

South Australia's Home Battery Scheme

Batteries for residential strata title common areas

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If you live in or manage a residential strata title property, you may be considering how a battery could help reduce the energy costs of your common areas, and how you can access a subsidy for the cost of the battery under the Home Battery Scheme.

With the right guidance and experts around you, a battery can:

- reduce your reliance on electricity from the grid
- maximise the benefits of solar panels on your roof by capturing solar energy that would normally be sent to the grid and instead save it for use at other times
- reduce the amount of electricity your strata uses during peak periods and maximise the benefits of any off peak electricity tariffs you may have access to (subject to your electricity retailer contract)
- power at least some parts of your common areas during an outage
- through being enrolled in a virtual power plant, support the grid in times of need in return for financial benefits such as discounted solar and battery systems or lease-to-own plans, reward payments, low electricity tariffs, or credits on your electricity bill.

With subsidies and low interest loans available to help pay for the battery through South Australia's Home Battery Scheme, you could find that a common area battery is well within reach.

But like many things, a battery might be right for some stratas and not for others. So just like any significant purchase, it's important to do your research before you commit.

WHAT TO KNOW

To help with your research, the following checklist has been designed to step you through just some of the items to think about, and where to go for help in answering them. By working through this checklist, you'll be more informed about your options and be ready to speak in more detail with your Strata Corporation and a Home Battery Scheme Qualified System Provider.

We also recommend you read the information available at the Clean Energy Council's "Buying Battery Storage" webpage at cleanenergycouncil.org.au/consumers/buying-battery-storage, to make sure you have a good idea of what to know and what to consider.

Think about the future, even if you are only getting solar right now.

If your strata is only looking at solar right now but is interested in how it could work with a battery in the future, discuss this with a System Provider and still consider the rest of this checklist. The way your solar is sized, designed, and installed, or even your decision about getting solar or which company to choose, could be influenced by your future plans for a battery. And you'll be better informed about how your solar will or won't support a battery later on.

A Qualified System Provider should ask you some questions about what you are looking to achieve with solar, your plans for a battery later on, and how certain those plans are or are not. Based on your answers they should be able to tell you how they have designed and would install your solar to accommodate a battery later on, or what changes you would need to consider in the future to help a battery be installed and reduce your electricity bills.

Check you will have enough solar generation to feed a battery.

A battery stores excess generation from your solar panels ready for use at other times – such as during cloudy periods or when the sun goes down. If you don't have much or any excess generation from your solar, you may find that a battery can't do much for your energy usage and costs.

A Qualified System Provider should ask you some questions about your common areas, your available roof space for solar panels, and analyse at least a few electricity bills for your common areas and tell you if you'll have enough excess solar generation to feed a battery.

Check your metering arrangement allows a battery to only serve common areas.

For a battery to only provide electricity to common areas, it needs to be connected to an electricity meter that only measures electricity for common areas of the strata. Metering arrangements can vary from site to site, so it's important to consider your specific metering arrangement instead of relying on what has been seen or done elsewhere.

A Qualified System Provider should look at your metering arrangement to confirm if this can be done. If your Strata Corporation already receives electricity bills that are only for common areas, it's very likely that your building has an arrangement that will work.

Understand how your electricity retailer might change your tariffs.

Installing a battery might result in your electricity retailer changing the prices your strata pays for electricity (otherwise known as your 'electricity tariffs'). Before you have a battery installed, it's important to understand how your tariffs might change, and if that change will affect the financial benefit the battery can provide.

Your strata's electricity retailer should be contacted before you sign a contract for a battery to check what new tariffs might be applied, and **a Qualified System Provider** should indicate how the new tariffs might change your battery benefits. Your strata's electricity retailer should also be contacted after the battery has been installed to confirm that the agreed tariff has been applied.

Ask what costs might be involved in getting network approval.

Part of the process to have your battery installed will be getting approval from SA Power Networks (SAPN) for the battery to be connected to the grid. Depending on the size of the battery's inverter and any solar inverters also at the site (existing or proposed), there may be additional costs and hardware required by SAPN to get their approval so that the battery is connected to the grid in line with relevant Standards and legislation.

