



Media Release

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Solpod: Innovation to revolutionise commercial solar in Australia

“Solpod” is a world-first mobile method of deploying and installing large-scale rooftop commercial solar energy installations, designed and made in Australia and officially launched today.

Solpod comprises prefabricated commercial-grade solar panels on raised aluminium pods that can be installed within hours on industrial sized rooftops. The pods are mobile and can easily be re-deployed if the business moves, property is sold, or businesses have an appetite to effectively lease rather than buy the solar systems.

Solpod has been brought to the market by ASX-listed energy retailer and solutions provider, ERM Power, and the product’s developer, Solpod Pty Ltd, ensuring the energy pods are manufactured in Melbourne and the intellectual property remains in Australia.

Property industry interest in this significant commercial solar evolution can be demonstrated by blue-chip property giants such as the GPT Group and NSW Government agency, Property NSW, signing up to an Australian Renewable Energy Agency co-funded pilot program. This involves 25 Solpod installations across Victoria and NSW in a combined project valued at \$5 million.

The initial 2.5MW Solpod demonstration program is supported by a \$975,000 grant from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), which sees this application able to be rolled out across Australia and internationally.

GPT has just turned on its first three of 10 installations, including at Parkmore, Highpoint and Norton Plaza Shopping Centres. Property NSW, which manages the NSW Government’s property portfolio, will also roll-out 10 Solpod installations in various locations in both metropolitan and regional NSW in 2019.

ERM Power expects 500 kW installations for logistics and industrial sheds to become the most popular commercial set-up in the future. ERM also predicts that Solpod could double the scale of 100kW-5MW commercial solar installations in Australia from 113MW in 2018 to closer to 250MW by 2021.

“Solpod’s innovation in commercial solar installation is ground breaking. Commercial buildings, Logistics or large scale industrial operators can purchase the Solpod pods or lease them and enjoy the benefits of significantly lower solar installation costs, slash their power bills and have the ability to take the Solpod installation with them anytime in the future,” said ERM Power CEO Jon Stretch.

“Each 5kW pod is simply lifted and lowered onto the roof by crane, with each pod taking on average 10 minutes to install. The pods are fixed by industrial strength adhesive to the surface of the roof structure and do not penetrate the roof sheeting so there is no risk of leaks and the pods can be easily removed without damaging the roof.”

ERM Power believes the true innovation of Solpod is that it aligns commercial solar with buying electricity. With a low cost of relocation, Solpod can create a secondary market for its commercial solar systems. This enables lease and power purchase agreement options to be offered to minimise the investment customers have to make to obtain the benefits of solar power.

“Businesses now have more commercial choices to procure gigawatt hours of clean energy, and at the same time reduce their energy costs,” said Mr Stretch.

Solpod CEO James Larratt said: “Solpod is industrialising the installation of rooftop solar. Rather than individually assembling every panel, bolt, nut and cable on a customer’s roof over many weeks, Solpod assembles pods in a quality-controlled factory and minimises our time on site. Solpod enables businesses to benefit now from rooftop solar without having to make long term commitments to the property or be stuck with outdated equipment for decades.”

ARENA CEO Darren Miller said Solpod’s innovative redeployable solar system opens up new markets for rooftop solar installation.

“Solpod’s new way of installing solar will pave the way for businesses who were previously locked out of rooftop solar to take up renewable energy solutions and options under shorter term power purchase agreements.

“This Australian start up will help to accelerate solar PV innovation and allows for renewable energy alternatives in niche markets, providing a cost-competitive alternative to standard methods of fixed mounting for delivering rooftop grid connected solar PV,” Mr Miller said.

“The inability to relocate traditional solar arrays once they are installed has been a major barrier to solar investment in some of our property assets,” said Steve Ford, Head of Sustainability and Energy at GPT. “The low-cost and ability for Solpod installations to be shifted across our property assets, if there is a redevelopment or roof works, has been a decisive factor in GPT choosing to be a part of this pilot program.”

Solpod is manufactured in Melbourne, creating 10 manufacturing jobs. Each pod weighs less than 14kg per square meter – less impact than a single person walking along the roof.

The pods are positioned east and west to spread the solar generation out across the day. This maximises on-site energy use from solar. In addition, the panels are tilted 10 degrees to enable self-cleaning. The 21 pods it takes to create a 100 kW installation can be stacked on the back of a single truck for transport to the site, ensuring easy and fast distribution.

Solpod is available as part of ERM Power’s portfolio of integrated and end-to-end energy solutions to help businesses take control of their energy and reduce consumption, cost and improve sustainability. ERM Power is proud to support product innovation in the Australian energy market that will help businesses harness the benefits of energy efficiency solutions such as solar PV.

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About ERM Power

ERM Power is an Australian energy company operating electricity sales, generation and energy solutions businesses. The Company has grown to become the second largest electricity provider to commercial businesses and industrials in Australia by load¹. A growing range of energy solutions products and services are being delivered, including lighting and energy efficiency software and data analytics, to the Company's existing and new customer base. The Company operates 662 megawatts of low emission, gas-fired power stations in Western Australia and Queensland.

¹ Based on ERM Power analysis of latest published information.