

Stakeholder Reference Network: Communique 1

Progress in co-designing a National Product Stewardship Scheme for Photovoltaic (PV) Systems

FEBRUARY 2022

This Communique informs and invites stakeholders to join in developing an industry-led, national stewardship scheme for PV systems including solar panels and inverters.

Why a national product stewardship scheme for PV Systems?

End-of-life solar panels are estimated to increase by **1700% between 2019 and 2030** as the first generation of solar panels come off Australian roofs. This rapid growth in end-of-life PV systems has been known for some time.

PV systems were placed on the Environment Minister's **Product Stewardship Priority List** in 2016. The List identifies the products most in need of a product stewardship approach.

The current Minister's Priority List includes PV systems with the following actions:

- An industry agreed nationwide scheme design must be finalised **by June 2022**.
- The nationwide scheme must be operational **by June 2023** and include an approach to deal with legacy panels.

Urgent action is needed now. Australia needs an effective, sustainable, and industry-led national scheme to address the growing waste stream from solar photovoltaic systems. The Government is committed to the co-design process being led by the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence to meet the deadline of finalising a national scheme design by June 2022.

Trevor Evans MP

Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management



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The Australian, State and Territory governments have acknowledged the need for a product stewardship scheme for photovoltaic systems over many years:

- During 2018, Sustainability Victoria, with other jurisdictions, investigated and assessed various options to progress a national approach for PV systems in Australia. The resulting report – *PV Systems Stewardship Options Assessment (May 2018)*, found that key stakeholders (including PV manufacturers, importers and industry associations) supported a nationally coordinated approach for managing PV system waste.
- *The National Waste Policy Action Plan (2019)* Action 3.5 is that a preferred stewardship scheme for photovoltaic system be (a) identified by 2021 and (b) in place by 2023.

However, progress has been limited and piecemeal.

No industry-led, national product stewardship scheme has been developed. End-of-life solar panels remain a future environmental problem.

The co-design process

Everyone who imports, designs, manufactures, distributes, sells, uses and disposes of products has a shared responsibility to reduce the environmental and human health and safety impacts of those products.

The Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence was engaged by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment in November 2021 to facilitate a co-design process to:

- Establish and co-design with stakeholders across the solar industry and government the development of a product stewardship scheme for PV systems while ensuring co-ordination with the ongoing work program of the Battery Stewardship Council to deliver stewardship for battery storage.

- Facilitate a collaborative process with industry, governments, and other stakeholders as part of the scheme co-design process.
- Produce a report on the co-design process and identify next steps for implementation or in the case where the scheme design was unable to be finalised the report will identify the major barriers to establishing the scheme.

The project is being led by a dedicated project team from the Centre comprising:

- **Vaughan Levitzke PSM, Team Leader and Industry Working Group Chair**
- **John Gertsakis, Centre of Excellence Director**
- **Rose Read, Centre of Excellence Director**
- **Dr Nick Florin, Centre of Excellence Principal Adviser**

The team is bringing together industry stakeholders from across the supply chain to design a scheme that is solution and outcome-oriented and is working closely with industry, officials from the Department, as well as state and territory agencies to inform the scheme design process.

Scheme Co-design Activities and Timeline

Nov-Dec 21	Jan-Mar 22	Apr-June 22	July 22 – June 23	July 23 >>
Phase 1 – Initiate Co-design (led by PSCoE)		Phase 2 – finalise design, pilots, establish		Phase 3 – Launch
Situational Analysis				
Meet individually with industry leaders in the solar industry				
Establish Industry Working Group (IWG)				
	IWG Meetings	IWG Meetings		
	Establish and engage with Stakeholder Reference Network (SRN)	Engage with SRN		
	Develop preliminary scheme design and pathway forward to establish scheme – i.e. problem, scope, objectives, outcomes, financing principles, governance roles and responsibilities, potential risks, and operational protocols and procedures	Finalise scheme design including governance, business model, financing and operations, conduct pilots to test various aspects of scheme operations and costs,		Launch National Scheme

Role of Industry Working Group (IWG)

The IWG is comprised of representatives from industry associations, manufacturers, importers and suppliers of solar panels and inverters, energy companies, research organisations and independent industry experts.

The IWG's role and purpose is to confirm scheme scope, objectives, funding principles, governance, roles and responsibilities, with a view to co-designing an implementation-ready stewardship scheme for PV systems, over the coming months.

Role of Stakeholder Reference Network (SRN)

The SRN is being formed to allow other interested organisations to learn what's happening and to provide feedback and technical advice to the IWG

on technical, policy and regulatory matters. The SRN will also provide opportunities for service providers, businesses and other stakeholders to contribute up-to-the-minute information related to decommissioning services, collection logistics, materials handling, reuse and recycling.

Role of E-stewardship Jurisdictional Committee

This existing jurisdictional committee is made up of representatives from the Commonwealth, State and Territory jurisdictions. Its remit includes all electrical and electronic products including photovoltaic systems.

What is impactful Product Stewardship?

Everyone who imports, designs, manufactures, distributes, sells, uses and disposes of products has a shared responsibility to reduce the environmental and human health and safety impacts of those products.

Product stewardship schemes support the environmentally sound and safe management of products and materials over their life. This includes at the end of their useful life. These arrangements may be voluntary, mandatory or shared with governments and industry.

Examples of impactful product stewardship are when:

- Companies design their products for durability, reuse, easier repair and recycling.
- Companies use more recycled materials and less resources to manufacture their products.
- Companies eliminate and/or limit the use of hazardous materials in their products and manufacturing processes.
- Companies address social and human health impacts associated with the resources they use and the products they manufacture and place on the market.
- Consumers and users can reuse, repair and recycle products, and associated packaging.

What are the key elements of a PV stewardship scheme design?

To design a PV stewardship scheme, the co-design process is considering:

- the problem
- the scope of the scheme, including products, sectors and industries covered by the scheme
- objectives and outcomes
- roles and responsibilities across the supply chain and for governments
- how the scheme is to be financed by industry
- how industry will govern and manage implementation of the scheme
- risks to the scheme, and their management
- operating principles and procedures, including standards, compliance and reporting.

How to participate

The project team is eager to hear your views and solutions that can inform the design and implementation of an industry-led, national product stewardship scheme for PV systems.

Register your interest in being part of the Stakeholder Reference Network by contacting the project team in the first instance.

We encourage stakeholders to make contact and share solution-oriented perspectives on creating a timely and world-class stewardship scheme that the solar industry can be proud of.

Contact:

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