Alert: Solar panel sales

workers.consumeraction.org.au/alert-solar-panel-sales/

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Consumer Action advises community legal centres and financial counsellors to be alert to the potential for unscrupulous traders to take advantage of the Andrews Government's recently announced solar power initiative.

Unsolicited sales of solar panels are particularly problematic, as outlined in Consumer Action's 2017 report Knock it off! Door-to-door sales and consumer harm in Victoria.

Under the government initiative, eligible people* are currently able to claim a rebate of up to $2,255 for installation of a 4kW solar system, representing 50% of the cost of such a system.

From 1 July 2019 eligible people* will also be able to access a no interest loan through the government agency Solar Victoria to cover the other 50% of the cost. The loans will be repayable over four years.

Solar retailers may take advantage of confusion to induce people to purchase solar panels using commercial 'interest free' finance products, which are not provided by licensed credit providers and are therefore not subject to consumer credit protections. This is particularly the case before 1 July 2019 when the government loans become available.

Consumer Action has seen multiple cases involving these products, where no affordability assessment has been made and people have been unwittingly signed up to unaffordable payment plans.

Consumer Action advises against the purchase of solar panels through door knockers or telemarketers, and advises that people should considerpurchasing solar panels through approved solar retailers who are signatory to the Clean Energy Council Solar Retailer Code

of Conduct.

*** –** *Eligible people are home owners living in their own home valued at less than $3 million, with a combined household income of $180,000 or less***.**