



City Futures Research Centre

Check the Suitability of Retrofits

Checking the Suitability of Sustainable Retrofits with Your Scheme

Whether sustainability retrofits are suitable for your scheme depends on several factors. This factsheet introduces some of the considerations if you want to implement sustainable retrofits in your scheme.

What's already been done?

This is important, as your great idea for improving your scheme might have already been considered, or there might already be something similar in process. Check with your strata committee, strata manager, building manager and strata committee meeting minutes where available to see whether your idea is new, or whether you're covering old ground. If you find that your sustainable retrofit idea has been considered before, look into the reasons why it was abandoned. If you have new information, or there is new technology that might make the retrofits idea suitable, it might be worth presenting the idea again. Alternatively, if the retrofits idea is currently in the process of being implemented, find out how you can get involved or if there are other retrofit ideas worth pursuing.

Who to contact?

Before spending too much time planning sustainable retrofits, talk to people who know the scheme well, are experienced with retrofits and can give you hints as to what retrofits would be most suitable. You should contact:

Building manager

They should have a good knowledge about the day to day maintenance and management of the building, know where there might be opportunities for cost-savings and will be able to flag potential issues with the sustainable retrofit ideas early on. Your building managers might also have experience with other schemes that have implemented retrofits.

Strata manager

They should have a good knowledge about the financial aspects of the strata scheme and whether the other owners and residents are likely to be co-operative. Your strata manager should also have access to the utilities bills for the last two years, which will be helpful for

establishing areas of greatest cost saving. They might also have experience with other schemes that have implemented retrofits.

Strata committee

You will need to contact the strata committee especially if the retrofits affect common property. Although the strata committee cannot approve projects making changes to the common property on behalf of the owners corporation, the strata committee can provide important information such as whether relevant bylaws are in place, and can help you communicate with the other low owners of the strata scheme. If you are not already on the strata committee, you could consider joining. For more information, see How to: Communicate with Stakeholders.

Sustainability sub-committee

Sub-committees can undertake research on specific projects and provide this information to the owners corporation. This information will help lot owners to make an informed decision when voting on a project at a general meeting. If there isn't a sustainability sub-committee, you could consider starting one.

Sustainable retrofits professionals

There are several contacts outside of your strata community that could help you check the suitability of retrofits for your scheme and give you pointers on how to get started.

What is likely to be required?

Consider what is likely to be involved in implementing sustainable retrofits in your scheme. You can check this by looking at case studies and examples of common retrofits, and checking what approvals may be required. Think about whether this is likely to be a major or minor project, who will be affected, and whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Sustainable retrofit professionals and government contacts can help you answer these questions.

How will the implemented retrofits look?

Consider how the retrofits might improve or maintain the building's appearance by looking at other examples and case studies (energy, water, or facilities and services) of the planned retrofits.

Will the benefits outweigh costs?

The retrofits that will best help your scheme and be likely to be approved are those that will have the best cost benefit. Check whether there are grants and rebates offered for your sustainable retrofit ideas (energy, water, or facilities and services) that could make the plans more financially viable. Also consider whether the retrofits will save owners money in long run.

By first checking your utilities bills, you can see how much water and energy your building consumes. Strata managers should keep utilities bills, but if you don't have the bills you can request consumption data from the utility provider. Establish what you are paying for (e.g. what tariffs the building is on, whether you're getting estimated reads). If your building is connected to the Ausgrid network you can also request up to two years of [metering data via the Ausgrid website](#). Third party requests can also be made through this service provided you have signed permission from the account holder. Information about this is provided in the application process.

Strata schemes that implement sustainable retrofits can be strategic, and implement the retrofits with the quickest payback or the greatest cost saving potential first, such as lighting upgrades, or carbon monoxide detectors and variable speed drives for large buildings. They can then use the money saved to fund other retrofits or unrelated projects. If it seems the retrofits will be financially viable and will have the support of the strata committee, then you can encourage the strata committee or sustainability sub-committee to audit the building's [electricity](#) and [water usage](#), or [obtain quotes](#) for the retrofits. Professional audits could be undertaken, usually for larger buildings, or buildings can be self-audited by walking around the building and undertaking an inventory, checking ratings of lights and motors.

