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Applications Open For Australia's Solar Sunshot Program

September 2, 2024 by [Michael Bloch](#) 3 Comments

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Funding rounds have been launched by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to support Australian solar PV manufacturing innovation and related supply chains.

The \$1 billion Solar Sunshot program **was announced** by the Albanese government in March this year; part of its \$22.7 billion **Future Made in Australia** package. This was followed by a Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) consultation process with various stakeholders seeking to inform the program's design. With that done and dusted, two initial funding rounds were opened on the weekend.

- Round 1A (\$500 million): to support solar PV manufacturing innovation with a focus on panels and their inputs (such as glass and frames), and deployment systems (e.g. innovative racking). Expressions of interest are due on 10 December 2024, with full applications due on 30 April 2025.
- Round 1B (\$50 million): funding for solar PV manufacturing studies. Full applications due on 2 November 2025.

For these rounds, proposals will be assessed against merit criteria on a case-by-case basis. ARENA expects to launch one (or more) further funding rounds next year.

More On Solar Sunshot Round 1A

Round 1A involves the commercial-scale manufacturing of solar PV technologies, with new and/or additional manufacturing capacity. It is limited to **solar panels**, cells and other module components, and PV racking, tracking, and deployment technologies. Projects involving upstream activities relating to ingots, wafers or polysilicon will not be supported under Round 1A.

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- Supporting the development of an integrated solar P.V. supply chain in Australia resilient to challenges.
- Support innovation and use of advanced automation technologies in manufacturing, and providing new economic opportunities.
- Reduce barriers to manufacturing.
- Develop pathways to sustainable and competitive supply chains, taking into consideration Community Benefit Principles¹ and long term economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

The aggregate ARENA funding (capital grant + production credits²) for a single project is expected to be in the range of \$10 million – \$350 million. Applicants don't need to be headquartered in Australia, but they must hold an Australian Business Number (ABN) and be an Australian entity incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001. Each project must take place primarily in Australia, and co-funding commitments will play a role in the application assessment process.

More detail on eligibility/merit criteria and other information on [round 1A can be found here](#).

One local company that has already indicated it will be putting its hands up and out is Australia's only solar panel manufacturer currently. Tindo Solar produces panels made with imported cells and other components. Aside from its "gigafactory" expansion aspirations that would benefit from funding, Tindo Solar recently again stated its [commitment to integrating Australian-made components](#) into its solar panels.

More on Solar Sunshot Round 1B

Round 1B projects will be either feasibility studies or engineering studies on commercial-scale manufacturing of solar PV technologies; including polysilicon, ingot and wafer production, and broader solar innovation and automation.

Objectives:

- Lead to development and operation of sustainable and commercial scale manufacturing facilities.
- Reducing barriers to manufacturing.
- Support innovation and use of advanced automation, consistent with achievement of [ARENA's solar 30-30-30 goal](#).

Under Round 1B, capital grants will be in the range of \$1 – \$5 million, and will comprise no more than 50% of a study's budget. The study must primarily take place in Australia, and an applicant must be an ABN holder and an Australian-registered company.

More information on [Round 1B can be viewed here](#).

Is Solar Sunshot Worth The Effort And Expense?










Given the massive scale of solar PV production elsewhere, especially in China, some have questioned whether it's a waste of money embarking on Solar Sunshot. ARENA acknowledges we're behind the eight-ball and expects it will take "some time" for Australian manufacturing to become competitive on a global scale.

ARENA says the initiative will also support elements of the supply chain where Australia can be most competitive, particularly given local access to abundant raw materials such as [silicon in the form of quartz](#).

"We need to build on our history of innovation and extend this into manufacturing across the solar supply chain," [said ARENA CEO Darren Miller](#). "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."

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Finn's Bestseller

1. Ensuring public investment and the private investment attracted flows on to benefit local workers and businesses. ↩
2. Production credits: Grant funding paid per unit of eligible production output. This is short-term additional funding required to be competitive with imports while scaling up; to bridge the gap between the expected selling price and cost of production + justifiable return on capital. ↩

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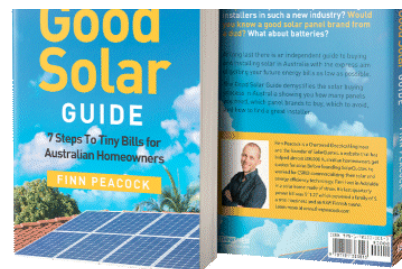


About Michael Bloch

Michael caught the solar power bug after purchasing components to cobble together a small off-grid PV system in 2008. He's been reporting on Australian and international solar energy news ever since.

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**Forrest Gardener says**

September 2, 2024 at 7:06 am



Governments picking winners. What could possibly go wrong?

REPLY

Graham Reeve says

September 4, 2024 at 9:09 am



I was told recently that Tindo panels, while manufactured in Australia, use predominantly Chinese components. Just wondering if that is indeed true. I'm considering using Tindo panels.... But not if they are being misleading on their origin.

REPLY

Anthony Bennett says

September 4, 2024 at 11:25 am



Hi Graham,

Tindo assemble panels here in a factory that's actually smaller than the experimental R&D production line that Longi have in China. ie the chinese make 90% of the worlds solar and so getting the components there isn't something exceptional.

BP used to make solar here in Australia, if you remember Telecom remote area phone boxes and the first solar car to cross Australia, they used BP cells. The plant they were made in Sydney was taken over by Silex for a short time but then closed.

I can't help but mention that the olympic village in Sydney had BP solar panels on it, while Holden & the CSIRO developed a hybrid eCommodore 25 years ago. While John Howard spent 10 times more R&D money subsidising "clean coal" than he did on renewables. UNSW developed the PERC technology used in most modern solar cells but as mentioned 90% are made in China...

It's worth considering Donald Horne's full quote:

Australia is a lucky country... run mainly by second rate people who share its luck. It lives on other people's ideas, and, although its ordinary people are adaptable, most of its leaders (in all fields) so lack curiosity about the events that surround them that they are often taken by surprise.

REPLY



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1. Real names are preferred - you should be happy to put your name to your comments.
2. Put down your weapons.
3. Assume positive intention.
4. If you are in the solar industry - try to get to the truth, not the sale.
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