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What is the Solar Sharer Offer?

Starting 1 July 2026, all major electricity retailers in NSW must offer you at least 3 hours of free electricity in the middle of the day — roughly 11am to 2pm. This is called the Solar Sharer Offer (SSO).

Why? Australia's rooftop solar panels produce so much electricity during the day that wholesale prices often drop to zero (or even go negative). The government wants to pass those savings on to households. The idea is simple: if electricity is cheap to produce at lunchtime, you shouldn't be paying full price for it.

Who can get it?

- Most households in NSW, South Australia, or South East Queensland.
- You must have a smart meter installed (more on this below).
- You do NOT need to have solar panels on your own roof — most households with a smart meter can access it.
- Renters can access it too, as long as the property has a smart meter.

How much could you save?

The exact savings depend on how much electricity you can shift to the free window. For example, if you run your washing machine, dishwasher, and charge your EV during the free hours instead of at night, you could save hundreds of dollars per year. The government estimates average savings of around \$100–\$350/year, but households that shift a lot of usage could save more.

Is there a catch?

- There is a daily cap of 24 kWh of free electricity — but that's more than enough for most households (the average home uses about 16–20 kWh per entire day).
- Retailers must offer the free hours, but the rest of your plan (peak rates, daily supply charge) might be structured differently — so always compare the full plan, not just the free hours.
- You need a smart meter. If you don't have one yet, you can request one for free (see Section 4 below).

Jargon Buster – Key terms explained

The energy industry uses a lot of technical terms. Here's a plain-English guide to the ones you'll see when reading about the Solar Sharer Offer.

Term	What It Means
Smart meter	A digital electricity meter that records your usage every 30 minutes (instead of just a total every 3 months). It's what allows your retailer to give you free electricity at specific times of day.
Default Market Offer (DMO)	A price cap set by the government each year. It's the maximum a retailer can charge you on a 'standing offer' (their standard plan). The Solar Sharer Offer is built into the DMO from 2026–27.
Standing offer	The basic, default electricity plan your retailer puts you on if you haven't actively chosen a plan. Usually not the cheapest option.
Market offer	A plan you actively choose — often cheaper than the standing offer, and may include extra benefits like discounts or different rate structures.
Time-of-use tariff	A pricing structure where electricity costs different amounts at different times of day (e.g., cheaper at night, more expensive in the evening). Smart meters enable this.
Feed-in tariff (FiT)	The rate you get paid for solar electricity your panels send back to the grid. Typically 3–8 cents per kWh in NSW.
kWh (kilowatt-hour)	The unit used to measure electricity. Running a 1,000-watt heater for 1 hour uses 1 kWh. A typical home uses 16–20 kWh per day.
AER	Australian Energy Regulator — the government body that sets price caps, monitors retailers, and enforces rules. They run the Energy Made Easy comparison website.
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water — the federal government department that designed the Solar Sharer Offer.
Duck curve	The shape of electricity demand during the day: it dips in the middle (when solar panels produce lots of power) and rises sharply in the evening (when people get home). The SSO encourages you to use power during that midday dip.
Free-power window	The hours during which your electricity is free under the SSO. In the draft for NSW, this is 11am–2pm (to be confirmed by the AER).
SoAR grant	Solar for Apartment Residents — a NSW Government grant that helps apartment buildings install shared solar panels. Up to \$150,000 per building.

Practical Tips – How to get the most out of the SSO

Once you're on an SSO plan, the key to maximising your savings is shifting as much electricity usage as possible into the free window (roughly 11am–2pm). Here are some practical ideas:

- Set your washing machine and dryer on a timer to run between 11am and 2pm.
- Run your dishwasher after lunch instead of after dinner.
- If you have an electric hot water system, ask your electrician about setting it to heat during the middle of the day (many systems can be put on a timer).
- Charge your electric vehicle (EV) during the free window if you're at home — even a partial charge saves money.
- If you have a pool pump, set it to run during the free hours.
- Pre-cool or pre-heat your home during the free window — your home acts like a thermal battery.
- If you work from home, schedule energy-intensive tasks (e.g., charging devices, running appliances) for the free period.

