PV Industry Alert

February 2015 – Issue 17

Reactive Power Control (RPC) requirements delayed again

Ergon Energy and Energex have previously communicated that a Reactive Power Control (RPC) setting would become mandatory on certain inverter capacities from 1 March this year. We now understand that largely due to the delayed introduction of the new AS4777, some sections of the PV industry are unable to comply with this requirement, so it has now been **delayed until 30 September 2015**.

We regret any inconvenience caused to those who worked hard to prepare for the 1 March requirement. We remain committed to promoting RPC given the benefits it provides to our customers, the industry and our network. We continue to strongly recommend RPC on exporting inverters rated above 2kVA and installed on the main grid (not SWER or isolated networks where there is minimal benefit), as this will:

- allow many inverters to operate for longer before tripping off, thereby allowing more kWh of generation per day from those inverters than without RPC, and
- reduce the rate of PV-driven voltage rise on the network, thereby allowing all PV systems to operate more effectively than they otherwise may have, and ultimately allowing Ergon Energy to approve more IES applications.

RPC and replacement inverters

When a main grid premises inverter greater than 2kVA that is without reactive power control (RPC) capability requires replacement under warranty, we strongly recommend replacement with an inverter with RPC capability, and a 0.9 lagging or lower setting. However, this is not yet mandatory.

Where the original inverter is out of warranty, from 30 September 2015 it will be mandatory for all new inverters greater than 2kVA connected to the main grid to have RPC set at 0.9 lagging or lower.

When installing a replacement inverter of the same AC power rating, which is still AS4777 certified but a different make or model, a new application form must be lodged before the installation occurs, so that we can update our records. No new approval or agreement will be issued, so it is not necessary to wait for Ergon Energy's approval before installing the replacement inverter. Please continue to advise Ergon when changing RPC settings.

When a customer has reported their inverter tripping off, installers are encouraged to investigate activating Reactive Power Control as means of rectifying the issue, prior to raising a request for a Quality of Supply investigation. This provides another low-cost and easy-to-implement solution that installers can provide to their customers. Where an installer enables Reactive Power Control or changes the RPC setting, this new setting must be advised in writing to Ergon Energy. The best way to do this is by emailing us at energysystems@ergon.com.au with the relevant customer details, including their name, address, NMI and the new RPC setting.

CEC and APVI membership

Ergon Energy recently renewed its membership of the Clean Energy Council (CEC), allowing us to contribute both to the CEC's work on initiatives such as the *Future Proofing in the Australian Distribution Industry* project and to expand our communications channels to the PV industry. The CEC has expressed its support for Ergon Energy's initiatives to enhance PV industry practices.

We are also a corporate member of the Australian PV Institute, which has a strong research, analysis and information focus.

Newly installed inverters to be left switched off

Effective **Monday 30 March 2015**, and in line with Energex's policy, Ergon Energy requires all IESs to be switched off at the AC isolator/s once the installation is complete. Reminders will be sent to installers who do not do this.

From that date, once the Ergon Energy compliance inspection is complete and the meter is installed, the AC isolator/s will be left switched on, so there will be no need for installers to return to the premises. We are only able to do this based on the Form A confirmation that the 'IES has been tested and deemed electrically safe to be re-energised by Ergon Energy for compliance testing'. If an electrical hazard arises from the IES installation after the AC isolator is switched on, the installer remains liable.

Separately, **DC isolators must be left switched on** for the compliance check. If the DC isolators are switched off, we will not switch them on, and cannot do the compliance check or meter installation. A Form B will be issued to the customer, a wasted truck visit fee charged, and the installer will need to revisit the site to switch on the DC isolators and then lodge another Form A.

Reminder - upgraded inverters need new Form A

If you have performed inverter upgrades in total inverter capacity at any time in the past without lodging a Form A, it is critical that you lodge a Form A for each installation as soon as possible. While a new meter is not required, the Form A will trigger the necessary new compliance inspection.

Update on assessment thresholds

We have indicated to the PV industry that we intend to change our technical assessment thresholds. It is a complex issue and we recognise the impact that any change will have on the PV industry and prospective PV owners. We are confident our developing assessment framework will deliver an efficient process for applicants while helping to protect network standards. We aim to have the new framework in place by 1 July 2015 and will communicate details to you as soon as we are able.

Please remember to apply for array upgrades

We appreciate the high compliance with our requirement for an application form to be lodged for any array upgrade on an existing inverter before the array upgrade takes place. Once you lodge your application, you're free to undertake the array upgrade. If you have undertaken an array upgrade without lodging an application, please lodge one now for the extra array capacity so we can update our records and avoid any future confusion.