

# New flats take a shine to solar

Gareth ParkerState Political Editor | September 23, 2015, 12:30 am

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Engineer Edwin Cole with Jemma Green from Curtin University. Picture: Mogens Johansen/The West Australian

## A pilot program aims to boost solar panel uptake in apartments by offering a framework to share the benefits of cheap solar power between owners and tenants.

Though 170,000 Perth households have solar systems installed, apartments have been much slower on the uptake because they are more likely to be owned by investors who do not have a financial interest in spending extra on solar panels so that their tenants get the benefit of cheap power.

But Curtin University research, headed by sustainability policy institute project officer Jemma Green, aims to add an incentive to the installation of solar panels and battery systems by making strata companies responsible for billing individual apartments for the cost of electricity, with solar systems installed across an entire apartment complex.

Under the model, a strata company would have a single point of connection to Western Power's network and would be responsible for billing individual apartments.

The installation of battery systems mean that a solar-connected apartment building under the model could rely on its own electricity generation for as much as 90 per cent of the time.

Ms Green believes such a system could pay for itself in eight years on current costs.

"It seeks to create a match between who pays and who benefits from solar energy, it's a micro-grid," she said.

"The owner can give the tenant discounted electricity, or they can charge, under strata law, up to the A1 Synergy (retail) tariff.

"Even if (landlords) charge the same price as Synergy, the tenant gets the benefit of carbon-free electricity.

"But obviously the revenue-sharing model is very good in attracting tenants if you get a discount on your electricity bill and carbon-free electricity."

The model is being installed in a White Gum Valley demonstration unit of three residences, called Gen Y, which is intended to showcase sustainable design.

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