Your Step-by-Step Action Plan

Here's exactly what to do, in order:

1. Check if you have a smart meter. Look at your meter box — if it has a digital display (not a spinning disc), you probably have one. If unsure, call your retailer and ask.
2. If you don't have a smart meter, request one. Call your retailer or network (Ausgrid, Endeavour, or Essential Energy in NSW). It's free under the mandatory rollout. Installation takes about 30 minutes.
3. Read the SolarQuotes explainer (see online resources below) to understand the pros, cons, and what to watch out for.
4. From 1 July 2026, go to Energy Made Easy (energymadeeasy.gov.au) or WATTever (wattever.com.au) and compare SSO plans at your address.
5. Choose the best plan for your household. Don't just look at the free hours — compare the full plan including peak rates, daily supply charge, and any discounts.
6. Contact your chosen retailer to switch (or stay with your current one if their SSO plan is competitive).
7. Start shifting your electricity usage to the free window. Use timers on appliances, schedule EV charging, and run pool pumps during the day.
8. Monitor your bills for the first few months to make sure you're actually saving. If not, compare plans again — the market is competitive. You can always go back to a non-SSO plan if that is the best option for you.

Online Resources

Start Here – The 3 most important websites

If you only visit a few websites, make it these three. They'll give you a solid understanding of the scheme and how to sign up.

Website	URL	Why Start Here
Energy.gov.au – Solar Sharer overview	https://www.energy.gov.au/news/solar-sharer-offer-cut-electricity-bills	The government's own plain-English summary. Start here to understand the basics: what it is, who it's for, and when it starts.
SolarQuotes – Solar Sharer Explained	https://www.solarquotes.com.au/blog/solar-sharer-ss0-explained-mb3306/	A high quality explanation of the SSO. Written by a trusted consumer advocate, it covers the good AND the potential pitfalls in easy-to-read language.
Energy Made Easy – Compare Plans	https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/	The free government tool for comparing electricity plans. From 1 July 2026, use this to find and compare SSO plans available at your address.

Official Government websites

These are the most authoritative sources — straight from the government departments that created the scheme.

Website	URL	What You'll Find (in plain English)
Energy.gov.au – Solar Sharer Offer	https://www.energy.gov.au/news/solar-sharer-offer-cut-electricity-bills	The main government page explaining the SSO. Covers how it works, who's eligible, when it starts, and includes a link to the Solar Consumer Guide.
DCCEEW – Solar Sharer Announcement	https://www.dcceew.gov.au/about/news/solar-sharer-offer-help-cut-electricity-bills	The federal department's news release. Good overview of why the scheme was created and the key design principles behind it.
DCCEEW – Default Market Offer Explained	https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/programs/default-market-offer	Explains the price cap system that the SSO sits within. Useful if you want to understand how the government controls electricity prices.
DCCEEW – Community Solar Banks	https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/renewable/community-solar-banks	The broader \$100m community solar program. Worth reading if you're interested in community energy projects or live in an apartment.
NSW Energy – Solar for Your Home	https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/households/upgrades/solar	NSW Government page covering solar panels, estimated savings, case studies, and links to rebates. Helpful background if you're also thinking about getting solar.

Your Guide to Free Daytime Electricity

Solar Sharer Offer (SSO) – Websites & Resources for NSW Households

Comparing plans & switching retailers

Once the SSO launches on 1 July 2026, you'll want to compare plans to find the best deal. These free tools help you do that without needing to visit every retailer's website.

Website	URL	What You'll Find
Energy Made Easy (Government)	https://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/	The government's free, independent plan comparison tool. Enter your postcode and it shows every plan available in your area. From 1 July 2026, it will list SSO-compliant plans. No ads, no commissions — just facts.
Service NSW – Compare Energy Plans	https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/referral/compare-energy-plans-with-energy-made-easy	The NSW Government portal that links you to Energy Made Easy with NSW-specific guidance on how to compare and switch.
Energy.gov.au – Switch to Save	https://www.energy.gov.au/households/switch-to-save	Government guide explaining how to switch energy plans step by step. Includes tips on what to look for and how to avoid hidden costs.
WATtever	https://wattever.com.au/	A free, independent website set up to provide easy comparison between published energy plans. Includes the value of solar feed-in tariffs, and EV, battery and “free” plans.

Smart Meters – You'll need one (and they're free)

A smart meter is the one thing you must have to access the Solar Sharer Offer. It's a digital meter that replaces the old spinning-disc meter on the side of your house. It records your electricity usage every 30 minutes, which is what allows your retailer to give you free power at specific times. The government has mandated that all Australian homes will get a smart meter by 2030, and the upgrade is free. You can also request an early installation.

