Alternative Strata Solutions for Sustainability

If retrofits are not logistically or financially viable for your building, or the owners corporation does not approve retrofitting, there are other ways to make your building more environmentally-friendly.

Below are low cost, easy to implement alternatives that the owners corporation can undertake, and see also the Rent Smart Guide:

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<th>Energy Usage</th>
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<td><strong>Avoiding energy usage</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Minimising energy usage</strong></td>
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<th>Alternative energy providers</th>
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<td>Strata building owners can support the use of renewable energy without installing renewable energy systems themselves by opting for GreenPower energy plans. Energy retailers can offer the GreenPower plan on top of regular common area or private landholder energy usage plans. This means that the consumer is guaranteed that a percentage (anywhere from 2 to 200%) of their energy consumption is coming from a renewable source.</td>
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## Waste Reduction

### Avoid creating waste

Individual owners and the owners corporation can avoid creating waste by:

- refuse excess packaging and plastic bags, and select products that have less packaging
- only buy the amount of **food that you need**
- buy re-usable products over single use products
- place a "No Junk Mail" or "No Advertising Material" sticker on your letter box
- borrow, share and hire where you can and only purchase new products, retrofit and renovate when necessary
- when purchasing new products, implementing retrofits and renovating, make sure changes are adaptable to changing needs to prevent future resource use

### Reduce the amount of waste

Individual owners and the owners corporation can reduce waste by:

- purchasing a [compost bin](https://www.easternsuburbs.com.au/) or **worm farm** to reduce food scraps and organic waste, for personal or communal use. A compost bin or worm farm on common property will **require strata committee approval**.

**Case studies:**
- Bondi apartment block, Green Strata
- Signature Apartments, Green Strata

- buying in bulk to reduce transport and packaging
- selling or giving away items that you no longer need, rather than disposing of them
- receiving and sending mail and **phonebooks** in electronic format if possible
- undertaking a waste audit to find out areas of high waste generation. This will require **strata committee approval**, but could highlight areas where waste going to landfill can be significantly reduced.

### Re-use materials

- buy second-hand or pre-loved clothing and furniture
- re-use glass jars, containers and bottles
- create a ‘swap room’ for residents to trade their unwanted goods and items

**Case study:**
- Signature Apartments, Green Strata

### Recycle appropriately

Individual owners and the owners corporation can aid the recycling process by:

- buying products that **can be recycled** or are made from recycled materials
- using **recycled materials** for renovations, retrofits and repairs
- recycling all products that can be recycled **locally** (e.g. plastics, paper)

**Owners corporations can:**

- ensure recycling is as convenient to access as general waste disposal in common areas
- provide space or containers for residents to recycle **other forms of waste than those accepted in recycle bins**, to be dropped off to **specialised recycling drop off point** when full
Case studies:
- Bauhaus Apartments, Green Strata
- Altair, Green Strata
- The Princeton, Green Strata
- The Park Apartments, Green Strata

Water Saving

Minimise water usage and loss from appliances
- Household appliances such as the toilet, washing machine and dishwasher can use a lot of water each use. Owners can purchase water and energy efficient appliances to reduce the water and electricity bills. The owners corporation can replace old appliances with efficient appliances in common areas, such as shared laundries or shared bathrooms.
- Check and replace (if necessary):
  - central cold water storage tanks
  - cooling towers
  - water flow regulators on common property, and encourage individual owners to check flow regulators on owner’s property.
- Check and fix water leaks on common property, and encourage individual owners to check leaks on owner’s property.
- Encourage owners and residents to follow Sydney Water’s water saving tips and reduce water use inside apartments.

Sydney Water

Waterfix® Program
- The Waterfix® Program is a service offered by Sydney Water to check your apartment or building for any leaks or tap and shower head replacements that could reduce water usage. This can be organised by individual owners, but is generally more successful, and generates more discounts, when initiated by the owners corporation.

Capture and/or re-use water
- Untreated stormwater, treated stormwater and building greywater can all be re-used around the building, however there are restrictions on what each can be used for.

Gardens and grounds
- Simple gardening and landscaping techniques can be used to reduce water usage, such as planting locally indigenous and drought-tolerant species on both common and individually-owned property.

Swimming pool cover
- If your building has a pool, purchasing a pool cover can save water that would otherwise be lost to evaporation.

Swimming pool maintenance
- Make sure the pool has:
  - correct water level
  - adequate filtration
  - right chemical balance
  - check for leaks

Transport Options

Encourage residents to cycle to work or on weekends
- The owners corporation can set up a bike pool or provide space on common property for secure bicycle storage. Individual owners could also set up a social cycling group to share routes and bicycle maintenance tips.

Minimise car usage and increase car efficiency
- Minimising car usage and driving more efficiently limits the use of non-renewable fossil fuels. Some ways to do this area:
  - driving hybrid or electric cars
  - using a car share service
  - avoid rapid acceleration and use air conditioning less
lower wind resistance and remove non-essential loads
service and maintain your car
avoid short trips where you could walk, cycle or catch public transport instead

Additional Resources:
- There’s a lot you can do, Green Strata
- For Households, Energy NSW
- Home, Green It Yourself
- Beyond the brand: appliances guide, Sanctuary Magazine
- Easy Energy Saving Tips, South Australian Government