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## Switch over to sunshine and save

### HOW TO BUY...

THE scheme allowing homeowners to sell excess electricity back into the grid may have been scrapped, but it's still a great time to buy a solar panel system for your home, industry experts say.

The price of a solar panel system has dropped by as much as 40 per cent in the past year. The combination of falling solar power costs and rising electricity costs makes this the perfect time to invest, the experts say.

"Solar component prices have dropped drastically," says Australian Solar Energy Society CEO John Grimes. "Twelve months ago you were paying around \$2.50 per kilowatt of capacity for a panel and now you're looking at paying less than \$1.

There are two main reasons for this, says Grimes.

"Firstly, demand for solar products in the European market has dropped.

"Secondly, the Chinese, the biggest solar panel manufacturers in the world, were over-producing products at a time when demand was suffering a downturn. So they have been left with a massive over-supply.

"I would say a solar panel package would cost around 40 per cent less today than a year ago, which is a huge bonus for homeowners."

Christopher Zinn, from consumer watchdog, Choice, says buyers should look around for a quality product rather than opting for the cheapest one they find.

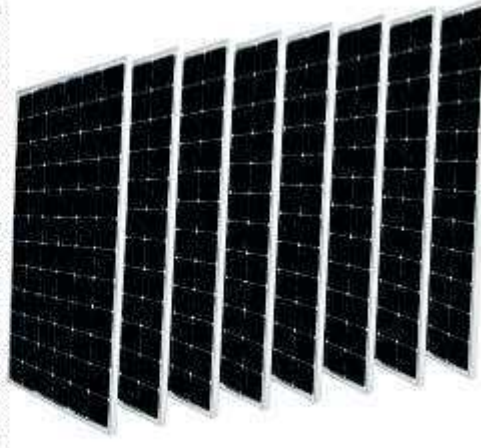
— MERCEDES MAGUIRE



**CAPTAIN GREEN**

RRP \$1995, 1300 361 682 or  
[www.captaingreen.com.au](http://www.captaingreen.com.au)

● THIS 1.52kW package comes with eight LDK mono-crystalline solar panels and an SMA inverter. The panels are made in China by one of the largest solar panel manufacturers in the world. The SMA inverter is German-made and maintenance-free, thanks to convection cooling and a simple DC plug system. Captain Green offers interest-free plans and free in-home energy assessments and quotes.



**ORIGIN**

RRP \$2490, 1300 791 468 or  
[www.originenergy.com.au/solar](http://www.originenergy.com.au/solar)

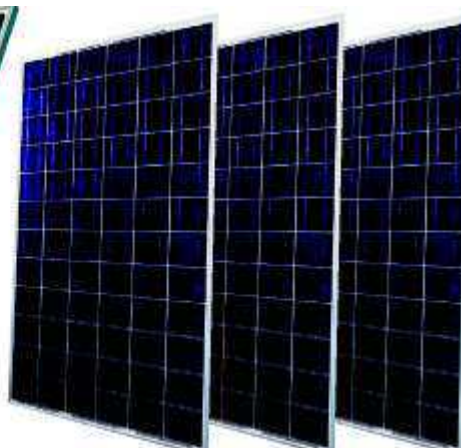
A 1.1kW system that includes a minimum 1100 watts of solar panels manufactured by Suntech or Trina and a minimum 1.1kW Clenergy inverter. Both components are backed by manufacturers' warranties. Origin offer a two-year interest-free payment plan. You will need to pay \$125 up front, then \$100 a month over 24 months. Origin also has a range of larger system sizes to suit your monthly budget.



**BTS ENERGY**

RRP \$3299, 1300 319 419 or  
[www.btsenergy.com.au](http://www.btsenergy.com.au)

● BTS has been installing solar PV panels since 2003 and is the preferred installer for six Sydney councils. This package provides a 1.52kW solar PV system with a 2kW inverter. The CEEG-produced solar panels, which provide excellent performance in low-light conditions, come with a 25-year manufacturer's warranty. The SunnyRoo inverter carries a five-year manufacturer's warranty.



**INGENERO**

RRP \$6128, 1800 993 334 or  
[www.ingenero.com.au](http://www.ingenero.com.au)

A TOP-of-the-line package providing a 1.575kW panel system from the best solar panel and inverter manufacturers. All Ingenero systems have a 10-year warranty on all workmanship and parts on top of the industry standard 25-year output performance guarantee. Finance packages are available with no upfront costs or on-going account fees. Payment plans translate to weekly repayments of \$24.95.