

# Re: Inquiry into Renewable and Affordable Energy for Apartments

Victorian Legislative Assembly  
Environment and Planning Committee  
Parliament of Victoria

May 2026

**LET ME  
BE FRANK.**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at the Inquiry on 30 April 2026. We valued the astute questions asked by panel and as invited, are following up with some supporting information on key points.

### **Social transmission must be designed in**

Peer-to-peer learning and information exchange is essential to drive change at scale.

The influence of peers has consistently proven to be a powerful mechanism. We must bring apartment communities - owners, residents and managers - together for online and offline events. We need to share success stories and expose challenges.

As council staff will attest, events designed especially for apartment communities are consistently well attended and often sold out. The 2024 High Life Expo is just one example with over 1,100 registrations for the in-person event. Apartment community leaders want to connect with each other.

Engaging apartment owners and residents is not ever a challenge. The challenge is providing them with the policy and legislative foundations they need to make change, along with the programmatic, technical and financial support.

### **Legislation is an essential foundation but can't stand alone**

Legislative updates must be implemented to provide foundations for change. However, (just like technology) it isn't the panacea.

Apartment building communities will still need a range of direct support including implementation mentorship. As suppliers attested to in the Inquiry, working with apartment communities takes longer and is more resource intensive than working with other customer types. Well informed, committed and engaged suppliers are important but it's unfair and uneconomic to rely solely on suppliers to do the heavy lifting supporting apartment communities.

Owners corporation committees are likely to be more motivated and successful in completing energy upgrades if they can tap into support from peers and programs designed and funded to provide support.



It was a full house at the 2024 High Life Expo. An event all about electrification, sustainability and living well in apartment building communities.

### **Equity: Renewable and affordable energy for apartments**

Apartments house high proportions of renters, migrants, people with lower incomes and single person households, people who are highly exposed to climate risks and more likely to miss out on energy transition benefits.

According to a [2023 report from AHURi](#), apartments in Australia are more likely than other dwelling types to house renters. In Victoria, 45% of apartments are home to renters. Private apartments are also more likely to house migrants (57%), people who speak a language other than English at home (50%) and single-person households (35%) (Easthope et al. 2018). Private apartments house a substantial proportion of lower income households. Of all private apartment households living in buildings of four or more storeys, 39% have a household income in the bottom two quintiles (Easthope et al. 2020a).

## **Maintenance plans and funding can create systemic change over time**

Updating the Owners Corporation Act to mandate electrification in maintenance planning and funding is a huge opportunity that will drive change in the base building that will flow through in the apartments themselves. It's a rare intervention that will benefit owners and crucially, renters, who are so often lock out of all-electric, renewable-energy powered homes.

Of course, a substantial legislative change of this nature will need to be flagged with the sector early and phased in over time.

Prior to the legislative change commencing, the right supports and evidence base must be in place to give community confidence that the change is both possible and beneficial.

There is a need for detailed, long-term case studies and exemplars which document processes, highlight challenges and share enabling tools and templates that other apartment communities can freely use.

## **More work is required to strengthen the VEU and Solar programs for the apartment sector**

VEU and Solar for Apartments are good programs and we commend the Government for starting to tackle program development for apartment communities.

While the programs provide a funding mechanism, they do not adequately connect people with the support systems needed to make upgrades more likely to succeed.

Both programs are heavily reliant on suppliers, unfunded local electrification groups, events like High Life, and local governments to help support the technical, collective decision-making and change processes. While it's wonderful to have these groups, crucial information that could help other is lost due to an inevitable lack of co-ordination and inconsistent delivery due to sporadic and insufficient program funding.

## **More detailed inclusion of apartments in the Gas Substitution Roadmap**

During the inquiry, there was discussion about longer-term planning challenges (i.e. how can we know which buildings can electrify / install solar/ Ev charging etc). That's why the specific inclusion of apartments into the Gas Substitution Roadmap is essential. Currently, the scale of the challenge is opaque and therefore harder to tackle.

