



February 2026

Submission to the Victorian Environment
and Planning Committee: **Inquiry into
renewable and affordable energy for
apartments**

Executive summary

Our submission focuses on solutions that address the upfront costs and economic barriers, enhance access for renters, and ease the governance challenges to accelerating energy upgrades in apartments:

1. **Owners Corporation (OC) legislation reform:** empower strata buildings to act on sustainability upgrades.
 - a. Require OCs to only pass an ordinary resolution to approve sustainability upgrades,
 - b. Consider reforms and easements to enable the easy installation of sustainability infrastructure that may affect, or be mounted upon, common property,
 - c. Prohibit objections to sustainability upgrades on the basis of aesthetics,
 - d. Mandate the consideration of sustainability at every annual general meeting as a standing agenda item.
2. **A Strata Energy Upgrades Scheme (SEUS):** To support owners across the financial spectrum when a shared upgrade is agreed to, offer deferred, low-interest loans to apartment residents to cover approved special levies for sustainability upgrades. Instead of regular repayments, the loans would be repaid with inflation indexation when the unit next sells.
 - a. A property could access multiple loans up to a certain threshold.
 - b. This loan does not impact cashflow for the owner and removes the sudden economic impact of special levies.
 - c. This scheme is suitable for owner occupiers or landlords.
3. **Establish a 'Renters' Right to Plug in':** facilitating the standards and interoperability required to make it practical for renters to invest in their own CER
 - a. Task Energy Safe Victoria with establishing safety standards for small plug-in solar and battery systems - in countries such as Germany, such 'balcony solar' systems can be bought from IKEA or Aldi and plugged into an ordinary wall socket,

- b. Develop standards for more powerful portable batteries and electric vehicle chargers,
- c. Reform the Residential Tenancies Act to establish a reasonable right to request certain infrastructure upgrades to enable access to CER,
- d. Extend the Victorian Energy Upgrades to support the installation of electric hot water timers to enhance the benefits from Solar Sharer Offers.

Introduction

Rewiring Australia is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry and commend the committee for focusing on this issue. Compared to freestanding homes, apartments are structurally disadvantaged when it comes to accessing consumer energy resources (CER) due to at least four additional barriers:

- Physical structures: technical differences and limitations;
- Demographics: apartment residents have lower incomes and less wealth;
- Ownership: 60% of Victorian apartment residents are renters;
- Governance: the collective action problems inherent in strata decisionmaking.

Owners Corporation (OC) legislation reform

Collective decision-making in OCs can be hampered by well-known inertia and apathy, especially when many owners are landlords who may be absent from the building and meetings or underincentivised to invest in sustainability upgrades. Strata owners or residents who want to implement sustainability upgrades must convince their neighbours of the benefits and value of the upgrade, whilst navigating an obscure legal framework. Some receive helpful guidance from a strata manager, others are less well supported.

To overcome these challenges and empower strata communities to deliver crucial energy upgrades, we encourage the government to implement the following Owners Corporation (OC) legislation reforms.

We encourage the government to empower strata committees to move ahead with energy upgrades by requiring OCs to only pass an ordinary resolution to approve sustainability upgrades. This would align with moves made by other jurisdictions, such as NSW, which have empowered strata committees to deliver energy upgrades with simple majority

resolutions of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). This change is vital for enabling a wide range of collective energy upgrades.

Furthermore, a comprehensive review of OC legislation should include the following measures:

- Consider reforms and easements to enable the easy installation of sustainability infrastructure that may affect, or be mounted upon, common property,
- Prohibit objections to sustainability upgrades on the basis of aesthetics,
- Mandate the consideration of sustainability at every annual general meeting as a standing agenda item.

Strata Energy Upgrades Scheme (SEUS)

We believe it is crucial to ensure strata communities can act decisively to improve energy outcomes. But it is also important to recognise that imposing financial obligations on absent owners and any minority opponents of upgrades could drive conflict within strata communities, and the costs involved can impose genuine financial hardship on owners. Household income for those living in apartments is considerably lower on average than those in freestanding homes - around 20% lower. Apartment residents are therefore less likely than others to be able to fund these upgrades upfront or to service standard loan repayments to cover the costs.

Many shared upgrades implemented by strata committees are paid for by strata finance, which is repaid based on increased fees or periodic special levies on owners. Smaller upgrades may also be paid for by a single special levy payment to raise the capital required upfront.

To address this challenge, we propose a Victorian Strata Energy Upgrades Scheme which would offer fully-deferred low-interest loans to enable apartment owners to pay for approved special levies for energy upgrades.



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Strata Energy Upgrades - loan opt-in

1 Contact details

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Your building upgrade is eligible for the Strata Energy Upgrades Scheme

Your building is upgrading:
Shared solar system, shared battery system, and switchboard upgrade to support EV charging

What this means for you:
Your owners' corporation has approved this upgrade and will issue a special levy of \$10,750 to each owner to cover the cost.

The Victorian Government's Strata Energy Upgrades Scheme (SEUS) can cover this levy for you now, so you don't need to pay anything upfront. The amount is repaid automatically when your property is next sold, adjusted for inflation. A notice is registered on your property title so the repayment happens as part of the normal settlement process the next time your property sells.

