


“Landmark alliance:” Origin, Coles strike solar and battery deal to cut emissions, balance grid


Sophie Vorrath (<https://reneweconomy.com.au/author/sophie-vorrath/>) 3 August 2023 5




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Origin Energy has partnered with retail giant Coles to roll out rooftop solar and battery storage across the Australian supermarket chain's stores, in a move that will clean up the retailer's energy supply and also expand Origin's growing national virtual power plant.

The innovative partnership, announced on Thursday, will see the two companies co-invest in solar at up to 100 Coles supermarkets and liquor stores nationally – adding a total of around 20MW of rooftop PV capacity.

On the battery side of the equation, commercial energy storage systems are expected to be installed at one-third of the 100 stores – so roughly 30-odd systems – to capture and store excess solar generated on-site. More information on the battery supplier and capacity is being sought.

For Coles, the alliance aims to help reduce each participating store's electricity use from the grid by around 20% on average and help the company to achieve its 100% renewable electricity goals by June 2025.

For Origin, the batteries, alongside the solar and controllable loads from the retail outlets such as in-store heating, cooling and refrigeration systems, will be connected to Origin's virtual power plant to help ease pressure on the energy grid during peak periods of demand.



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As part of this, another key component of the deal will see Origin manage the controllable energy loads – including refrigeration – across a separate group of 150 stores nationally, for use in the frequency control and ancillary services market.

“This ...marks Origin’s largest customer aggregation agreement providing Frequency Control Ancillary Services (FCAS),” said James Magill, executive general manager of Origin Zero, an arm of the gentailer that works with large businesses on energy efficiency and decarbonisation.

“[This part of the deal will allow] us to orchestrate 10MW of flexible energy use across heating, cooling and refrigeration assets at select Coles stores, which helps to support stable and safe operations of the grid.”

According to the latest half-year figures, Origin’s solar and battery VPP was at 449MW, up from 258MW in June last year – with a similar jump in numbers expected to be reported at the upcoming end-of financial year results announcement this month.

“This is a landmark alliance between two of Australia’s leading retailers across supermarkets and energy which will see the companies co-invest ... to help deliver greater emissions reductions for Coles,” Magill added.

Coles announced in March 2021 its [plan to source 100% renewable electricity](https://reneweconomy.com.au/coles-snubs-coal-and-gas-and-commits-to-100-pct-renewables-by-2025/) (<https://reneweconomy.com.au/coles-snubs-coal-and-gas-and-commits-to-100-pct-renewables-by-2025/>) by the end of the 2025 financial year, and later that year signed power purchase agreements with Origin, Acciona Energía, and Engie for large-scale generation certificates from renewable energy generated at wind and solar farms across Australia.

The supermarket chain has also already installed solar on 87 stores across the country and made moves to improve in-store energy efficiency, to electrify its gas assets, and is trialling the use of an electric delivery truck.

“This alliance with Origin is an important step towards achieving our 100% renewable electricity target by June 2025,” said Coles head of energy Jane Mansfield.

“Not only will this investment in renewables help us reduce our emissions, it will also lower our operational costs and allow us to meet more of our energy needs from our own on-site solar generation.”

A spokesman from Origin told RenewEconomy that work on the newly announced solar and battery roll-out was “off and running,” with roughly 1MW of solar installed across 10 stores in Victoria – installation at all 100 stores is expected to be completed by 2026.

Origin says work is also underway on the FCAS part of the deal with Coles, at about 13 stores in Victoria, with some of those stores already registered on the VPP.

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