

Planning considerations for existing residential rooftop solar energy facilities

Planning Practice Note 88

OCTOBER 2018

This practice note provides information and guidance about planning permit applications for development that may overshadow an existing residential rooftop solar energy facility and explains how an application will be assessed.

What is a residential rooftop solar energy facility?

A residential rooftop solar energy facility is a structure associated with a dwelling for the purposes of utilising solar energy to reduce the energy requirements of the dwelling.

They may be used to generate electricity for general usage or be part of a specific appliance such as a solar hot water heating system.

It does not include a skylight, pool cover or greenhouse.

Planning for existing residential rooftop solar energy facilities

Planning seeks to improve the efficiency of energy use through greater use of renewable energy technologies and other energy efficiency upgrades. Rooftop residential solar energy facilities make an important contribution to improving efficiency through greater use of renewable energy. They also play a role in Victoria meeting State renewable energy targets.

In October 2018, Amendment VC149 amended the *Victoria Planning Provisions* and all planning schemes to introduce planning requirements that require a new development to consider its impact on any existing solar energy facility mounted on the roof of an adjoining dwelling.

The new planning requirements apply to all new buildings and works that require a planning permit in a residential zone* or Commercial 1 Zone if an adjoining lot in a residential zone contains an existing rooftop solar energy facility on a dwelling.

*Note: In this practice note 'residential zone' means the General Residential Zone, Mixed Use Zone, Neighbourhood Residential Zone, Residential Growth Zone and Township Zone. It does not include the Low Density Residential Zone.

The solar energy facility must exist at the date of the planning application being made on an adjoining lot.



Application considerations

Making an application

A planning permit application should include the following additional information:

- The location of any existing rooftop solar energy facility on a dwelling on an adjoining lot and the extent of any existing overshadowing.
- The extent of overshadowing created by the new building and works on any existing rooftop solar energy facility.
- An outline of how overshadowing of any existing rooftop solar energy facility is proposed to be mitigated.

Assessing an application

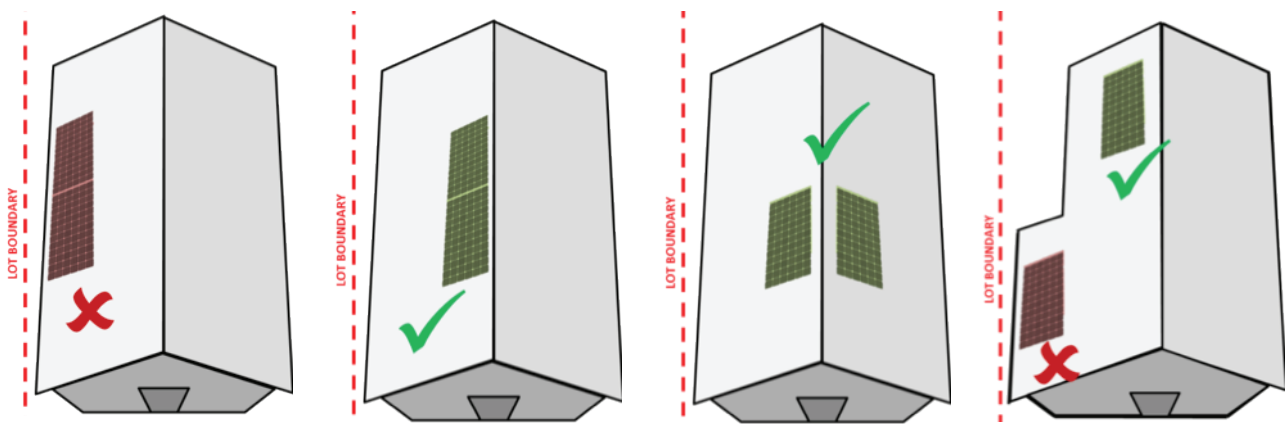
When assessing the overshadowing of an existing rooftop solar energy facility, the responsible authority must consider:

- The extent to which an existing rooftop solar energy facility on an adjoining lot is overshadowed by existing buildings or other permanent structures.
- Whether the existing rooftop solar energy facility on an adjoining lot is appropriately located.
- The effect of overshadowing on an existing rooftop solar energy facility on an adjoining lot.

- Relevant factors to consider in determining whether the impact is unreasonable or not include:
 - The extent of existing overshadowing of the rooftop solar energy facility from existing buildings or permanent structures.
 - Whether the new development meets the side and rear setback and north-facing windows standards for residential development under clauses 54 and 55.
 - Whether the protection of the existing rooftop solar energy facility will unreasonably constrain or compromise the proposed new development.
 - The type of existing rooftop solar energy facility. A multiple string system is less affected by shading than a single string which is more vulnerable to shading, or any other system features such as micro inverters or bypass diodes which can operate with partial shading.
- Whether the siting of the existing rooftop solar energy facility takes into account the potential future development of adjoining lots promoted or permitted under the planning scheme.
- The extent to which the existing rooftop solar energy facility has been located to protect it from overshadowing through placement higher on the roof and further from existing lot boundaries.

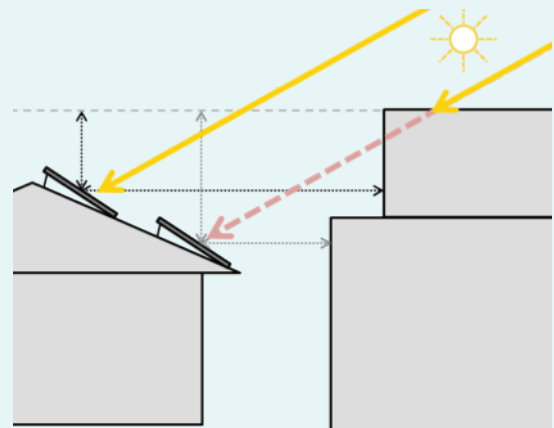
What is considered to be reasonable action to protect an existing solar energy facility?

Higher on the roof peak



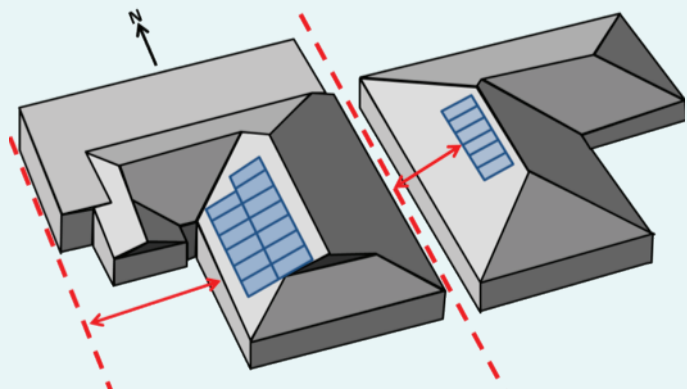


Locating panels higher on the roof line will:
(a) increase the separation between the panels and any neighbouring development and
(b) reduce the height that any neighbouring development extends above the panels, minimising the likelihood of overshadowing.



Set as far back from the lot boundary as possible

Setting the panels as far back from the lot boundary as possible (either by moving them to roof panes with a greater setback or placing them further back on the roof) will increase the distance between your panels and any potential source of neighbouring overshadowing, giving a greater degree of protection.



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