strata community association® VIC

Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into renewable and affordable electricity for apartments and other multi-unit dwellings

Submission

February 2026

vic.strata.community

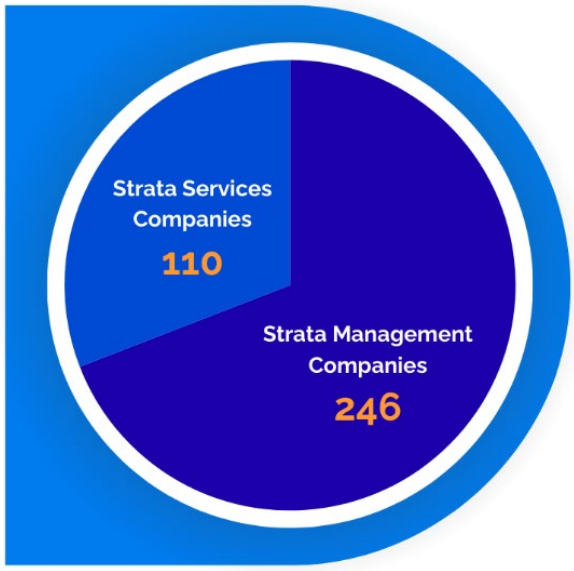
Contents

About Strata Community Association Victoria

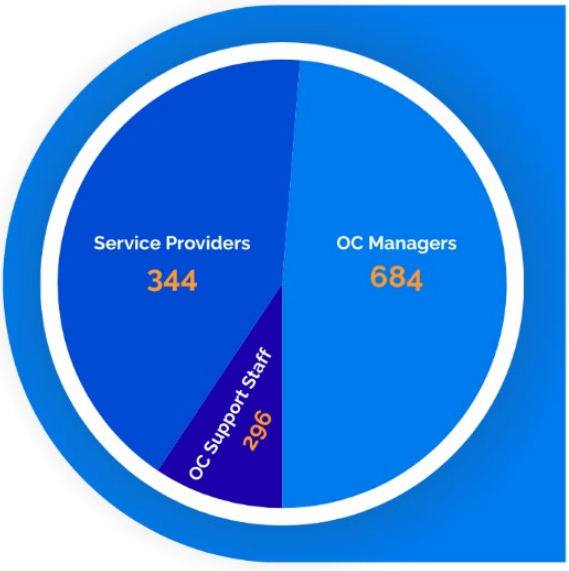
Strata Community Association Victoria (SCA (Vic)) is the peak industry body supporting Victoria's professional strata management and service provider sector. Established in 1990 as the successor to Owners Corporations Victoria (OCV) and the Institute of Body Corporate Managers Victoria (IBCMV), SCA (Vic) has a long history of advancing professionalism and accountability in the sector.

Our **246 strata management companies**, **110 service provider companies**, and more than **1,300 individual members** oversee, advise, and manage owners corporation committees across Victoria. Collectively, they manage in excess of **500,000 lots** - likely more than half of all professionally managed lots in the state.

Membership by Company



Membership by Individuals

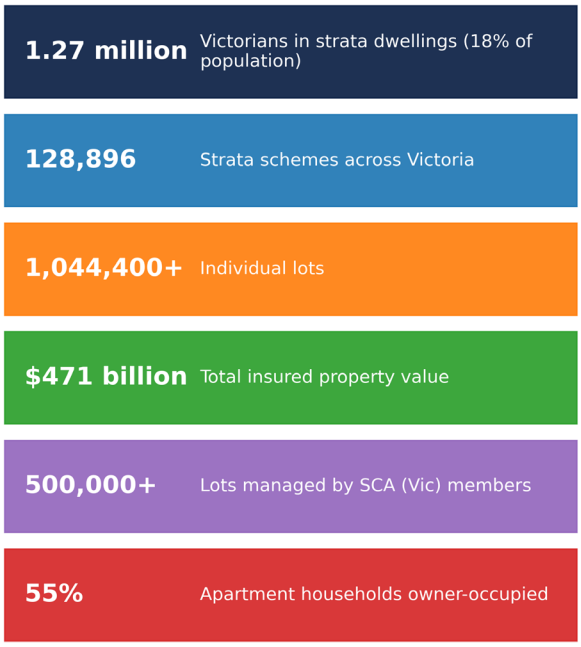


Key figures snapshot*

Strata is now a cornerstone of Victoria's housing mix. More than **1.27 million** Victorians - around 18% of the population - live in strata-titled dwellings, including over 500,000 apartment residents and 770,000 residents in townhouses, villas, and other strata developments.

