

Help Shape Australia's Circular Solar Economy: PhD Scholarship Available

UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures

Join a nationally significant research program that will help shape Australia's approach to solar panel reuse, recycling and circular economy. A fully funded PhD scholarship is available at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) to investigate the barriers and opportunities for sustainable end-of-life management of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.

The successful candidate will be based at the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF), University of Technology Sydney (UTS), in Sydney and will have the opportunity to collaborate with a team of academic and industry experts through the [ARC Hub for Solar Panel Recycling and Sustainability](#). This project represents an excellent opportunity to develop industry networks and conduct research to help develop a circular economy for solar PV.

We are seeking applications from Australian or New Zealand citizens (or holders of Australian permanent resident visas) to undertake full-time PhD study.

The successful applicant will receive:

- A UTS scholarship valued at approximately **\$40,500 per year (tax free)**
- An additional **top-up scholarship of \$18,600 per year (tax free)**
- Access to industry partners and leading researchers through the ARC Research Hub for Solar Panel Recycling and Sustainability.

Why undertake this PhD?

This project offers the opportunity to:

- Influence Australia's transition to a circular economy for solar PV
- Collaborate with leading researchers and industry partners through the ARC Hub
- Contribute to emerging national policy and product stewardship initiatives
- Develop expertise in circular economy, sustainability transitions and resource recovery
- Build a strong professional network across the renewable energy, recycling, product stewardship and policy sectors

About You

We welcome applications from candidates with backgrounds in:

- Sustainability

- Environmental science
- Engineering
- Circular economy
- Public policy
- Economics
- Resource recovery
- Related disciplines

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Excellent academic performance
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- An interest in sustainability and applied research
- The ability to work independently and as part of a collaborative research team

Background

Australia's rapid deployment of solar energy is creating a new sustainability challenge in managing growing volumes of end-of-life solar panels. While solar PV is critical to decarbonisation, millions of tonnes of panel waste are expected over coming decades. Without effective collection, reuse and recycling systems, valuable materials may be lost and environmental risks may increase.

At the same time, solar panel reuse and recycling presents a major economic opportunity. Recent analysis estimates that solar PV waste could exceed one million tonnes by 2035, with recoverable materials worth more than \$1 billion.¹ The development of circular economy solutions can help recover critical materials, reduce emissions and support Australia's renewable energy transition.

PhD project

The research will be undertaken at a time of major circular economy policy and regulatory reform in Australia, including the development of a national stewardship scheme for solar PV. The successful candidate will have opportunities to engage with policymakers, industry leaders, product stewardship organisations and sustainability practitioners.

The successful candidate will work with the supervisory team to refine a research project within this broad area. Potential research questions include:

- What technical, economic and regulatory barriers limit reuse and high-value recycling?
- What policies, regulations or incentives can best support circular economy outcomes for solar PV?
- How can end markets for recovered materials be strengthened?
- What lessons can be learned from leading international approaches?

¹ For example: Deng et al., Scoping Study: Solar Panel End-of-life Management in Australia", ACAP, March 2024



Applicants should follow the application process outlined [here](#).

Step 1: Expression of Interest

Submit:

- Completed HDR Expression of Interest form
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Summary of research experience, publications and areas of interest

Email Expression of Interests to **Nick.Florin@uts.edu.au**

Step 2: UTS HDR Application (by 14 August 2026)

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to develop a full proposal for submission to the UTS HDR application round.