

Excerpt from: **SMH 05/07/2011**

Faults found in home solar systems Ruth Williams July 06, 2011

STARTLING figures out of NSW last week have confirmed what the public has suspected for months - that there are widespread faults in solar panel installations. And while many of these faults are minor, some are serious.

In an audit of 658 household solar systems in western Sydney, just one in five were installed correctly, and some 18.5 per cent had "major" defects posing safety risks.

The federal government, through the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, last week denied it has tried to avoid releasing information to the public, saying that solar panel safety is the responsibility of state and territory governments.

... the Clean Energy Council,has known about the extent of the problems since October 2010. The director of strategy at the CEC, Kane Thornton, said that the figures ... were "probably consistent with what we understood to be the case".

Because householders cannot fix the faults themselves, the council feared that alerting the public could lead to some people panicking and trying to interfere with their systems.

Some in the industry suspect there is more to the story. Last week, the opposition's environment spokesman, Greg Hunt, suggested a national audit had uncovered similar results to the NSW audit, and that the government was "sitting on" the figures.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator, began its own round of national inspections in mid-May. It says it is too early for these inspections to generate any data but that it has received "preliminary information" about certain issues.

There are now 300,000 solar panel installations nationwide. 383 megawatts of photovoltaic power was installed in Australia in 2010, an incredible 480 per cent rise on 2009. Little wonder there have been concerns raised about the quality of installations in such a booming market.

NECA, representing electrical contractors, says, "There is going to be a significant amount of rectification work required. No one knows just how many faulty systems there are."

Excerpt from www.choice.com.au

Solar panel safety concerns

With solar photovoltaic (PV) panel feed-in tariffs being wound up or restricted around the country and generous federal subsidies being cut, consumers are rushing to get systems connected before time runs out.

While opportunities to make a quick buck are fading, there are still plenty of fly-by-night installers keen to get their fingers in the solar rebate scheme pie. Corners are being cut by inexperienced operators entering the market and rushing to complete jobs.

Solar rebates and other incentives are very stop-start, creating a boom-bust cycle. This encourages bad players to move in, undercut with cheap components and bad installations and then fold.

In 2009, 58% of audited systems were rated as high quality, and a total of 12% required attention or were substandard. In 2010, only 7% of systems were high quality, and 29% required attention or were substandard.