiT. In fact, households with Climate Saver accounts need to decommission their Climate Saver meter by having an electrician rewire all of the Climate Saver circuits to the main meter, and requesting Powercor to remove the Climate Saver meter prior to the Solar PV System installation.

Circumstances do vary, so KPE recommends that householders contact their energy retailer to confirm.

19 - Will I need a planning permit?

No. Planning permits are not required for installing solar PV systems. However, if the building is in a heritage overlay area and the system is to be installed on the street façade of the building, a heritage planning approval may be required.

If unsure, KPE recommends querying the statutory planning department of your Council.

20 - Once the system is installed, what do I need to do?

Once a system is installed, the building owner needs to be proactive to ensure it gets connected to the Grid and to ensure a FiT contract is gained.

This full system installation process is as follows:

#	Who	What
1	CUSTOMER	Registers interest in a solar system with KPE (website (www.keppelprince.com Green Energy - Solar; phone 03 5523 8888; email: solar@keppelprince.com.au; office visit: 184 Darts Rd, Portland Victoria)
2	KPE	Creates Offer and either emails or posts to customer
3	CUSTOMER	Signs Offer returned to KPE with deposit
4	KPE	Processes Offer and organises site visit & firm quote
5	CUSTOMER	Signs Quote returned to KPE with payment
6	KPE	Installs PV system
7	KPE	Fills in Solar Connection Form (SCF), Electrical Works Request (EWR) & Certificate of Electrical Safety (CES)
8	KPE	Requests electrical safety inspection
9	CUSTOMER	Signs Solar Connection Form
10	Electrical Inspector	Inspects/approves system installation and signs CES
11	KPE	Forwards fully filled in SCF, EWR, CES to retailer, with a copy to Customer
12	Power Retailer	Receives copy of the SCF, EWR, CES and forwards EWR to Powercor to provide solar-capable Smart Meter
13	**CUSTOMER	Contact Retailer as a customer to ensure Retailer has received all forms.
14	Powercor	Installs solar-capable Smart Meter, and informs Retailer
15	**CUSTOMER	Fills out FiT contract and send to Retailer
16	Power Retailer	Puts Customer onto FiT contract

****Steps 13 and 15 are vitally important for the Customer to perform, as failing to do so may allow the solar PV system application to become lost in the retailer/Powercor system.**

21 - How much do the systems cost?

For all systems ordered after 1st January 2016, prices are as follows:

Nominal Size	3040W Single MPPT	3040W Dual MPPT	4000W	5000W
Actual Panel Capacity	16 x 190W Panels 3040W DELTA RPI H3A Single MPPT inverter	16 x 190W Panels 3040W DELTA RPI H3A Dual MPPT inverter	16 x 250W Panels 4000W DELTA RPI H5A (EXPANDABLE) inverter	20 x 250W Panels 5000W DELTA RPI H5A inverter
System incl. design & installation	\$6,998.36	\$7,428.47	\$8,836.62	\$9,968.74
SRES Credit (\$38 incl. GST)	-\$2,106.00	-\$2,106.00	-\$2,769.00	-\$3,342.00
Net Cost to system buyers	\$4,892.36	\$5,322.47	\$6,067.62	\$6,536.74

All system prices start with ideal conditions, which is a single story steel roof of 15 - 30 degrees where the system panels can be installed in one location and a suitable switchboard is available (see below for details).

22 - What other costs are there?

There are four types of other costs:

- Upgrades to your system that you may be required to undertake
- Upgrades to your system that you may choose to undertake
- Grid connection and switchboard costs
- Financing costs

Upgrades to your system that you may be required to undertake

The following are cost extras which you might expect in the final quotation where your installation is different to the ideal due to roof size, type, orientation etc:

1. Tiled Roof: an extra \$200 for a 3000W system and \$300 for a 5000W system;
2. Where available roof is pitched <15°, and/or you choose a tilted mounting frame: an extra \$350 for a 3000W system and \$500 for 5000W systems;
3. For ground array systems mounted on tilt legs onto concrete foundations supplied and installed by the system owner: an extra \$350 for a 3000W system and \$500 for 5000W system;
4. DC cabling runs from the panel array to inverter longer than 20m; \$20 per extra metre;
5. AC cabling runs from inverter to switchboard greater than 1m; \$100 plus \$10 per extra metre. This assumes cable runs within the building having solar PV installed. Owners will be responsible for any trenching costs if the preferred installation requires underground cabling from the solar system to switch or meter boards;
6. Extra access costs for double story and/or high shed roofs: an extra \$275 for a 3000W system and \$475 for a 5000W system;