Victoria has approximately 128,896 strata schemes comprising more than 1,044,400 lots, with a total insured property value of $471 billion. Just over half (55%) of apartment households are owner-occupied. As Victoria grows, strata living will expand exponentially, making it central to meeting housing affordability and density targets.

Key Figures Snapshot – Victoria's Strata Sector



* *Data obtained from 2024 Australia Strata Insights Analysis*

Complexity of Strata

Victorian Owners Corporation Managers (strata managers) comprise both individual persons or corporations that are registered with Business Licensing Authority (BLA) who perform an exceptionally complex role that combines legal compliance, financial stewardship, building maintenance, safety, and people management across a sector of enormous scale and value.

For example, SCA (Vic) has 246 registered corporate owners corporation management companies across small (under 1200 and 1-2 full time staff), medium (1200-6500 lots and 8-10 full time staff) and large business sizes (over 6500 lots and in excess of 20 staff).

They are required to interpret and apply a demanding legislative framework, administer budgets and insurance, coordinate essential services, and manage risks for diverse properties - all while responding to the needs of more than 1.27 million strata residents. Their role requires not only technical expertise but also strong interpersonal and conflict-resolution skills, as they often mediate disputes and resolve issues in high-pressure, emotionally charged situations.

Despite these challenges, strata managers and their employees deliver an outstanding service that safeguards residents' most significant financial asset - their home - while ensuring properties remain safe, compliant, and financially sustainable. Their professionalism underpins the success of strata living and directly supports housing affordability, urban liveability, and community wellbeing. Recognising their contribution is essential as government and industry collaborate for the continued growth of strata living, the added complexity of buildings and their technology and increasing legislative obligations in Victoria.

Executive Summary

Victoria's apartment sector faces unique structural, financial and governance barriers to accessing renewable and affordable electricity. Unlike detached homeowners, apartment residents must act collectively through owners corporations, share infrastructure costs and navigate complex decision-making and legislative frameworks.

Recent reforms in New South Wales require sustainability to be included as a standing agenda item at AGMs and require capital works fund plans to consider sustainable replacement of common property assets. Victoria should consider similar integration of sustainability into routine governance processes.

It is critical to recognise that an owners corporation is a creature of statute. Owners corporations can only exercise powers expressly granted under the Owners Corporations Act 2006 (Vic). If legislation does not clearly authorise infrastructure installation, cost allocation between lots, access to private lots, or long-term maintenance responsibility, committees cannot lawfully proceed.

While shared solar, heat pumps, load-managed EV charging and power-sharing technologies have matured significantly in recent years, uptake in apartment buildings remains constrained by ageing electrical infrastructure, funding gaps and latent building defects, particularly passive fire protection issues[1]. Smaller schemes face higher per-lot cost exposure, and outdated voting and quorum provisions delay implementation[2].

Renters and social housing tenants experience disproportionate energy stress yet have limited control over upgrade decisions. Current funding and policy settings remain primarily designed for detached housing and do not adequately reflect apartment realities.

SCA (Vic) supports a whole-of-building, staged electrification pathway that integrates renewable energy, electrical infrastructure upgrades, fire safety compliance and long-term asset planning. Reform must recognise apartments as a distinct housing type in energy policy and align owners corporation legislation, funding programs and regulatory frameworks with Victoria's legislated emissions reduction and renewable energy targets.