We need to develop a much more complete picture of the building stock, energy infrastructure, residential make up etc. We also need the DNSPs to tell us where there are network constraints and plan for and promote their upgrades so following, building can plan for their own upgrade.

Crucially, the DNSPs and government need to fund DNSP infrastructure upgrades where there are network constraints. The current model - relying on owners corporations funding substation upgrades - is completely untenable and inequitable.

## **People need to understand what they are buying into**

While this inquiry is focused on renewable energy, it is inextricably linked to the legislative frameworks and culture of apartment living. It's impossible to switch an apartment building to renewable without navigating the governance and culture of the building's community.

An overwhelming number of people who buy into apartment buildings do not understand their role and their legal obligation to actively participate in the management and maintenance of the building. People often buy an apartment because it's what they can afford or they think it's low maintenance. While the apartment itself might be low maintenance, operating and maintaining the larger building infrastructure, systems and governance - let alone making the switch to all electric, renewable energy - is anything but!

We need invest in a sustained public campaign about strata living - what it means, what it requires, and how to do it well - to shift the cultural norm away from a default assumption that apartments are 'low maintenance'. We also need Consumer Affairs Victoria to be properly resourced and committed to engaging with the sector.

## It's easy for us to point to what government needs to, but you might also ask - what are you doing?

Let Me Be Frank staff have been passionately chipping away at the complex challenge of all-electric renewable energy apartment building upgrades for more than 10 years. They have carried the challenge from job-to-job, gathering and sharing insights from hundreds of owners and residents.

Prior to being employed with Let Me Be Frank, our staff delivered:

- [Unlocking Sustainable Strata](#): technical advice and electrification infographics for a range of apartment building typologies
- Smart Blocks: a national sustainability-in-strata program with City of Melbourne, City of Sydney and Strata Communities Association (Vic)
- 2015-2017 High Life Expos, City of Melbourne
- Hi-res: How to make positive change around your apartment building, Moreland Energy Foundation

As Let Me Be Frank our portfolio of strata work includes:

- [Working with Apartment & Strata Communities: A Handbook for \(Victorian\) Local Governments](#)
- [Local Government Home Energy Upgrades Models](#): a review of home energy upgrade approaches for general households, climate-vulnerable households, and apartments
- [Strata disaster](#): How prepared are our apartment communities for emergencies and disasters? with Owners Corporation Network
- 2024 High Life Expo and [High Life Living website](#)
- Industry consultations, including EEC's Commercial Building Electrification Roadmap (inc. apartment buildings), Race for 2030's Realising Retrofit Opportunities for Apartment Buildings, Sweltering Cities Heatwave Impacts on Renters in Apartments, Solar Victoria's Apartments program, and the Sustainability in Strata Advocacy Working Group.
- Ongoing workshops and community presentations including to One Millions Homes Alliance, All Energy Australia, Electrify Boroondara, Electrify Southside, Owners Corporations Network, City of Yarra.
- With funding from the Victorian Government and in partnership with Owner Corporation Network, [Electrifying Apartment Buildings](#)

## A new, sustainable apartment not-for-profit is coming...

After consulting with apartment communities, Owners Corporation Network, Strata Communities Association, the broader strata sector and suppliers, we are in the process of establishing [High Life Living](#) as an independent not-for-profit organisation.

The intention is for High Life Living to:

- Be the central repository for Victorian apartment building communities looking to improve resilience or implement efficient, renewable and all-electric upgrades
- Develop the missing and much needed tools, templates, stories and detailed case studies
- Point to suppliers actively working to support apartment buildings communities with their resilience and energy upgrade projects
- Host ongoing in-person and online events, including the 2026 High Life Expo
- Deliver on-ground research and publish the results in a format that will support both policy change and deliver practical advice for apartment building communities
- Continue to bring stakeholders together to share information and advocate for change

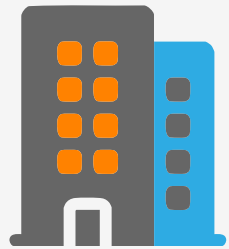
We will soon be announcing funding that will support our research endeavors for the next two years. Knowing that apartment building communities take many years to implement base building upgrades, we will be investigating other future funding channels to ensure crucial research and information sharing can be maintained.

