



What kind of solar hot water systems are available for installation on a residential strata building?

Generally, there are two types of solar hot water systems:

- Active systems (also known as split systems), where the solar panels are installed on the roof and the storage tank is located on the ground or in another convenient location.
- Passive systems, where the tank is installed on the roof above the solar collectors.

Active systems are often installed on townhouses where space is available for a ground mounted tank. Passive systems are often installed on apartment buildings where internal or ground space for tanks is limited or inconveniently located. Additionally, some apartment buildings have centralised hot water systems that provide hot water to multiple apartments from a large communal tank.

Information on types of solar hot water systems is available at: www.yourhome.gov.au/technical/fs65.html

An example of an apartment with a centralised hot water is available at www.greenstrata.com.au/case/nexus-solar-hot-water

How do I select a solar hot water system?

In general, owners should consider a range of issues including but not limited to:

- roof access and material
- amount of unshaded northerly roof aspect
- structural strength of the roof
- number of people the hot water system is supplying and how much hot water is required
- connections to plumbing and power (gas or electric boosted). The type of any pipe or cable, the route taken, the method of affixing them, and the size of any hole in common property floors and walls and their impact on waterproofing and fire safety separations need to be considered
- ensuring the integrity of any waterproof membrane is maintained or reinstated, particularly when mounting systems on flat roofs
- tank location and its weight-bearing load
- any impact the system may have on the building's insured value and consequently the premium paid by the owners corporation
- information required for owners corporation approval - specific details of where each component will be situated, that the proposed locations can support the weight, what drilling will be necessary, how cabling and piping will be run and shielded, what measures will be taken to waterproof any penetration of common property walls, roofs and floors, and that fire safety separations are not compromised. Diagrams should be provided for completeness
- where an individual owner is proposing to install a solar hot water system on common property for personal use, a by-law is required to ensure the owner is responsible for the installation and maintenance of the system, as well as to protect the amenity and safety of all residents and building

users. Refer to GO SOLAR Strata owners corporation approvals frequently asked questions sheet available at: www.reduceyourfootprint.com.au/gosolar

- cost effectiveness of the proposal versus other options.

Ultimately, a Clean Energy Council accredited specialist solar hot water provider will be able to advise whether solar hot water is suitable for each circumstance. The solar proposal should be discussed with the strata manager and/or executive committee prior to requesting a site assessment and quote.

For information on considerations for strata approvals, refer to the GO SOLAR strata owners corporation approvals frequently asked questions available at: www.reduceyourfootprint.com.au/gosolar.

Information on steps to consider when installing solar is available at:

- www.livinggreener.gov.au/take-action/save-energy/install-solar-hot-water/
- www.nabers.com.au/page.aspx?cid=567&site=3
- www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/cec/resourcecentre/Consumer-Info/SWHguide.html

What solar hot water incentives and rebates are available?

The NSW Government's Hot Water System Rebate offers a \$300 incentive to replace existing electric hot water systems*. Further information is available at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/rebates/ccfhws.htm.

The Australian Government's Renewable Energy Bonus Scheme offers rebates of \$1,000 for installing a solar hot water system*. Further information is available at: www.climatechange.gov.au/government/programs-and-rebates/solar-hot-water.aspx.

Owners and/or owners corporations may also be eligible for Renewable Energy Certificates* (RECs) from the Australian Government. Owners may wish to assign these RECs to the solar supplier in exchange for an upfront discount on the purchase price. More information on Renewable Energy Certificates is available at: www.orer.gov.au/swh/index.html

Note that bonus RECs may also be available under the Australian Government's Solar Credits Scheme*.

Individual lot owners can apply for the Solar Credits Scheme, however the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator (ORER)

does not currently consider an owners corporation's common property to be eligible. Owners corporations should check with ORER for the latest details if they are considering installing solar hot water.

* Eligibility conditions apply.

Who pays the costs and who benefits from the energy savings?

Where an individual owner proposes to install a solar hot water system on a strata building, the individual owner usually pays the installation costs and benefits from the subsequent energy savings. The owner may also be required to bear the costs of preparing the necessary by-law as outlined in the GO SOLAR strata owners corporation approvals frequently asked questions sheet available at: www.reduceyourfootprint.com.au/gosolar.

Where an owners corporation proposes to install a centralised hot water system, the owners corporation pays the cost of installation and the building's residents (both owners and tenants) benefit from the subsequent energy savings. In this situation, the business case presented at the general meeting should go beyond consideration of the energy savings for residents and take into account the cost of maintaining the current hot water system versus that of installing and maintaining the new one.

How does a centralised solar hot water system get billed?

Centralised solar hot water systems are typically gas-boasted and characterised by:

- centrally metered gas which is charged to each apartment based on how much hot water they have used
- the volume of water used by each apartment which is measured by a water meter at the apartment's hot water entry point.

What funding can the owners corporation use to purchase a solar hot water system for common use?

The Sinking Fund will be used by an owners corporation to purchase and install a solar hot water system for common usage in accordance with its 10-year sinking fund plan.

If the expenditure cannot be met from the Sinking Fund, the owners corporation can raise a special levy or take out a loan. Some organisations that specialise in strata finance are listed in

the Institute of Strata Title Management's Strata Directory at www.istm.org.au.

Is Council approval required?

To check whether Council approval is required contact your local Council or refer to GO SOLAR Council Approvals Frequently Asked Questions sheet available at:

www.reduceyourfootprint.com.au/gosolar.

What accreditation should a solar supplier have?

Ultimately, a Clean Energy Council (CEC) accredited specialist solar hot water provider will be able to advise whether solar hot water is suitable in each circumstance. Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra Councils have selected a CEC accredited GO SOLAR preferred solar power provider who can provide you with a free site assessment and quote as well as an exclusive GO SOLAR discount for a quality product and service. Visit www.reduceyourfootprint.com.au/gosolar to register for your free information pack or site assessment and quote.

The solar proposal should be discussed with the strata manager and/or executive committee prior to requesting a site assessment and quote.

Other resources

Green Strata

Information sharing website for ideas for sustainable apartment buildings: www.greenstrata.com.au

Owners Corporation Network

Non-profit peak body representing residential strata owners: www.ocn.org.au

Institute of Strata Title Management

The peak industry body for the NSW Strata Management Industry: www.istm.org.au

Terminology

By-law

By-laws are a set of rules that all people living in the strata scheme must follow. They apply equally to tenants and owners and can be made or changed to meet the needs of all owners and to assist with running the scheme.

Lot

A lot is an individual property such as an apartment in a strata title apartment block and generally includes everything including and within the inner surface of the boundary walls, the under surface of the ceiling and the upper surface of the floor.

Common property

All the areas of land and building not included in any individual property or 'lot'. Common property generally includes the roof. To confirm, ask the managing agent or check the strata plan.

Owners corporation

The owners corporation comprises all the owners of the 'lots' in a scheme. Its responsibilities include the maintenance and repair of common property and the management of the scheme's finances.

Executive committee

The executive committee is made up of elected owners who oversee day-to-day issues on behalf of the owners corporation. They may work in collaboration with a strata managing agent (if one has been appointed).

More information available at: www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/Tenants_and_home_owners/Strata_schemes/Common_property_and_the_lot.html.

Disclaimer

This information was prepared by Green Strata Network and GO SOLAR and is intended as a guide only. Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra Councils and Green Strata Network are not responsible for the use of this information. The information is correct as at October 2010 and is subject to change.