

As Strata Manager, Where Do You Start?

By Strata Energy Services

There is no doubt that the wave of electric vehicles is well and truly underway. As the numbers of electric vehicles in our community increases, the need for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations will naturally flow into the strata space. In this article, we explore what steps are required to manage the queries from the communities you manage.

Electric Vehicle Market Growth

The global EV market is growing rapidly with about 2.2 million passenger plug-in electric vehicles sold around the world in 2019. In Australia, electric vehicles are forecast to reach upfront price parity with traditional combustion engine vehicles from 2024. In addition to reducing carbon emissions, electric vehicles present a significant opportunity for motorists to reduce their yearly car operating costs. Today, the average driver can save about \$1,300 per year on fuel costs by switching to an electric vehicle, as well as saving about \$300 on annual maintenance costs¹.

While there are moves across Australia to increase the number of public charging stations, most charging is still done at home. Strata is not immune to this. As you would be aware, EV charging stations are considered and often included in new strata developments – by either establishing EV charges ready for use, or at least provisioning for electrical conduits and wiring to make it easy to install electric vehicle charging equipment when the need arrives. However, there are over three hundred thousand existing strata schemes around Australia housing over 2.6 million people, that eventually could require discussions in relation to retrofitting EV charging infrastructure

to meet growing needs.

Considerations for Strata

You receive a call or an email from a Committee Member. You know the one. "I've just bought an Electric Vehicle and the car company say they can organise to install a charger for me" they exclaim excitedly, "how do I organise that?" Sound familiar? If not yet, it's coming.

Is the charger solely for use of an individual resident? If yes, who is responsible for any repairs for damage caused by the EV charger on common property (electrical or physical)? Would the owner need their own insurance cover to mitigate the risk to the Owners Corporation/Body Corporate? Would the Owners Corporation/Body Corporate need to increase their level of cover if the owner fails to have sufficient cover?

If the Owners Corporation/Body Corporate chooses to install a communal EV charger, common questions or concerns include who covers the costs and how it is split amongst owners. These costs include items such as:

- Upgrade of existing infrastructure
- Energy management & cost reimbursement
- Repair & maintenance cost
- Insurance cover
- Health & safety compliance

Additional considerations include:

- What bylaws are needed to govern EV chargers use, including times of use, where it is to be located, will there be any obstruction of common property whilst being used, etc?



- Can we include solar and battery storage to reduce the carbon footprint of the building?
- Will the addition of EV charging facilities in the building be a positive thing and add value to the property?
- What is the level of interest among owners and residents to use EV charges and would they be prepared to pay for infrastructure upgrades?

Once you get past these hurdles and questions about ownership, costs and related concerns and all agree a path forward is required, what else needs to be considered and how do you get started?

Site Assessment

The objective of a site assessment is to understand the options and impact on a building.

A site assessment and feasibility study should include the following:

- Technical analysis reviewing the existing infrastructure including

- main switchboard capacity
- Review of the electric schematics & reticulation systems
- Energy usage management, including input cost and load management system options
- Cost recovery methodology from users of the service should the power be drawn from common property energy supply
- Is it reasonable for the Owners Corporation/Body Corporate to profit from energy cost recovery to assist with payback of any capital outlay?
- Understanding the availability of the provision of dedicated parking spots for EV chargers

Once these steps have been completed, the proposed installation can now be designed, budgeted for and reviewed prior to approval and acceptance by the Owners Corporation/Body Corporate.

What to Look Out For When assessing EV Charger Needs for Your Building?

As the demand for in-house EV charging service has increased, so have the number of EV charger providers and installers in Australia. When looking at options, the following, amongst other items, should be taken into consideration:

- Are you looking for a turnkey managed solution from an EV operator?
- Advice on the best options to increase the value of the building including 'future proofing';

- do we set up options and capacity for additional potential needs, or
- is it better to start with the minimum number of charging stations?
- Do we install an open protocol solution providing a universal platform to work with many charging stations hardware & service providers?
- Is it better to have a hardware & software combination solution?
- Is there an energy management system provided ensuring we don't exceed the energy capacity of the building?
- Are there any ongoing fees to Owners Corporation/Body Corporate after established?

The Road Ahead

While the retrofitting of electric vehicle charging stations is a relatively new and potentially a complex process to many of us now, demand for such facilities within strata communities is set to increase as affordability of electric vehicles improve and the longer term benefits both in operating cost and to the environment become apparent. Being at the front of the learning curve in understanding and driving this initiative will help set you ahead of the pack.



“ I want to set up an Electric Vehicles Charger for my new car

Switching to an electric vehicle can save **\$1300** on fuel and **\$300** on maintenance a year



¹ Source: Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030