You have a choice in how you pay

☒ **Yes, cover my levy**
The SEUS will pay the \$10,750 levy on my behalf. I understand the amount, adjusted for inflation, will be repaid from the proceeds when I next sell this property.

☐ **No thanks, I'll pay the levy myself**
I'll pay the special levy directly when it's issued by the owners' corporation.

Figure 1 A mock-up of the start of the application process for the proposed Strata Energy Upgrades Scheme.

Based on Rewiring Australia's Electrify Everything Loan Scheme

Rewiring Australia advocates for governments to offer finance based on the model proposed in our Electrify Everything Loan Scheme: offering the upfront capital to home

owners making energy upgrades, securing the loan on their property title, indexing to inflation, and deferring repayment until the property next sells.

The framework has been designed to not rely on income or capacity to service regular payments which eases assessment and approval. Repayments are only required at a time that suits the borrower - as they sell their property - and shifts the critical default risk away from the consumer. Earlier repayments can be permitted and encouraged where appropriate.

A scheme such as this is suitable for owners and landlords, who make purchasing decisions and relevant investments. Offering funding directly to renters to improve homes is unfortunately neither fair (renters should not bear the cost of capital improvements) nor practical (they are usually not entitled to do so). Finally, this scheme is extremely low risk for the Government budget as lender. The loans have a very high certainty of repayment and inflation indexation limits the cost to the lender. Public Debt & Interest costs of lending at inflation rates are limited to about 2% of loaned principal per year¹.

Electrify Everything Loans for Apartments

The finance structure outlined above offers particular benefits for apartments, helping more strata groups to reach a majority 'yes' vote on upgrades while also protecting the interests of minority residents. The loans would be available to owners to cover their share of a special levy for specified and approved energy projects - potentially including feasibility studies or the upgrades themselves. To account for a staged approach which may be more practical for many OCs, multiple applications for this finance could be permitted with a defined threshold for maximum total loan.

The scheme can be offered to apartment owners with very low concern for income or finances, meaning that across the potentially dozens or hundreds of owners with diverse financial situations, the costs of upgrades can be reliably deferred until the home (or investment) is sold. This approach removes the need for owners to seek private market 'green credit' products, which often involve onerous application processes or income checks. Furthermore, the finance could be offered to owners directly from a loan scheme to opt to pay a registered special levy specifically for energy upgrades, thereby avoiding the need for the Owners Corporation to arrange complex financing or debt collections.

¹ Parliamentary Budget Office ([2025](#)). Home electrification

The SEUS could be operated by Solar Victoria or the State Electricity Commission and utilise the existing Service Victoria infrastructure and DEECA's solar finance infrastructure from the Solar Homes Program.

Establish a 'Renters' Right to Plug in'

The advent of the Solar Sharer Offer this year in DMO states, with the potential to expand to Victoria, can have significant potential benefits to apartment owners even without solar panels, offering savings for maximising the use of electricity in the cheap, green midday peak, which in turn can reduce system costs more broadly.

However, accessing meaningful savings from these offers depends on moving high-energy loads to the middle of the day. Many apartment residents with shared hot water do not have these loads, others are renters who may have electric hot water but cannot control when it switches on.

We submitted a detailed proposal to the Federal Treasury as a Pre-Budget submission on enabling equitable access to the benefits of Solar Sharer offers². In particular, we called for financial support for fitting timers to electric storage hot water systems. In Victoria this could be simply delivered through the Victorian Energy Upgrades program and enable renters or apartment residents (and others) to install a cost-effective timer and save \$400-\$500 a year.

We also called for a Renters' Right to Plug In. First, this should include the right to plug in small portable solar and suitcase batteries in their apartment. Second, a separate standard for more powerful portable devices should be developed by Energy Safe Victoria, in co-ordination with regulators across the Commonwealth, to enable the easy installation of batteries and electric vehicle chargers which can be disconnected and taken when moving house. Finally, the Residential Tenancies Act should be reviewed and updated to empower tenants to request certain reasonable energy upgrades, such as wiring to facilitate the connection of larger portable batteries or electric vehicle chargers. We have recently published a [technical discussion paper](#) on enabling a renters' right to plug in³ and we are happy to discuss in more detail.

² Rewiring Australia (2026). Policies for faster and fairer electrification.

³ Rewiring Australia (2026). Enabling Portable Energy Devices and a Renter's Right to Plug In.

About Rewiring Australia

Rewiring Australia is a non-profit research and advocacy organisation dedicated to representing the people, households and communities in the energy system. We deliver practical climate progress by working with government, industry, and communities to electrify everything. Co-founded in 2021 by Dr Saul Griffith and Dan Cass, Rewiring Australia highlights the positive climate and economic outcomes possible for Australia, and the world, with electrification of fossil fuel machines. www.rewiringaustralia.org

In addition to co-founding Rewiring Australia, Saul Griffith is also the co-founder and Chief Scientist of Rewiring America. [Rewiring America](#) and Saul worked closely with the Biden Administration in the drafting of the Inflation Reduction Act to drive investment in clean, electric machines and in supporting households and the larger U.S. economy to electrify.