A Qualified System Provider will be able to review any existing and proposed inverters at your site (both solar and battery inverters) and compare them with SAPN requirements, to let you know upfront what sort of costs might be involved in getting approval to connect to the grid.

Consider how your battery will connect to the internet.

Providing a communications link between your battery and the internet is an important element of any installation. A link to the internet will help you access the battery's online monitoring data, ensure the battery receives software updates from the manufacturer, and help connect the battery to a virtual power plant if your strata chooses to. A strong and consistent internet connection can also sometimes be a requirement of the battery's manufacturer's warranty.

Your Strata Corporation should discuss how you will provide an internet connection to the battery, and in particular whether it will be connected through a particular person's internet connection, if a communal internet connection should be arranged, or if you need a **Qualified System Provider** to provide one as part of their works.

Have an individual that can apply for the Home Battery Scheme subsidy on behalf of the strata.

Large subsidies and low interest loans are available to help pay for the battery through South Australia's Home Battery Scheme, provided that the battery is an eligible system and that it is installed by a Qualified System Provider. To apply for the subsidy, you simply need a quote from a Qualified System Provider, a copy of a recent electricity bill for the common areas, and an individual that is willing to be the name on and contact person for the application.

Your Strata Corporation should be the first people to speak to about an individual that can apply on behalf of the strata. Once you know this, a Qualified System Provider will be able to help you through all the steps to apply for the Home Battery Scheme subsidy and a low-interest loan if needed.

Ask what the battery will be able to power during an outage.

If a goal is to have a battery that can provide power to your common areas during an outage, it will be important to understand how your battery will do this, what it will be able to power, and if there are any additional costs for the feature.

A Qualified System Provider should talk you through what the battery brand/s you are considering can and cannot do during an outage, and what extra costs might be involved, if any. In many cases you should expect that a battery might be able to power things like lights and powerpoints during an outage, but will be unlikely to help with items like air-conditioning or lifts.

Consider where a battery can be safely installed.

Safety is an important consideration when looking at where a battery can be installed at your strata. Your installer will need to consider things like ventilation, weather, fireproofing, proximity to heat or ignition sources, potential for impact from other items, and manufacturer's guidelines when determining where your battery can be safely installed.

A Qualified System Provider or the **battery manufacturer** will be able to guide you on the things to consider for a safe installation location. As a guide, you should expect that the battery will not be able to be installed in a habitable area, and any location in a carpark or similar environment could require extra safety measures (like bollards) to minimise the chance of impact.

Check if you are part of an embedded network.

For most battery installations, approval to have the battery installed and connected to the grid will require discussions with your electricity retailer and SA Power Networks. These are discussions that a Qualified System Provider will handle on your behalf. However some stratas are also part of an 'embedded network', which is a private electricity network that delivers electricity to many dwellings through a single connection point to the grid. If your strata is part of an embedded network, you will also need to seek approval from the 'Embedded Network Operator'.

Your Strata Corporation should be the first people to speak to, to understand if your building is part of an embedded network and if so how to get in touch with the Embedded Network Operator. If the Strata Corporation is not sure, you could also consider speaking to the building owner.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

As this fact sheet shows, there are many things to consider when it comes to batteries for strata common areas. But with the right information and knowing your options, it could be an investment that lowers your strata's running costs and gives benefits to everyone who lives at the property.

When you are ready to learn more and get started on a battery, these next steps will help you on your path:

- Visit the Home Battery Scheme website at homebatteryscheme.sa.gov.au to learn more about the Scheme, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to Qualified System Providers. You can also call the Home Battery Scheme enquiries line on **8463 3555**.

- Speak to your Strata Corporation about how a battery could help with common areas, and find out whether the property is part of an embedded network, how many people in the strata are interested in having a battery for the common areas, and who could start speaking to Qualified System Providers.
- Talk to a range of Qualified System Providers about your options, what you want to achieve, and how they can guide you along the best path for you. As with any significant purchase, we recommend talking to more than one System Provider and obtaining multiple quotes.
- Make an informed decision that is best suited to the needs of your strata.

South Australia's Home Battery Scheme.

Affordable, reliable power is here.



For more information, visit homebatteryscheme.sa.gov.au
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