Without targeted reform, inequity between detached housing and multi-unit dwellings will widen. With coordinated legislative, funding and governance changes, apartments can play a central role in delivering affordable, reliable and renewable electricity to hundreds of thousands of Victorians.

Footnotes

1. Johnston, N. (2022), Investigating Passive Fire Protection Defects in Residential Buildings, Deakin University, supported by the Victorian Building Authority.
2. Strata Community Association (Vic) Submission to the Statutory Review of the Owners Corporations Act 2006 (September 2025).

Sections

A. Recent developments in energy supply and technology options for these dwellings over the last four years

Over the past four years, renewable and electrification technologies suitable for apartment buildings have matured significantly. While technical solutions are increasingly available, the most persistent barriers relate to governance settings, infrastructure capacity and funding alignment.

Examples include:

- Shared rooftop solar and power-sharing technology are now technically proven in apartment settings.
- Heat pumps have become mainstream replacements for gas-fired central hot water systems.
- Zero-upfront and solar-as-a-service finance models have reduced capital barriers.
- Load-managed EV charging systems are increasingly integrated into building design.
- Whole-of-building electrification planning has replaced piecemeal upgrades.
- Electrical infrastructure constraints are now recognised as the primary bottleneck.
- Latent passive fire protection defects can constrain electrification upgrades.

RECOMMENDATION – SECTION A:

Government should formally recognise whole-of-building electrification pathways for apartments and integrate fire safety audits, electrical upgrades and renewable energy planning into a staged framework supported by long-term funding and clear statutory authority for implementation.

B. Barriers and inequities experienced by Victorians in such dwellings, including renters and social housing tenants, when accessing renewable and affordable electricity compared with households

Barriers faced by apartment residents are structural, legislative, financial and behavioural. Unlike detached housing, collective decision-making and statutory limitations significantly shape what can be implemented and how quickly.

Barriers include:

- Apartment residents have lower access to solar compared to detached homes.
- High shared upfront costs exist for substations, switchboards and enabling works.
- Collective voting processes are slow and complex.
- Renters and social housing tenants have limited influence over energy decisions.
- Rebates and policies are primarily designed for detached housing.
- Poor building documentation handover delays informed decision-making.
- Undetected fire safety defects create hidden upgrade barriers.

- Smaller schemes face higher per-lot financial exposure.
- Scepticism and distrust of government funding programs reduce participation.
- Cost-of-living pressures reduce appetite for long-term capital upgrades.
- Safety concerns regarding batteries and EV charging deter committees.
- Upfront feasibility assessments and engineering reports create cost barriers before projects commence.
- Legislative uncertainty exists regarding infrastructure location, access rights, cost allocation and maintenance responsibility.
- Owners corporations are limited to express statutory powers.
- Some legacy buildings may be technically or economically incapable of cost-effective electrification, raising questions about existing termination and redevelopment pathways.
- Legacy telecommunications infrastructure occupying rooftop space, limiting installation of solar arrays and heat pump systems.

RECOMMENDATION – SECTION B:

Apartments should be recognised as a distinct housing category in energy policy, supported by targeted funding, legislative clarification, modernised governance settings, improved network transparency, and review of structural barriers that impede electrification in certain buildings.

C. Options to increase access to renewable and affordable electricity for these dwellings, including shared rooftop solar, balcony or façade solar, community batteries and virtual power plants

The technical options available to apartment buildings are diverse and increasingly commercially viable. However, successful implementation depends on governance settings, cost allocation clarity and integration into long-term capital works planning.

Options may include:

- Shared rooftop solar and power-sharing technology.
- Zero-upfront and staged finance models.
- Apartment-specific grants for enabling infrastructure.
- Whole-of-building electrification planning.
- Heat pump upgrades and load-managed EV charging.
- Community batteries and virtual power plant participation.
- Modernised interim resolution and approval processes.
- Embedding sustainability as a standing AGM agenda item and requiring capital works plans to consider sustainable replacement pathways would normalise electrification planning.
- Review of decision-making thresholds for electrification infrastructure, including treatment of EV charging as a sustainability measure.
- Targeted workforce development, certification and professional education to support electrification delivery in strata environments.

