

FINDING SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABILITY UPGRADES

Quick Guide for Owners Corporations

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1. Purpose of this Quick Guide

Owners Corporations may be able to access government or public sector support when planning sustainability upgrades.

Support may assist with projects involving:

- energy efficiency
- solar and battery storage
- electrification
- electric vehicle charging
- water efficiency
- climate resilience
- building performance

This guide explains the common types of support available, where to look and what to consider before applying.

It does not list individual programmes because funding, eligibility and application periods change regularly.

2. Common Types of Support

Rebates

Rebates generally provide partial financial assistance for an approved product, service or upgrade. They may apply to:

- energy-efficient equipment
- solar systems
- batteries
- heat pumps
- electrical upgrades
- approved appliances

Rebates often require the use of eligible products, accredited installers or approved providers.

Grants

Grants may provide funding for specific projects, trials or larger-scale upgrades. They may be:

- competitive
- time limited
- targeted to particular building types or locations
- linked to defined sustainability outcomes
- subject to reporting requirements

A grant should not be relied upon until formal approval has been received.

Loans and Financing

Some programmes provide:

- low-interest loans
- structured finance
- repayment over an agreed period
- funding linked to expected savings

Financing may assist where a project has long-term benefits but the Owners Corporation does not have enough funds available immediately.

Advisory Support

Some programmes provide non-financial assistance, including:

- energy audits
- feasibility assessments
- technical guidance
- project planning support
- information sessions
- approved supplier lists

Obtaining advice before selecting a project can help avoid unsuitable or poorly scoped applications.

Pilot Programmes

Pilot programmes test new technologies or delivery models. They may focus on:

- apartment buildings
- shared infrastructure
- renewable energy
- EV charging
- energy management
- climate resilience

Pilot programmes may have limited places and specific participation requirements.

3. Start With the Project, Not the Funding

An Owners Corporation should not undertake a project only because funding is available. Before looking for support, consider:

- What problem are we trying to solve?
- Is the project included in our maintenance or capital works planning?
- Has the building been assessed by an appropriately qualified professional?
- Is the proposed solution suitable for the building?
- What are the whole-of-life costs?
- What maintenance will be required?
- Would the project still be worthwhile without funding?

Funding should support a sound project rather than determine the project itself.

4. Five Steps to Finding Support

Step 1 – Identify the Opportunity

Determine:

- the building issue or opportunity
- the proposed upgrade
- the likely scope
- the expected benefits
- whether specialist advice is required

Step 2 – Check Current Programmes

Review current information from relevant government agencies and programme providers. Check:

- opening and closing dates
- building eligibility
- location requirements
- eligible technologies
- approved product or provider requirements
- maximum funding
- required contributions
- reporting obligations

Step 3 – Confirm Eligibility Before Committing

Do not assume the Owners Corporation qualifies. Confirm whether:

- an application must be approved before works begin
- quotations are required
- approved contractors must be used
- co-funding is required
- the programme applies to common property
- the Owners Corporation structure is eligible

Step 4 – Obtain Approval and Apply

Before applying or committing expenditure:

- obtain any required professional advice
- prepare a clear scope of works
- confirm the project budget
- identify ongoing costs
- obtain the required Owners Corporation approval
- retain supporting documents
- submit the application within the required timeframe

Step 5 – Deliver, Record and Review

After approval:

- complete the works in accordance with programme conditions
- retain invoices, approvals and completion records
- meet any reporting requirements
- monitor project performance
- record maintenance responsibilities
- review whether the expected benefits were achieved

5. Questions to Ask Before Applying

- ☐ Is the programme currently open?
- ☐ Is the Owners Corporation eligible?
- ☐ Does the support apply to common property?
- ☐ Must approval be obtained before signing a contract?
- ☐ Are approved products or providers required?
- ☐ Is the funding competitive or guaranteed?
- ☐ What contribution must the Owners Corporation make?
- ☐ Are ongoing software, servicing or maintenance costs involved?
- ☐ Can the project be combined with other funding?
- ☐ What reporting or evidence must be provided?
- ☐ What happens if the project changes or is delayed?
- ☐ Does the project still represent good value if funding is not received?

6. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- selecting a project only because a rebate is available
- commencing works before funding approval
- assuming eligibility without written confirmation
- failing to consider ongoing costs
- relying on outdated programme information
- accepting unclear scopes or quotations
- overlooking Owners Corporation approval requirements
- failing to retain project records
- assuming funding covers the full project cost
- delaying necessary maintenance while waiting for a future programme

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Owners Corporation and Committee

The Owners Corporation or Committee should:

- identify the building need
- consider the project benefits and risks
- approve the required expenditure
- confirm the funding arrangement
- ensure decisions are documented

Strata Manager

The Strata Manager may:

- assist with administration
- coordinate information
- arrange meetings and resolutions
- support communication with owners
- retain relevant records

The Strata Manager should not be expected to provide technical, legal or financial advice unless appropriately qualified and engaged to do so.

Specialist Advisers

Depending on the project, advice may be required from:

- energy consultants
- electrical engineers
- licensed electrical contractors
- sustainability advisers
- building consultants
- finance providers
- legal advisers

8. Where to Look

Current programmes and guidance may be available through:

- Victorian Government energy and sustainability websites
- Sustainability Victoria
- Solar Victoria
- Victorian Energy Upgrades
- local councils
- Australian Government energy programmes
- Australian Renewable Energy Agency
- electricity network providers
- authorised programme administrators

Always confirm current eligibility and programme status through the official source.

9. Key Takeaways

- Start with a genuine building need, not an available rebate
- Confirm eligibility before committing expenditure or commencing work
- Consider whole-of-life costs, not just the funded amount
- Obtain appropriate professional advice for technical projects
- Ensure the required Owners Corporation approvals are in place
- Keep full records of applications, approvals, works and outcomes
- Check official sources because programmes and eligibility change regularly