



Skylight  
Industry

Association

# INDUSTRY ALERT

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## SIA draws a distinction between skylights and LED solar lighting

The Skylight Industry Association (SIA) has launched a campaign to educate the industry and the public regarding the use of misleading terminology that is confusing industry stakeholders and consumers.

The products in question are solar powered LED lighting devices. In some instances, these products are marketed as *solar skylights* or similar. According to the SIA, defining these devices as "skylights" has caused unnecessary consumer confusion, to the degree the definition is a misnomer, i.e. a wrong name or inappropriate designation.

The Australian standard for skylights states the prime function of skylights is to provide natural light to interior parts of a building. Dictionary references to a skylight are clear that a skylight is a window built into a roof or ceiling to allow light in.

The SIA contends the promotion of solar lighting devices as skylights sets a false consumer expectation and impression of how the product works, how it looks and what it achieves.

The SIA has adopted and recommends the terminology hybrid solar lighting device (HSLD) to accurately categorise these products, which speaks to their use of both solar and LED lighting technologies.

### Skylights vs HSLDs

The National Construction Code 2015 Volume 2 states, "Roof light ... means a skylight, window or the like installed in a roof ... to permit natural light to enter the room below." The most distinctive feature of a skylight is its provision of natural light. In contrast, the light source of an HSLD is an LED.

The three product definitions within the Industry Code of Practice and the skylight standard, AS4285-2007, are skylights, tubular skylights and roof windows.

There is no provision for HSLDs within AS4285.

The standard that applies to the installation of solar panel products, AS5033, covers low voltage solar products that would include many HSLDs.

To position a HSLD as a "skylight" (when it does not allow access to natural light) infers it will be covered by the skylight standard, which is incorrect, and could result in the misapplication of that standard.

WERS for Skylights is the independent, thermal rating system that is called up in the National Construction Code. There are no protocols to test and rate HSLD products within this scheme.

From an engineering perspective, there are three main components to a HSLD – a solar panel, electric cabling and an LED luminaire. None of these components are found in skylight assembly.

A range of practical benefits synonymous with skylights are not addressed by HSLDs. These include ventilation and transparency options, plus the well-documented positive effects of natural light on psychological well being.

### From the Australian Window Association (AWA):

Tracey Gramlick, Executive Director & CEO of the AWA, supports the SIA in this position, "The SIA campaign to educate the industry and the public when discussing skylights in contrast to LED solar lighting devices is endorsed by the Australian Window Association and the Window Energy Rating Scheme. It's in the fenestration industry's best interest to ensure all products are marketed correctly."

### From the Skylight Industry Association (SIA):

Ian Murphy, SIA President, comments, "The SIA welcomes new innovations, and we see a place for these devices within the solar lighting market. However, it's the responsibility of distributors and manufacturers referring to HSLDs as "skylights" to promote their products accurately. In this instance, a select few have introduced confusion, thus leaving it up to the SIA to clear up the distinction between skylights and HSLD's."

"The market confusion has been building over time and the SIA has fielded numerous enquiries from members, individuals and trades seeking clarification over the distinction."

Ian continues, "A core principle on which the SIA was founded in 1989 was terminology clarity, as we sought to address the misinformation prevalent at the time. It's with this same purpose the SIA is now seeking to safeguard the credibility of our industry, to uphold the industry understanding of a true "skylight" as giving natural access to sunlight."

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