

Kerin Benson Lawyers Fact Sheet 7

Energy Efficiency and Strata: The Hidden Costs of ‘Upgrading’ Lighting Systems

In recent times there has been a lot of literature suggesting that strata schemes should implement energy-saving lighting systems, such as LEDs and fluorescent lights. With the potential to simultaneously improve a strata scheme’s energy efficiency whilst reducing expenditure, it is easy to see why implementing such lighting systems has been heralded as a ‘win-win’ situation. However, owners corporations need to exercise caution when deciding whether to install energy-saving lighting systems as they may contain various hidden costs.

Two recent reports¹ have highlighted some of the many issues with energy-saving lighting systems that are often overlooked. A summary of the issues are in the table below:

Lighting System	Issues
LED Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is a wide variation in the quality and performance of LED systems on the market as there are no standards for the testing of LEDs. As a result there is inconsistency between performance and the claims made by manufacturers; ○ LED performance is dependent on the local temperature. If the right conditions do not exist, LEDs may operate at as low as 50% of their quoted luminance; and ○ LED systems are often not compatible with a building’s existing transformer.
Fluorescent Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fluorescent lights often have lower illuminance and may fall short of the Australian Lighting Standards. Some models require regular maintenance to meet these minimum standards. ○ There is a large number of products on the market that vary in quality. The supplier should be prepared to provide certification that the product meets the Australian Lighting Standards.

In light of these reports, owners corporations should be prepared to ask the right questions of contractors when looking to install an energy-saving lighting systems. This will help ensure that they receive a quality product that complies with the Australian Lighting Standards.

¹ *Energy Saver – Energy Efficient Lighting Technology Report*, NSW Government – Office of Environment & Heritage, 2014; *Building Code of Australia Residential Lighting Control*, Lighting, Art + Science Pty Ltd, 2009.