

Further information

The information provided in this document is not exhaustive and should be considered in conjunction with the relevant body corporate legislation and advice in your state. Below is a list of departments that govern body corporate or strata scheme legislation in different states.

NSW Department of Commerce

Office of Fair Trading
www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

SA Attorney Generals Department

www.justice.sa.gov.au

Queensland Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development

www.dftwid.qld.gov.au

WA Department of Land Information

www.dli.wa.gov.au

Tasmania Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment

www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au

ACT Planning and Land Authority

www.actpla.act.gov.au

Northern Territory Department of Justice, Land Titles Office

<http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/>

www.greenhouse.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of the
Environment and Heritage
Australian Greenhouse Office

Reducing energy use in body corporate or strata properties



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ENERGY EFFICIENT RENTAL PROPERTIES



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Being a member of a body corporate or strata scheme in a block of flats, units or apartments presents different issues for managing energy use than in detached housing.

Not only is there energy use from within your apartment or flat, but there is the energy used from the activity of all residents on common property. By-laws or 'rules' and restrictions over changes to common property can also impact on your ability to improve your own energy use.

If the property is an investment property these energy considerations will mostly impact on the tenant. In either case, failure to consider energy use can impose greater costs to all parties and cause unnecessary greenhouse gas pollution.

If you want to reduce energy use and costs you need to understand the workings of the body corporate.

While you may be aware of opportunities for reducing energy use, other members of your body corporate may not. Explaining to others in your flat or apartment block possible changes and their potential benefits - both environmental and financial - could generate the support necessary for changes to be made.

Common property

There are a number of examples of energy use on common property or elements which impact on energy use, including:

- > Lighting of common property (e.g. stairwells, car parks, pools)
- > Heating and cooling of common property (e.g. gyms, pools and meeting areas)
- > Common laundry facilities with hot water
- > Availability of clothes lines (or lack of)
- > Installation of external fittings including awnings and blinds
- > Installation of pergolas
- > Landscaping (planting of trees and shrubs to provide shade)
- > Pool heating and operation

Reducing the energy use within individual dwellings can require you to take into account the boundaries of common property. For example, installing blinds or awnings or replacing hot water systems will often require permission from the body corporate. Explaining the energy saving benefits will probably be helpful in this regard and could encourage others to take similar actions.

How to improve energy use in your strata or body corporate

If you are a member of a body corporate you are entitled to put forward motions or resolutions at general meetings. This would be necessary to make alterations to common property, change maintenance conditions or to make changes to the by laws or rules governing residents' behaviour.

Managers, secretaries and committee members are able to call extraordinary or special general meetings. In most states a meeting can also be called if a proportion of the members (usually 25%) request a meeting.

Depending on the size of the body corporate there could be an elected committee that meets regularly and makes decisions on the day-to-day operations of the body corporate.

As a first step it is worthwhile discussing any ideas for improvements with other residents to find out their thoughts. Obviously this is much more convenient in flats or units with fewer residents, however, if there is a notice board for residents, posting some information would be useful (possibly providing your contact details). If your body corporate has a committee then raise this with a committee member so it can be discussed at the next committee meeting - or better still, if you are a member of your body corporate committee then you can raise energy efficiency issues yourself.

Energy use and maintenance

Maintenance of common property will often be undertaken by a professional maintenance contractor. In this case any changes that the body corporate agrees to will need to be communicated to the contractor. For example, this could mean instructing the maintenance contractor to replace all expired light globes with compact fluorescents.

The initial cost of energy improvements to common property might result in some resistance from other owners. However, energy efficiency improvements result in cost savings. Communicating these savings as part of a motion will demonstrate the longer term cost savings - the information and suggestions on the overleaf will give some examples of how this can be done.

In some cases the body corporate will have a sinking fund for ongoing maintenance (in some states this is a legislated requirement), which could be the source of funding for energy efficiency improvements. Alternatively owners could be levied for the costs of alterations.