2025 consultation

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MASTER ELECTRICIANS AUSTRALIA

Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is a peak industry association representing electrical contractors and is recognised by industry, government and the community as a leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. You can visit our website at www.masterelectricians.com.au

MEA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on accelerating electrification and improving energy resilience across NSW. Expanding access to Consumer Energy Resources (CER), including rooftop solar, battery storage, and bi-directional EV charging, is critical to improving grid resilience, lowering energy costs, and supporting a fair and sustainable transition to electrification across NSW. Ensuring all households and businesses can participate in and benefit from this transition must remain a key policy priority.

Transport

What are likely to prove the most effective approaches to accelerate rapid decarbonisation across freight and passenger transport?

Private EV Charging Infrastructure

The Problem **-** There is limited EV charging capacity for households and businesses which undermines consumer confidence in EV investments. Incentives and investment are now needed to expand infrastructure to support uptake.

Benefits **–** For private passenger vehicles, EV batteries offer a unique, mobile form of energy storage. With bi-directional charging, households can charge their EVs using solar-generated energy, reducing charging costs and easing grid demand. Additionally, households can store surplus energy in their EV batteries, which can later be used to power their homes or appliances, or alternatively can be exported to the grid during peak times when grid supply is struggling to meet demand.

When combined with CER, bi-directional EV charging creates a powerful synergy that supports both energy independence and grid stability, ultimately helping to drive down power prices for all.

Action Required **-** MEA urges the NSW Government to ensure policy settings incentivise households and small businesses to install bi-directional EV chargers. Government policy settings are required to support body corporates to enable installation of EV chargers in car park areas.

Installation **-** The installation of private EV chargers in buildings should remain the responsibility of the private electrical industry, and ring-fencing guidelines should uphold this principle. MEA's members are prepared and well-positioned to meet the growing consumer demand for private EV chargers.

Public EV Charging Infrastructure

Location **-** Street-located chargers will also be necessary, particularly where older buildings are unable to accommodate private chargers.

Funding **-** In highly populated areas, these should be led by private investment and user-pays models. In more remote areas, government-funded infrastructure may be required, again on a user-pays model. Wherever possible, chargers should be linked to solar panels to enable low-cost charging in daylight hours.

Installation **-** The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) has recently initiated a consultation on ring-fencing arrangements related to the installation of EV chargers on public property. We are concerned that waivers to ring-fencing can have detrimental impacts on private businesses where a competitive market is viable; for example EV chargers in highly populated areas. Where a competitive market is not so viable, such as remote areas, ring-fencing arrangements are sensible.

Built Environment

What additional measures could accelerate electrification and increase energy efficiency of new and existing buildings?

Trusted Information – Consumers would benefit from useful information on how to reduce their energy bills and improve energy efficiency. Electricians are well placed to provide this advice and carry out work on existing buildings. MEA has information

designed for electricians to provide to consumers and intends to develop a training course on energy efficiency for electricians to improve advice and services related to energy efficiency provided by electricians to consumers.

Export Charges - There is concern over the AEMO's decision to allow power companies to charge Australian solar consumers for exporting electricity back to the grid, something which NSW[1] has implemented.

Often referred to as sun-tax, MEA claims a two-way tariff punishes consumers for doing the right thing, strips away incentives to invest in solar, and risks giving renewable energy a bad name at a time when we must roll out more CER. Export tariffs risks disincentivising rooftop solar installations.

MEA urges the rule to be revoked to protect energy consumers, particularly those who have made significant financial sacrifices to install solar assets and maintain momentum in small energy consumers electrifying their properties.

How could social equity be better addressed in the transition to an electrified built environment?

Key Concerns on the Inequitable Transition to Electrification:

- *Loan Schemes* – While well-intentioned, the Federal Government's *Household Energy Upgrades Fund* loan scheme introduces additional debt with short-term repayments and interest. For many households and small businesses, this is financially unviable and unlikely to support vulnerable groups in adopting CER.

- *Export Charges* – Solar export charges act as a disincentive for solar uptake and unfairly penalise those who adopted CER based on previous Government support and feed-in tariff incentives.

[1] Nina Hendy "Homeowners rush to buy batteries to avoid 'sun tax'" Australian Financial Review [03 September 2024]

Extreme Heat Events

What initiatives should the commission consider in assessing NSW's preparation and responses to extreme heat and humidity events in NSW?

CER improves grid resilience and energy security by helping to balance supply and demand.

Extreme heat and humidity drive up electricity use, particularly from increased air conditioning, placing significant pressure on the grid and increasing the risk of blackouts when demand exceeds supply.

CER enables households and businesses to generate and store their own solar energy, reducing reliance on the grid during peak periods. Households with surplus energy can also export it back to the grid, helping to support others who do not have access to CER during heatwaves.

Maximising small consumer adoption of CER is essential to strengthening the state's energy resilience in the face of extreme weather.

Conclusion

A successful transition to electrification in NSW must be practical, equitable, and forward-thinking. MEA supports a consumer-driven approach that maximises the role of CER; specifically small-scale solar, battery storage, and bi-directional EV charging. This will strengthen grid resilience, generate clean energy, reduce household costs, and enhance energy security.

To accelerate this transition, we urge the NSW Government to:

- Provide grants for bi-directional EV charger installation in both residential and commercial settings;
- Support policy reform that enables widespread CER access in multi-unit dwellings;
- Protect consumers from disincentives such as solar export charges; and

- Ensure infrastructure installation, including EV chargers, supports a fair and competitive market by upholding ring-fencing guidelines.

In the face of increasing heat events and rising energy demand, a strong focus on empowering small energy users through targeted investment and regulatory reform is critical.

MEA is ready to support this transition by delivering safe, skilled installations across NSW. We look forward to continued collaboration with the NSW Government in electrifying NSW's households and businesses.