Go Electric Action Plan

Empowering Strata

Join the clean energy future and make your apartment or townhouse all-electric.

Start your electrification journey by assessing which systems are currently using gas, such as heating, cooling, hot water, and cooking. Next, determine which systems are under your control to replace verses those that are managed centrally as part of the building's common infrastructure.

Refer to the tables below for how you can electrify your apartment or townhouse, and for information on working with your owners corporation to plan for the electrification of the entire building. Use this plan to prepare, so that when appliances need replacing, everyone is ready to make the switch.

Step 1 Record the age of your current appliance in the box under each appliance.
Tip: Check appliance nameplate or receipts.

Step 2 Choose your new electric appliance by placing a tick next to the appliance listed.

Step 3 Write down the year you plan to replace each appliance in the 'Replace (year)' column. Tip: Start with appliances that are 10+ years old and prioritise the order that you will replace the appliances.

Electrify your home

Current appliance	Electric appliance options	Rating	Cost	Replace (year)
Gas heating	☐ **Split system reverse-cycle air conditioner**	★★★	$-$$	
	☐ Electric heater/radiant panel heater	★	$	
Gas hot water	☐ **Electric heat pump**	★★★	$-$$$	
	☐ Electric instantaneous	★	$-$$	
Gas cooktop	☐ **Induction cooktop**	★★★	$-$$$	
	☐ Electric stove	★★	$-$$	
Gas oven	☐ **Electric oven**	★★★	$-$$	
Petrol or diesel car	☐ **Electric car**	★★★	$$$	
	☐ **Electric bike**	★★★	$-$$	

★ Good, ★★ Better, ★★★ Best - Rating based on quality, efficiency, and what's best for the environment.
$-$$$ - Upfront cost price range for the solution.

Electrify the building

Action	Guides
Work with your owners corporation to electrify the building's common heating, cooling, hot water, and cooking systems	• Read Merri-Bek and Yarra City Council's **Apartments Guide to Electrification** for a step-by-step process, as well as efficient electric appliance recommendations for strata buildings
Make sure your building is ready for electric vehicles by installing EV chargers	• Read the **NSW Government's Drive electric EV ready buildings residential strata guide** to understand the different EV charging options available to strata buildings
Install solar PV on the building to power it with clean, renewable energy and reduce electricity costs	• Turn over for Your Go Solar for Strata Guide • Refer to the Australian Government's **Solar Consumer Guide** • You may want to research and consider solar sharing technology to equitably share solar electricity amongst participating residents

Your Go Solar for Strata Guide

Rooftop solar can benefit all households

However, there are some extra hurdles for installing solar on properties owned under a strata-title, such as townhouses and apartments. Here are nine steps you will need to consider to gain the necessary approvals to installing rooftop solar on your strata building. Use this guide to start a conversation with your strata manager about the process and plan next steps.

While you go through the process, you can switch your home to renewable energy today by purchasing **GreenPower**. GreenPower is an Australian Government program and can be purchased through most electricity retailers for a small premium.

1 Understand if solar energy will help reduce the electricity costs of your building

To estimate the potential savings of installing a solar system, you need metering data. Metering data is usually available from the energy retailer for the building where the building has a digital common area meter.

Such data will allow you to understand the electricity load profile of your building, which is critical information to decide on what size system is appropriate. Reach out to the building's energy retailer to request this information.

2 Determine if Council approval is needed

In many cases, solar installations are 'Exempt Development', which means you don't need planning approval from Council. If your solar system doesn't meet the Exempt criteria, a 'Complying Development Certificate' may be sought from a Registered Certifier.

Read **City of Newcastle's Solar Information Guide** for more information about Exempt and Complying Development.

If your building is a Heritage Item or is in a Heritage Conservation Area, obtaining Council approval may be required. Speak to a **City of Newcastle Duty Officer** to check if this applies to your building.

3 Understand potential prerequisite projects

On the main switchboard, ceramic fuses (if currently in place) **must** be replaced with Residual Current Device switches to meet NSW service rules and AS3000 standard, as well as to reduce fire risks.

Newly cut meter panels may be needed to contain the bi-directional meters which are required for solar installations. If the building's roof is damaged, roof repairs or water proofing may be needed.

Ausgrid requires network protections for solar installs above 30 kW. Read **Ausgrid's information for solar installers**.

A structural engineering report may be needed depending on the height of the building (to assess windspeed safety) or for particular types of roofs, e.g. those with wooden cross-beams, to see if they will support the weight of a solar system.

4 Find a solar installer

Obtain at least three quotes from different Clean Energy Council approved solar retailers with in-house Clean Energy Council-accredited installers and make sure they have experience in commercial systems.

Visit **Clean Energy Council** to find approved solar retailers in your area. Make sure the installer understands the grid connection process with the Distribution Network Service Provider, which is Ausgrid in the Newcastle local government area. This is mandatory before solar installation.

5 Select appropriate solar system components

A solar system mainly consists of solar panels and solar inverters. Always choose Tier 1 (top 2%) solar manufacturers which:

- Have been producing solar panels for more than 5 years
- Are either publicly listed on a stock exchange or have a strong and stable balance sheet
- Have fully automated production
- Invest significantly in research and development

Always choose a solar inverter that includes a Wi-Fi/App monitoring function. Make sure the **solar panels** and **inverters** you are considering are approved by the Clean Energy Council.

6 Check for available Government rebates

Solar systems that are smaller than 100kW are eligible for an Australian Government rebate called Small-scale Technology Certificates (STCs). Such rebates vary depending on the STC price, which changes every day. Most of the solar installers provide you with a final price after the reduction of the STC rebate. It is a good idea to ask for the exact STC rebate amount you are getting and check yourself using this **calculator**.

7 Understand your electricity tariffs and how they might change after solar installation

To find out your current electricity tariffs and how these might change once your solar system is installed, contact your electricity retailer. Your solar installer should initiate a smart meter install (if required) so that you do not miss out on 'feed-in' rates after your solar install. It is strongly recommended you receive written confirmation from your electricity retailer on what, if any, changes will occur to your tariffs under the proposed new arrangements.

8 Determine how the project will be financed

If your strata committee chooses to finance the solar installation rather than using the existing capital works fund, you will need the paperwork from the finance company ready to be signed by certain committee members. It is best to have all this ready for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) or an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) when all are present.

9 Obtain a sustainability infrastructure resolution for the project

In NSW, installation of a solar system on a strata will require passing of a sustainability infrastructure resolution of all owners entitled to vote, which is at a threshold of 50% of those present and entitled to vote. (Note: this is NOT at a threshold of 75% which is needed for other special resolutions in your strata building). Your strata manager can assist you with preparing a sustainability infrastructure motion for voting at your next AGM or EGM.

We are here to help
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City of Newcastle