Website	URL	What You'll Find
NSW Government – Smart Meter Rollout	https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/households/bills/meters/smart-meter-rollout	The official NSW page on the smart meter rollout. Explains what happens during installation, what to expect, and includes helpful videos.
AER – Your Rights with Smart Meters	https://www.aer.gov.au/consumers/smart-meter-rollout/consumer-rights-and-smart-meters	Your consumer rights: the upgrade is free, your retailer can't force you onto a worse tariff for 2 years after installation, and how to complain if something goes wrong.
Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON)	https://www.ewon.com.au/page/customer-resources/managing-your-account/digital-meters	Independent consumer advice on smart meters: benefits, time-of-use pricing explained, and how to raise a complaint if you have issues with your retailer.
Canstar – Smart Meter Guide	https://www.canstar.com.au/energy/everything-to-know-about-the-smart-meter-rollout/	Easy-to-read guide: how to check if you already have a smart meter, what the installation involves, privacy protections, and how time-of-use pricing works.

Your Guide to Free Daytime Electricity

Solar Sharer Offer (SSO) – Websites & Resources for NSW Households

Live in an apartment or rent? These websites are for you

You don't need to own a house to benefit from the SSO — but there are some extra steps. If you live in an apartment, there are also grants available to help your building install shared solar panels.

Website	URL	What You'll Find
NSW Government – SoAR Grant	https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/solar-for-apartment-residents-soar-grant-program	Official grant page. Your apartment building can get up to \$150,000 (covering 50% of costs) to install shared solar panels. Applications close 4 December 2026.
NSW Energy – Solar for Apartments	https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/households/grants-rebates/solar-for-apartment-residents	NSW Government overview with FAQs and links to apply. Good starting point for strata committees.
Energy.gov.au – Rooftop Solar for NSW Apartments	https://www.energy.gov.au/news/rooftop-solar-initiative-nsw-apartments	Federal government summary: 33 apartment buildings already approved, estimated savings of \$600/year per apartment.
Solar Choice – SoAR Grant Guide	https://www.solarchoice.net.au/learn/solar-rebates/nsw/solar-apartment-residents-strata-grants/	Detailed independent guide: explains the two grant tiers (Standard 50% and Boost 80% for disadvantaged communities), co-contribution requirements, and common application mistakes to avoid.
Allume Energy – Apartment Solar Solutions	https://info.allumeenergy.com/au/nsw-solar-for-apartments	A technology provider that specialises in sharing solar power between apartments in the same building. Includes an eligibility checker and case studies of real installations.

Independent guides & reviews

These websites are written by independent journalists, consumer advocates, and energy companies. They often explain things more clearly than government documents, and they'll tell you about the potential downsides too.

Website	URL	What You'll Find
SolarQuotes – Solar Sharer Explained	https://www.solarquotes.com.au/blog/solar-sharer-ss0-explained-mb3306/	★ RECOMMENDED — A high quality and comprehensive explanation. Written by trusted consumer advocate Michael Bloch. Covers how it works, who benefits most, and what to watch out for (e.g., retailers making up costs elsewhere).
The Green Hub – How the Scheme Works	https://thegreenhubonline.com/free-electricity-solar-sharer-scheme-australia/	A step-by-step guide for beginners. Explains how to claim the offer, the smart meter requirement, and practical tips for shifting your usage to the free window.
GloBird Energy – Sydney-Specific Guide	https://www.globirdenergy.com.au/solar-share-sydney-plans-providers-and-step-by-step-enrolment/	Useful for Sydney residents specifically. Covers local providers, how to enrol, and compares the SSO to existing 'free hours' deals that some retailers already offer.
MPV Solar – NSW SSO Explained	https://www.mpsolar.com.au/nsw-solar-sharer-offer/	Written for NSW homeowners. Explains the free-power window (11am–2pm draft), the 24 kWh daily cap, and what it means if you already have solar panels or a home battery.
Canstar – Solar Sharer Overview	https://www.canstar.com.au/energy/solar-sharing-is-caring-government-to-introduce-new-solar-sharer-offer-with-free-solar-electricity/	Consumer-friendly overview from a well-known comparison site. Good summary of eligibility and how to reduce your bills by shifting usage.

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Solar Sharer Offer (SSO) – Websites & Resources for NSW Households

Amber Electric – Important for Battery Owners	https://www.amber.com.au/blog/free-power-at-lunchtime-sounds-great-but-is-it-better-than-what-youve-already-got	⚠️ READ THIS IF YOU HAVE A HOME BATTERY — Explains why the SSO might actually be worse for battery owners compared to wholesale-pass-through plans (like Amber's). Provides analysis of the trade-offs. NOTE: Amber is an energy retailer, and so the analysis should be considered alongside other information when making a decision about whether to switch to an Amber plan when you have a home battery.
ABC News – Original SSO Announcement	https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-11-03/energy-retailers-offer-free-power-three-hours-dmo/105965472	The original news coverage when the scheme was announced. Includes retailer reactions and quotes from the Energy Minister.

