

RENEWABLE & AFFORDABLE ENERGY FOR APARTMENTS

Submission summary — Glen Morris, Smart Energy Lab

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The problem

Australia has 4 million rooftop solar installations. The average household saves over \$1,500 a year. But **12.1% of Victorians live in apartments** and are largely locked out of that dividend. **30.9% of Victorian renters are already in rental stress**. The gap will widen unless governance, metering, and consumer-protection settings evolve.

Why now — four enabling shifts

- Solar-sharing technology is mature and safety-regulated (ESV guidance published).
- Smart meters — Victoria at ~99% penetration; national universal rollout by 2030.
- Active export management is operational (Victoria's emergency backstop).
- Community batteries and VPPs have moved from pilot to program scale.

Recommendations

| Reform | What and why |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Streamline owners corporation approvals | Define a category of “renewable & electrification works” with a lower voting threshold than “significant alteration,” plus model rules and template contracts. The #1 governance blocker. |
| 2. Scale shared rooftop & solar-sharing | Make Solar for Apartments permanent; add a high-complexity stream for larger buildings; bring embedded networks into scope under a clear access protocol. Program already reaches 3,200+ families, ~half renters, with up to \$500/year savings. |
| 3. Renter & social housing access package | Fund switchboard/meter-room enabling works; require tenant pass-through of bill benefits; aggregate procurement for social housing (APVI estimates 1.8 GW of untapped potential). |
| 4. Allow & regulate plug-in/balcony solar ★ | Establish a Victorian “plug-in DER” pathway: ESV-led working group, anchored in Australian electrical safety standards, staged pilots (export-capable, export-blocked, DC-coupled-with-battery), clear rules on metering, embedded networks, landlord/OC permissions, certification, disclosure. Germany registered 800,000 balcony systems in 2024 alone. The only form of solar a renter can take with them. |
| 5. Strengthen embedded-network settings | Treat embedded-network reform as an apartment-renewables enabler, not just a consumer-protection issue. Maintain VDO price cap; align with AER guideline reforms; create a state access protocol so embedded-network customers can join shared solar and batteries. |
| 6. Target community batteries & VPPs | Site batteries and design subscription models for apartment-dense areas; ensure renter inclusion; link to VPP value-stacking; require transparent allocation under smart-meter settlement. |
| 7. Require solar-ready & battery-ready new builds | Update planning/building requirements: reserved roof space, conduit/riser capacity, meter-room space, isolation provisions. Retrofits are expensive; this is cheap at construction. |

★ *The recommendation Victoria can lead on nationally and that most directly addresses renter equity.*

Bottom line

Victoria has the targets (65% renewables by 2030, 95% by 2035), the infrastructure (~99% smart meters), and a working program (Solar for Apartments). What remains is a governance and equity gap. Close it — and Victoria sets the national template.

Full submission references Solar Victoria, Energy Safe Victoria, AEMC, AEMO, AER, APVI, ABS, Clean Energy Regulator, Clean Energy Council, Fraunhofer ISE, VDE.