

## CASE STUDY: RENEWABLE ENERGY

## SMA – A WORLD LEADER IN SOLAR TECHNOLOGY CHOSE SYDNEY

**German company SMA is the world's largest manufacturer of inverters, a vital component of solar power systems. The company chose Sydney as a springboard into the Asia Pacific.**

## LEADING TECHNOLOGY

Inverters are crucial for solar power systems. The devices convert the electricity produced by solar panels from direct current (DC) to the alternating current (AC) required by most electrical devices.

Inverters allow homes and businesses to tap into the power produced by their solar panels and feed any excess electricity back into the grid.

In the 30 years since SMA designed its first inverters in Germany, its products have evolved to become cheaper, lighter, and more energy efficient. SMA inverters now also provide an energy management system that protects the electricity grid by not feeding in more power than it can deal with.

SMA was ranked as the world's largest manufacturer of inverters by market research firm IHS in 2014. Across the world, SMA inverters have helped produce a total of 32 Gigawatts of power, which is more than a quarter of the estimated 120 Gigawatts output of the world's solar panels.

## CHOOSING NSW

With a staff of more than 5000, SMA has expanded to 21 countries. Australia is among a handful of markets in which it set up its first subsidiaries.

Managing Director of SMA Australia, Mark Twidell, said the company was attracted by the size of the Australian domestic market.

"The residential solar market in Australia has been one of the biggest in the world, and with the exception of Japan it was the biggest in Asia," Mr Twidell said.

"In the last six or seven years, Australia also had one of the fastest-growing markets."

SMA Australia has conducted research and development to improve the control systems of hybrid solar/diesel power units, used in remote communities in Australia.



SMA inverters installed in the solar power system on Cockatoo Island, Sydney

The technology was then used for SMA systems on Pacific Island nations.

"We have a strong relationship with the University of NSW School of Photovoltaics, which has provided a number of graduates for our highly-trained and motivated workforce, and the pipeline of graduates from there and the University of Sydney and Macquarie University is probably better than other cities," Mr Twidell said.

***"NSW is the centre of the Australian renewable energy industry, with more major players located in NSW than any other Australian state."***

***Mark Twidell, Managing Director, SMA Australia.***

The NSW Government has developed a Renewable Energy Action Plan to guide energy development in NSW, with detailed actions to grow renewable energy.

The plan positions NSW to increase energy from renewable sources at least-cost to energy

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consumers and with maximum benefits to the state's economy.



Sydney Olympic Park, which uses SMA inverters on its solar panels

## CHOOSING SYDNEY

Sydney is a multicultural city, with more than a third of its residents born overseas. This made it easier for SMA Australia to recruit staff able to service its Asia Pacific clients.

Its staff of 40 speak 20 languages between them, and service clients from Taiwan and Vietnam to Thailand and India.

The SMA Australia headquarters are located in North Ryde, part of a high-tech cluster that makes north west Sydney the fourth-largest CBD in Australia after central Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane.

"We have a number of clients in the same area, so we are able to visit them much more easily," Mr Twidell said.

SMA has used Australia as a base to expand its presence in Asia. The company is heavily focused on customer service and support, and sends its engineers to provide initial support across the Asia Pacific.

The Sydney team also provides higher-level support to SMA subsidiaries in Japan, Korea, Thailand, and India.

## KEY REASONS TO INVEST IN NSW

- Concentration (45%) of Australia's renewable energy businesses
- Support of the Renewable Energy Target in the NSW State Plan NSW 2021
- Dedicated Renewable Energy Advocate
- Payroll tax deductions available for new jobs under the NSW Jobs Action Plan.

## ASSISTED BY NSW TRADE & INVESTMENT

NSW Trade & Investment assisted SMA Australia with introductions to government departments and the NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy.

"We always found the department very proactive, and it was especially useful in matchmaking us with other industry players who were potential clients," Mr Twidell said.

[www.sma-australia.com.au](http://www.sma-australia.com.au)

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