The Centre for Photovoltaic Engineering was established in January 2000. The Centre conformed to the standard school structure of the university and was an 'umbrella' Centre encompassing all photovoltaic and related activities such as the Key Centre and two Special Research Centres - the Photovoltaics Special Research Centre and the ARC Special Research Centre for Third Generation Photovoltaics. (files 961746 and 982464 & 1999 Key Centre Annual Report) The Centre was an independent budget unit and had the same standing as all the other school within the faculty of Engineering. The photovoltaic activities had formerly been part of the School of Electrical Engineering.

The Head of the Centre was Professor Stuart Wenham and the Director of Research was Professor Martin Green.

In December 2002 approval was given for a new ARC Centre of Excellence for Advanced Silicon Photovoltaics and Photonics to be established. With the awarding of this Centre for Excellence in 2003, the university made the commitment that the Centre for Photovoltaic Engineering would become the School of Photovoltaic Engineering, within which the ARC Centre of Excellence would be located. The Centre for Photovoltaic Engineering continued to exist until the establishment of the School of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering in January 2006.

Council at its meeting on 25 July 2005 resolved (CL05/82) 1. That Council approve the proposal to establish the School of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering, effective 1 January 2006.