Consumer advocacy & industry analysis

These organisations advocate for consumers and provide independent analysis. Their submissions to the government help ensure the scheme works fairly for households.

Website	URL	What You'll Find
Clean Energy Council – SSO Welcome	https://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/news-resources/sun-powered-savings-new-scheme-cuts-bills-and-eases-pressure-on-the-grid	The peak body for the clean energy industry. Their analysis estimates the SSO could save Australian households \$22 billion over time.
Clean Energy Council – SSO Submission	https://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/news-resources/submission-to-the-dcceew-solar-sharer-offer-consultation-paper-2025-26	Their formal submission to the government on how the SSO should be designed. Useful for understanding industry perspectives.
Energy Consumers Australia – SSO Submission (PDF)	https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/sites/default/files/2025-12/website-doc-submission-solar-sharer-submission.pdf	The main consumer advocacy body's submission. Focuses on protections for renters, low-income households, and ensuring the free hours deliver genuine savings.
pv magazine Australia – SSO Outcomes	https://www.pv-magazine-australia.com/press-releases/solar-sharer-offer-consultation-outcome-paper-released/	Industry news coverage of the six design principles adopted by the government after public consultation.

Your local electricity network

Your electricity network (the company that owns the poles and wires) can help with smart meter queries and solar connections.

Website	URL	What You'll Find
Ausgrid – Solar for Apartments	https://www.ausgrid.com.au/Connections/Solar-and-batteries/Connecting-solar-or-small-generation/Solar-for-apartment-residents	If you're in the Ausgrid area (most of Sydney, the Hunter, and Central Coast), this page explains how to connect shared solar systems in apartment buildings.

Your Guide to Free Daytime Electricity

Solar Sharer Offer (SSO) – Websites & Resources for NSW Households

Regulatory detail – For those who want to dig deeper

These are more technical documents — the actual regulatory decisions, consultation papers, and submissions that shaped the scheme. You don't need to read these to use the SSO, but they're useful if you want to understand the fine print.

Website	URL	What You'll Find
AER – DMO 2026–27 Draft Decision	https://www.aer.gov.au/industry/registers/resources/reviews/default-market-offer-2026-27/draft-determination	The energy regulator's draft pricing decision for 2026–27, including how the SSO tariff works and what price caps will apply. Technical but comprehensive.
AER – Draft DMO News Release	https://www.aer.gov.au/news/articles/news-releases/aer-releases-draft-default-market-offer-2026-27	A shorter summary of the draft decision. Notes that NSW household prices are expected to fall 2.4%–8.2% in 2026–27.
AER – SSO Fact Sheet for Retailers (PDF)	https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/2026-03/Solar%20Sharer%20Offer%20-%20Fact%20Sheet%20for%20Retailers%20March%202026.pdf	Technical detail on how retailers must structure their SSO plans — the 24 kWh cap, tariff structure, and network tariff interactions.
AER – DMO Consultation Invitation	https://www.aer.gov.au/news/articles/communications/aer-invites-consultation-2026-27-default-market-offer-determination	Background on the DMO reform process and public consultation that led to the SSO being included.
DCCEEW – Have Your Say (Consultation Hub)	https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/solar-sharer-offer	The official consultation page where the public and industry provided feedback on the SSO design. Includes 76 submissions you can read.
SSO Consultation Outcomes Paper (PDF)	https://storage.googleapis.com/files-au-climate/climate-au/p/prj38bdad552e555e1c7f990/page/Solar_Sharer_Offer_consultation_outcomes_paper_PDF_939KB_.pdf	Summary of the public feedback and the six key design principles the government adopted as a result.
SSO Original Consultation Paper (PDF)	https://storage.googleapis.com/files-au-climate/climate-au/p/prj38bdad552e555e1c7f990/page/Solar_Sharer_Offer_Consultation_Paper_2025_26_PDF_880KB_.pdf	The original discussion paper with detailed analysis of wholesale pricing patterns and tariff design options. Most useful for understanding the 'why' behind the scheme.

Note: The AER's final DMO 8 determination (due late May 2026) will confirm the exact free-power window times and tariff caps for NSW. Check the AER website (aer.gov.au) regularly for updates. The information in this document is current as at the date shown above and is general in nature — it is not financial or energy advice.