

# The solar resort: An industry game changer



By Mandy Clarke, *Editor*

**Progressive. Proactive. Forward thinking.**

These three traits can be attributed to Noosa Lakes Resort body corporate and onsite management team after the implementation of a resort-wide solar solution that sets the standard for resort, strata and body corporate entities, both now and into the future.

Noosa Lakes Resort sits on the banks of Lake Doonella, just metres away from the pristine Noosa River and Noosa Marina, it's one of the most idyllic environments in Australia. The resort is about to become carbon positive, and this project could revolutionise how the whole industry looks at renewable energy.

Manager Ryan Rae explained that the Noosa Lakes Resort solar project was in the planning stage for over two years before installation began and is now almost complete. He said the project was the brainchild of one of the resort's body corporate committee members, Ian Wright.

The solar idea was spearheaded by a persistent Ian, who spent



many hours researching, and planning the project.

**The project...**

Noosa Lakes Resort has installed over 400kW of the planned 550kW solar system. When complete in August, this project will form the largest installation in the Noosa Shire, more than doubling the size of the next

largest project. The renewable energy project has been modelled to offset 125 percent of the resort's carbon footprint based on historical energy use of the resort and divert money that was going to electricity retailers to the body corporate sinking fund, benefiting all members.

The driving force, body corporate member and Noosa Shire local

of 16 years, Ian Wright responded to questions about the project...

**Why was it undertaken?**

Sustainability: Noosa Lakes Resort is focused on improving sustainability.

Ryan Rae and the entire onsite management team have been working tirelessly to increase the resort's sustainability credentials



by harvesting rainwater, implementing electricity usage savings through timers and LEDs and introducing more native plants, for starters. Therefore, when an owner came to the body corporate to seek approval for a solar system, it occurred to me that the body corporate should investigate the opportunity to utilise the body corporate owned asset (the roof) to the benefit of all owners.

Revenue: Solar is great for the environment, but it has also proven time and time again to be an exceptional revenue stream. After considerable research, innovative ideas and careful electricity retailer selection by the chosen solar design and installation company, Home and Energy, the body corporate is projected to achieve a 20 percent return in the first year!

Other positive benefits that were not initially considered are:

- Solar panels reduce heat gain and make the properties cooler in summer;
- The increased revenue will have a positive effect on profitability for

owners and sale values via reduced annual body corporate levies.

### Which solar retailer did you choose and why?

The most important part of this process was applying appropriate due diligence in selecting the solar retailer. First, they had to be an approved solar retailer and Clean Energy Council Accredited company.

I can't overstate how important it is to find the right solar retailer. We initially went with a Brisbane based company that on paper seemed to tick all the boxes. Unfortunately, we didn't know what we didn't know and after one year of planning it became apparent that we needed to find a new solar retailer. Fortunately Zero Emissions Noosa and Tourism Noosa were running a "Solar for Strata" conference. One of the panelists was from local company Home and Energy.

Home and Energy, were backed with strong recommendation from other iconic Sunshine Coast businesses. They worked closely with the body corporate, understood the complexities of the project and aligned with our

sustainability goals. They also had the resource and knowledge to go above and beyond your 'run of the mill' solar offering to provide a solution and service that exceeded all others.

Now that we are halfway through the installation, I am aware of just how much effort it takes for a solar retailer to deliver an exceptional experience and outcome. I commend Home and Energy for their commitment to this end.

### Equipment choice?

We wanted to install equipment that not only met the resort's current energy needs but also our future energy needs. Consequently, we selected equipment that was able to integrate with electric vehicle chargers, had the ability to control the operation of equipment to best utilize the energy available and was able to be integrated with batteries in the future.

The equipment that Home and Energy put forward is way ahead of the pack when it comes to this level of future proofing. It also provides a level of monitoring and ease of maintenance that was unrivalled and allowed the time-poor committee members to not have to worry about the maintenance of the system as it essentially maintains itself with alerts, panel level monitoring, quarterly reporting and a level of long-term performance that other systems could not promise.

The technology of the system also gave peace of mind with its inbuilt rapid shutdown feature in the event of fire or fault.

### Lessons learned?

While diverting funds from the electricity retailers to the sinking fund is clearly a no-brainer, a successful project requires a lot more than sticking some panels on the roof.

It has been a journey to say the least through finding the correct business model to suit the body corporate and then establishing the required legal framework, solar design and modeling, retailer and equipment selection, energy retailer selection, Energex and clean energy council compliance to name a few of the hurdles.

But we have done it, it can be repeated, and I implore other Body Corporate Committees to begin looking at the viability of solar for their roof space.

Andrew Davidson, Director Noosa District Body Corporate wholly agreed with Ian.

He said: "The Team at Noosa District Body Corporate Management were proud to be able to support and assist the Noosa Lakes Resort Committee, lead by Ian Wright to undertake this major initiative. The project was complex, however the successful implementation was due to a collaborative approach taken by the Noosa Lakes Committee, The Noosa Lakes On site Management Team and the Team at Home and Energy." ▲



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