7. Split array costs of \$200 per system where panels have to be installed onto more than one roof space, requiring extra install time and materials: and

Upgrades to your system that you may choose to undertake

Possible extra equipment you may consider includes:

1. An oversize inverter to allow for possible future PV array size upgrades;
2. Battery systems: KPE is currently investigating a range of options for storing energy. These will range from small hybrid Battery/Grid systems; through to fully off-grid systems. Costs will vary considerably. Enquire for further details.
3. Energy monitoring equipment: Prices vary on solution. Enquire for further details.

Grid connection and switchboard costs

There is a mandatory requirement for all Grid-connected solar PV systems to use an approved solar-capable Smart Meter. This cost may vary for each installation, and is outside the control of KPE. The following are typical Smart Meter costs for houses:

1. Powercor charge to "bring forward" installation of Smart Meter if not already fitted: \$96.50
2. Powercor charge to configure Smart Meter for solar PV generation: \$30 to \$400

Note that although a cost of \$230 is typical for Smart Meter reprogramming, Powercor or your electricity retailer may charge more for this service. This is an unavoidable charge. To clarify exactly how much you will be charged, call your retailer (Origin, AGL, Neighborhood, etc).

If you do not have a suitable switchboard you may be required to upgrade or replace it. If your solar PV system is fitted to a building (such as a farm shed) without a switchboard you will have to have one installed.

In all of these cases this potential work will have to be carried out prior to your solar PV system installation, and is an external cost made between you and the electrician performing that work.

KPE will inform you at the quoting stage of the process whether any of this type of work is required.

Financing costs

Financing costs vary depending on your situation. In most cases, customers source financing from savings. If savings are not available the most common source of financing is either through a home equity loan or a personal loan.

23 - Are the systems customisable?

Yes. KPE solar PV systems are customized for every installation, and we will work with you to ensure your system is not only the best choice for today, but that the system is also ready for any future needs you may require.

24 - How do I sign up and purchase a system?

To sign up for a KPE solar PV system, please do the following:

1. Complete a KPE Offer Document, and return it to Keppel Prince with a deposit of \$250
2. Once your deposit is received, KPE will contact you to arrange a site design visit. This visit will confirm the system sizes able to be safely installed onto your property as well as assessing your property for any extra costs above the standard system prices that may be required due to the particular circumstances of your property
3. Confirm the final system size you require during the design visit and discussion.
4. KPE will notify you of the final cost of your system (as per the formal KPE Solar Quotation)
5. The outstanding balance of your system cost must be paid as per the timing detailed on the KPE Solar Quotation. We require full payment in advance of installation.
6. On the day the system is installed you will need to be available to sign off documents:
 - That certifies that the installation has been completed.
 - That assigns your right to the creation of STC's for your system to KPE.
7. Once the system has been installed KPE will notify your nominated electricity retailer who will arrange for Powercor to install or configure your meter as required. See FAQ 20, (page 13) - *Once the system is installed, what do I do?* For more information.

Notes:

- *There is a cooling off period of 10 days after the date you receive your final cost confirmation during which time you can decide to pull out of the purchase.*
- *If you take this decision KPE will refund your deposit within 7 days of you notifying us in writing of your decision to not continue. Please include your bank details for an E.F.T. refund*
- *Installation timing may be affected by shipping delays and/or bad weather. KPE will make all reasonable effort to keep you informed about possible delays to your scheduled installation date.*
- *Failure to sign completion and STC certificates may stop or slow the generation of SRETs for your system and may result in either you being charged an administrative fee or becoming liable for the Gross System Cost and being responsible for sale of the SRET's yourself.*

25 – Who should I contact?

All Portland region questions can be directed to Heinz de Chelard from Keppel Prince Engineering.

Heinz de Chelard

Solar Engineer

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