RECOMMENDATION – SECTION C:

Expand permanent apartment-specific funding to cover enabling infrastructure; review governance settings to reduce decision-making barriers for electrification; embed sustainability into AGM and capital works planning; and support workforce development to deliver upgrades at scale.

D. The likely impacts on those options on different groups of Victorians, including by tenure type, income, housing type and location, on the type, affordability and reliability of energy they receive

Electrification reforms will not impact all residents equally. Without targeted intervention, smaller schemes, low-income households and mixed-tenure buildings risk falling further behind.

Impacts:

- Owner-occupiers benefit from long-term savings and reliability.
- Renters benefit where building-wide solutions are implemented.
- Low-income households benefit from zero-upfront models but may face delayed savings.
- Social housing tenants require targeted support.
- Smaller buildings face higher per-lot cost exposure.
- Buildings with fire defects face additional cost burdens.

RECOMMENDATION – SECTION D:

Prioritise equity-focused funding and technical assistance for smaller schemes, mixed-tenure buildings and social housing to prevent widening energy inequality.

E. Any legislative, regulatory, planning or market reforms that could support the implementation of options, consistent with Victoria's legislated emissions reduction and renewable energy targets

Legislative reform is central to unlocking renewable access in apartment buildings. As statutory entities, owners corporations require clear authority, streamlined decision-making thresholds and defined cost allocation mechanisms to act confidently.

Suggested considerations:

- Recognise apartments as a distinct energy policy category.
- Make apartment-specific renewable funding permanent.
- Allow grants to cover enabling infrastructure and fire compliance works.

- Require solar-ready and EV-ready standards in new buildings.
- Modernise voting, quorum and benefit principle settings.
- Strengthen coordination between owners corporations and electricity distributors.
- Clarify access rights and long-term maintenance responsibility for electrification assets.
- Provide model cost allocation frameworks for shared infrastructure.
- Clarify statutory authority for renewable and electrification infrastructure on common property.
- Strengthen planning consideration of solar access for existing multi-unit dwellings to support long-term renewable investment.
- Review regulatory settings to support coordinated, neighbourhood-level DNSP planning for apartment electrification.

RECOMMENDATION – SECTION E:

Undertake coordinated reform across energy policy, planning law and network regulation to clarify authority for electrification infrastructure, modernise governance settings, strengthen planning support for solar access, improve network transparency and cost allocation, embed sustainability into capital works planning, and support implementation through permanent apartment-specific funding.

Recommendations Table

The following table collates the recommendations contained within this submission, providing a consolidated overview:

Section	Topic	Recommendation
A	Recent developments	Government should formally recognise whole-of-building electrification pathways for apartments and integrate fire safety audits, electrical upgrades and renewable energy planning into a staged framework supported by long-term funding and clear statutory authority for implementation.
B	Barriers and inequities	Apartments should be recognised as a distinct housing category in energy policy, supported by targeted funding, legislative clarification, modernised governance settings, improved network transparency, and review of structural barriers that impede electrification in certain buildings.
C	Options to increase access	Expand permanent apartment-specific funding to cover enabling infrastructure; review governance settings to reduce decision-making barriers for electrification; embed sustainability into AGM and capital works planning; and support workforce development to deliver upgrades at scale.
D	Likely impacts	Prioritise equity-focused funding and technical assistance for smaller schemes, mixed-tenure buildings and social housing to prevent widening energy inequality.
E	Legislative, regulatory, planning, market reforms	Undertake coordinated reform across energy policy, planning law and network regulation to clarify authority for electrification infrastructure, modernise governance settings, strengthen planning support for solar access, improve network transparency and cost allocation, embed sustainability into capital works planning, and support implementation through permanent apartment-specific funding.

strata community association® VIC

Strata Community Association Victoria Incorporated


Susan Chandler, General Manager


(03) 9416 4688


admin.vic@strata.community


vic.strata.community