

Australia's Solar Sunshot program to support solar manufacturing

The first AUD 550 million (\$372.2 million) of the Australian federal government's Solar Sunshot program has been launched to support the development of the domestic solar manufacturing industry and help local businesses capture more of the global PV supply chain.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2024 **DAVID CARROLL**

MARKETS MODULES & UPSTREAM MANUFACTURING AUSTRALIA



Image: Tindo Solar

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The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has opened the first phase of the AUD 1 billion Solar Sunshot program aimed at advancing PV manufacturing innovation in Australia and creating a more resilient renewable energy supply chain.

ARENA Chief Executive Officer Darren Miller said the Solar Sunshot program offers production subsidies and grants to Australian businesses and aims to uncover and support innovation to drive scale and diversity in a critical industry.

"Solar electricity will be the foundation of Australia's future energy supply and the key to our net zero and renewable energy superpower ambitions," he said. "We need to build on our history of innovation and extend this into manufacturing across the solar supply chain. The demand for solar required to meet our net zero and renewable energy superpower goals is immense and Australia has the opportunity to build resilience and unlock long-term economic opportunity."

The first AUD 550 million will support the commercialisation of Australian PV innovations and scale up the manufacturing of [Australian solar](#) panels.

This will include AUD 500 million in Round 1A to support solar panel manufacturing in Australia, with a focus on modules, inputs to modules, including solar glass and [frames](#), and deployment systems like racking. Round 1B will comprise AUD 50 million to fund solar panel manufacturing studies, including feasibility and engineering studies.

Australian Federal Energy Minister Chris Bowen said the Solar Sunshot program will let Australian technology, innovation, know-how, and skills compete against international players. He noted that only about 1% of the

solar panels installed in Australia are manufactured domestically.

"That's why bringing solar manufacturing to our shores is so critical for unlocking our future as a renewable energy superpower and securing the job of the future," he said. "Diverse, secure and resilient supply chains, supported by [more onshore manufacturing](#) across more of the value chain, are too important to our security and success to leave to hope. Now is the time to take advantage of some of the best solar resources and renewable energy expertise in the world."

Heidi Lee, chief executive of independent think tank Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE), said the Solar Sunshot initiative marks a significant step toward building a robust and sustainable domestic solar industry, but claimed that more needs to be done.

Lee said local content incentives within government contracts and schemes are needed to provide demand certainty for Australian-made clean tech, and to keep more of the benefits of the initiative circulating in our communities.

"China makes the lion's share of the solar panels which go onto Australian rooftops, and we can instead manufacture these parts and panels in regions such as the [Hunter](#), the Latrobe Valley, Illawarra and Central Queensland," she said. "These are all regions BZE has suggested can host renewables-powered industrial and manufacturing hubs. These clean industry hubs are the best investment locations for new manufacturing facilities with existing infrastructure, transport logistics and skilled workforces."

The International Energy Agency estimates 1.300 manufacturing jobs for each GW of solar PV production.

Applications for the first round of funding are now being taken with ARENA saying proposals will be assessed against merit criteria on an individual basis. Applications for Round 1A are due by April 30, 2025. while applications for Round 1B are to close on Nov. 12, 2025.

Future funding rounds under the Solar Sunshot program are expected to be announced from mid-2025.

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DAVID CARROLL



David is a senior journalist with more than 25 years' experience in the Australian media industry as a writer, designer and editor for print and online publications. Based in Queensland – Australia's Sunshine State – he joined pv magazine Australia in 2020 to help document the nation's ongoing shift to solar.

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