**Save the date: You're invited to next High Life Expo, Saturday 3rd October at the Melbourne Town Hall. Presented by High Life Living, City of Melbourne and partners.**

# IN VICTORIA

Source: 2024 Australasian Strata Insights, UNSW City Futures Research Centre and SCA

## HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVE IN STRATA?



501,781

Private apartment residents\*



770,298

Residents in other dwelling types\*\*

18%

of Victorian residents live in strata\*\*



\*\*Conservative estimate derived from analysis of land titles data on strata and community schemes and census data on dwellings, households and individuals.

\*2021 census data.

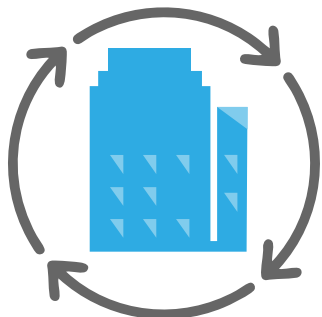
## PROPERTY VALUE

Total insured value of schemes



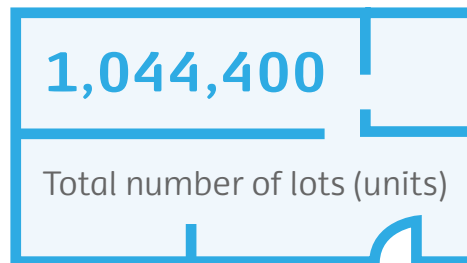
Estimate based on data provided by strata insurers who insure 43% of all strata and community lots in VIC.

## NUMBER OF STRATA SCHEMES & LOTS



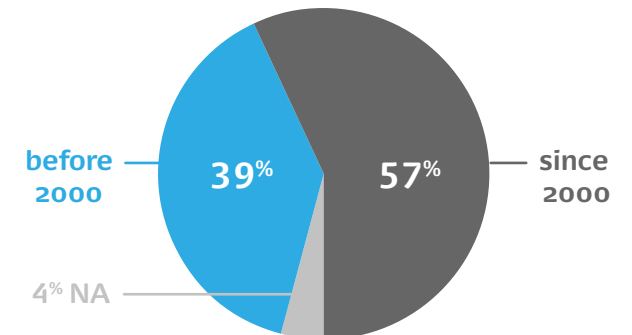
128,896

Total number of schemes (developments)



Data obtained from Land Use Victoria up to September 2024 and includes both commercial and residential/mixed use community title and strata schemes.

## Schemes registered





## Wawa!

This document was developed on Aboriginal lands of the Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung people, whose sovereignty was never ceded.



We recognise that First Nations people have deep knowledge and experience of resilience and sustainability that is critical to heal country, people, and communities.



Despite the ongoing impacts of colonisation, First Nations people are still generously sharing knowledge and working towards reconciliation and treaty. For this, we pay our respects and deep thanks to First Nations elders past and present, and extend this to all First Nations people. We endeavour to learn from and lift up First Nations expertise in our work.

We live, work and play on Aboriginal land. 1% of our income is paid to local First Nations organisations. We encourage everyone to pay the rent as part of the reparation system that supports First Nations self-determination and fairer wealth redistribution.

Let Me Be Frank is a member of 1% for the Planet. We donate 1% of our annual income to environmental organisations. We are proud to be part of a global network that is accelerating smart environmental giving.

Every year we work to reduce our emissions. Emissions we can't avoid are offset with Greenfleet.

Our donations and emission offsets, along with a summary of our achievements, are reported in our annual [Accountability Report](#).

Disclaimer: This document and the information it contains was current at the date of publication and may not reflect events or circumstances which occurred at a later date. The content of this document was developed using the best available information and in good faith. Let Me Be Frank and our collaborators cannot be held liable for the accuracy of the information presented in this document.

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