



Peacock Media Group T/A SolarQuotes®

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South Australia

To: ACCC by email [adjudication@accc.gov.au](mailto:adjudication@accc.gov.au)

**Re: Clean Energy Council - Solar Retailer Code of Conduct**

Dear ACCC,

I am the Founder & CEO of [SolarQuotes](https://www.solarquotes.com.au)®. Since 2009 we have helped almost half a million Australians get quotes for solar. We also answer thousands of emails and calls every year from Australians who need help with their solar before, during and after the installation -whether they went with a SolarQuotes client or not. We have around 300 highly vetted solar installer clients. Many of them (particularly in SA and VIC) have been forced to become Approved Solar Retailers so that they can participate in state-based rebate schemes.

**I don't think the Clean Energy Council's Approved Solar Retailer Scheme should be reauthorised** by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in its current form on account of how the past operation of the CEC Approved Retailer Scheme has...

- Not been voluntary in practice.
- Reduced competition which has been against the public interest.
- Has resulted in the CEC acting to the detriment of solar installation companies that are not Approved Solar Retailer members.

**Not Voluntary:** Various subsidy schemes — most notably the Victorian Solar Homes Scheme — have required participants to be CEC Approved Retailers to access the state solar rebate. If you are not a CEC Approved Retailer in Victoria, your solar systems will be about \$2,000 more expensive. Because of this, membership was clearly not voluntary but a prerequisite of remaining in the residential solar business in Victoria.

In SA you cannot access the SA Home Battery scheme rebate (about \$4000) unless you are an Approved Solar Retailer. If you want to be in the residential storage installation business in SA you are forced to be an Approved Solar Retailer.

**Reduced Competition:** Subsidy schemes that require CEC Approved Retailer membership reduce consumer choice and are anti-competitive.



**Does Not Represent the Industry:** The CEC claims to represent the rooftop solar installation industry but has taken actions to promote members of its Approved Retailer scheme to the detriment of installation companies that were not members. This has resulted in installers being driven out of the residential business in Victoria, not for the quality of their work but simply because they were not members of a group the CEC describes in its application or authorization as “voluntary”. There was obvious potential for conflict of interest in the organization in charge of setting standards and accreditation creating the Approved Retailer group and in practice, it has been glaring.

**The current CEC Approved Retailer Scheme should either be wound down or altered significantly from its current state.** I can make a few suggestions, but the issue needs more consideration than I’ve given it so far:

- Wind down the CEC Approved Retailer scheme in a way that causes minimal disruption and inconvenience for existing members.
- Completely separate the existing Approved Retailer scheme from the CEC.
- Replace it with a robust, independent, inspection and mystery shopper scheme with publicly available results that provides consumers with clear information on the quality of installations.

Sincerely,

Finn Peacock

[Redacted signature line]

[Redacted contact information line]

