

Alternatives to Retrofits

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](#):

Energy Usage	
Avoiding energy usage	<p>There are simple ways to avoid using unnecessary energy in your home, and on common property that don't require extensive retrofits. Below are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use passive ventilation techniques or other means to cool and heat your home or building rather than air conditioning • be aware of what causes high energy consumption when cooking
Minimising energy usage	<p>There are many simple ways to minimise energy usage at home, and on common property that don't require extensive retrofits. Below are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buy energy saving appliances • get a home energy assessment • consider using energy saving globes in your home • set your refrigerator to optimum settings • turn off lights when not in use • don't overheat or overcool rooms • don't leave appliances in standby mode • don't run your dishwasher half-full • use door sausages, close doors and cover windows to minimise drafts • install water efficient showerheads • have shorter showers (use a timer)
Alternative energy providers	<p>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.</p>

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 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](#)