

9 STEPS FOR STRATA TO GO SOLAR



1 Understand if solar energy helps with reducing electricity costs of your building

In order to estimate the savings, metering data is required, which 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.

2 Council approval

In many cases, solar installations are Exempt Developments, which means you don't need planning approval from Council. If your installation is larger than 100kw or your building is a Heritage Item or is in a Heritage Protection Area, obtaining council approval may be required. To check if this applies to your building, visit Council's [Development Approvals for Solar](#) web page where you will also find guidance on Council's streamlined process for free solar-only applications.

3 Understand potential prerequisite projects

On the main switchboard, ceramic fuses (if currently in place) MUST be replaced with RCD (Residual Current Device) switches in order 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 will be installed after solar installation.

Roof water proofing may be needed if the roof is damaged.

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 Finding a solar installer

Obtain at least 3 quotes from different Clean Energy Council (CEC) approved solar retailers with in-house CEC-accredited installers/designers and make sure they have experience in commercial systems.

Visit <https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/consumers/buying-solar/find-an-approved-solar-retailer#card-187285> to find approved solar retailers in your area.

Make sure the installer understands the grid connection process, which is mandatory before solar installation, with different Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSP).

5 Selecting 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 R&D

Always choose a solar inverter that includes a Wi-Fi/App monitoring function. Make sure the offered products are CEC approved. Solar inverter approval can be checked via <https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/industry/products/inverters/approved-inverters>

Solar panel approval can be checked via

<https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/industry/products/modules/approved-modules>

6 Government rebate

Solar systems that are smaller than 100kW are eligible for a government rebate called Small-scale Technology Certificates (STC's). 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. An online calculator is available at <https://www.rec-registry.gov.au/rec-registry/app/calculators/sgu-stc-calculator>

7 Understand your electricity tariffs and how they might change

In order 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 provide modelling which can be used to negotiate with your retailer. 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 Financing the projects

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 Passing ordinary resolutions and by-laws for the projects

Installation of a solar system in a strata building will require passing of an ordinary resolution of all Owners entitled to vote following passage of the NSW Government's Sustainability Infrastructure amendments to the Strata Schemes Management Act. Your strata manager can assist you with preparing a ordinary resolution for voting at your next AGM or EGM.

