



Make the **right one.**

[Homepage](#) [Household](#) [Energy and water](#) [Solar panels counting the cost](#)

Solar panels buying guide

How long does it take for solar panels to pay for themselves?

Updated: 10 Jul 2009 |

05. Avoiding dodgy imports

There's concern in the industry about the quality of some cheap imported panels. The problem for consumers is that it's impossible to tell a good panel from a bad one just by looking at them. CHOICE has not tested solar panels. You should ensure that any panel you consider has met Australian standards.

“As Chinese-made panels vary in quality, be careful when considering them,” says the Alternative Technology Association. “Most of the good panels come from Europe and the US (often assembled in Mexico), and have brand names including Schott Solar, Kaneka, BP Solar [Australian made], Sharp, Kyocera and Uni-Solar. There's at least one good Chinese manufacturer -- **Suntech. It's a large manufacturer with seemingly good quality control and their panels have long warranty periods.**”

And while nobody wants to spend money on cheap panels that don't last, a more serious concern is over their safety.

“People need to be very careful - you get what you pay for,” says Ted Spooner of the UNSW School of Electrical Engineering, and chair of Standards Australia's Renewable Energy Systems committee. “There are some bad practices and shonky certificates appearing from labs saying that the panels meet a standard, when they don't. And some panels have the 'CE Mark' from Europe, which is totally meaningless in Australia for solar panels. It's self-certification. A poor module manufacturer in China can self-test and put a CE Mark on its product – but this is not independent and not worth anything.”

Spooner says the safety risks resulting from poor quality panels and wiring could even include electrocution or house fires. It's important to check that your installer is accredited.

The standards for solar panels and their wiring are currently being tightened. A list of panels that are eligible for the government rebate isn't available from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, but manufacturers must provide the Department with proof of their certification by accredited labs to Australian standards, before the panels are eligible.