

BODY CORPORATE FACT SHEET

Improvements to Common Property

What needs approval, and from whom

Air conditioning, security screens, shade sails, satellite dishes, a new fence, a repaint. Some of this is maintenance the body corporate simply gets on with. Some of it is an improvement needing a specific approval — and the level of approval turns on what it costs.

Getting this wrong in either direction is expensive. A committee that approves an improvement beyond its power has made a decision that can be overturned; an owner who installs without approval can be required to deal with the consequences.

1. Maintenance or improvement?

The Act does not define maintenance, and it can be hard to tell whether work is an improvement or maintenance. Adjudicators' orders have used a like-for-like rule.

The work	How it is treated	Why
A wooden fence replaced with a similar wooden fence	Maintenance	No change to the existing fence.
A wooden fence replaced with a Colorbond fence	Improvement	There is a change to the existing fence.
Foyer tiles repaired with a similar modern tile because the original is unavailable	Maintenance	If you cannot get the same product or material, a change is not automatically an improvement.
Installing air conditioning	Improvement	A non-structural change is still a change.

Most day-to-day work is maintenance. A change can include adding, removing or swapping something.

2. Improvements by the body corporate

Under the Standard, Accommodation and Small Schemes Modules, the approval a body corporate needs depends on the cost of the improvement.

Cost of the improvement	Authorised by
Up to \$300 × the number of lots — the basic improvement limit	Committee resolution at a committee meeting, subject to the committee's spending limit.
More than the basic improvement limit, but not more than \$2,000 × the number of lots	Ordinary resolution at a general meeting. There can be only one such approval a year.
More than \$2,000 × the number of lots	Special resolution at a general meeting.

The committee sits under two ceilings, not one

The committee cannot spend over its spending limit, which defaults to \$200 × the number of lots unless increased by ordinary resolution. If the limit has not been increased, the committee cannot approve more than \$200 × lots.

And the committee cannot approve an improvement over \$300 × lots even if its spending limit has been set higher. Whichever ceiling is lower is the one that binds.

Where a number of improvements make up one project, the approval needed is based on the total cost of the project. The committee cannot divide a single project into smaller parts to bring it within its spending limit.

3. Improvements by an owner to common property

An owner can make an improvement to common property if it is approved by the committee, or by the body corporate at a general meeting.

The committee can approve an owner's improvement only if all three of the following are met.

- The total cost is under \$3,000.
- The improvement does not detract from the appearance of a lot.
- The body corporate is satisfied that the use and enjoyment of the improvement is not likely to be a breach of the owner's duties as an occupier — for example by causing a nuisance to others in the scheme.

If the committee cannot approve the work, it must be authorised by ordinary resolution at a general meeting.

A note on the \$3,000 figure

The Queensland Government guidance expresses this threshold as "less than \$3,000" on its improvements page and as "\$3,000 or less" on its exclusive use page. At exactly \$3,000 the two readings differ. The safe course is to treat \$3,000 as needing a general meeting.

What the owner takes on

- The owner must comply with any conditions of approval, and must maintain the improvement — including where it sits on common property.
- The owner must give the body corporate details of the type of work and the value of the improvement, which is recorded in the register of common property authorisations.
- If the improvement increases the body corporate's insurance premium, the owner may have to pay the extra.

The obligation to maintain runs with the lot. A buyer inherits responsibility for improvements a previous owner made — which is why the register is a search item on a sale.

4. Improvements to a lot

There is no general statutory approval requirement for work confined to a lot. Approval is triggered in two ways: a by-law requiring it, or the work affecting common property.

Hard flooring is the standing example. Putting timber or tiles into a lot is the reason for many body corporate disputes, and some bodies corporate have a by-law requiring approval for changes to flooring. Even where no approval is needed, an owner should consider the effect on others — if hard floors make extra noise for the lot below, that may breach a noise by-law or create a nuisance — under section 167 of the BCCM Act, or section 51 of the Building Units and Group Titles Act 1980 for a scheme under that Act.

5. Module variations

Module	How it differs
Commercial	The committee cannot approve improvements to common property by the body

Module	How it differs
Specified Two-lot Schemes	corporate at all — these need an ordinary resolution or an adjudicator. But there is no limit on the value of an owner's improvement the committee can approve. Body corporate improvements are authorised by lot owner agreement. An owner may improve common property by lot owner agreement, and there are no limits on the cost.
Standard, Accommodation, Small Schemes	The dollar tiers set out above apply.
BUGT Act (subsidiary bodies corporate)	The committee can approve an improvement under \$2,000 × the number of lots and within its spending limit. An owner improving common property needs a resolution without dissent. The body corporate can relieve the owner of the duty to maintain.

Under the Mixed Use Development Act 1993, the Integrated Resort Development Act 1987 and the Sanctuary Cove Resort Act 1985, it is the higher-level body corporate's responsibility to make improvements to its own common property or thoroughfares.

6. If there is disagreement

The body corporate or committee must decide whether the proposed work is maintenance or an improvement when working out what approval is needed. An owner who disagrees with the decision can apply for dispute resolution.

Source and disclaimer

Source: Queensland Government body corporate guidance at www.qld.gov.au/housing/body-corporate, current at 2 September 2026.

Legislation referred to: Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997 (Qld) ss 159 and 167; Body Corporate and Community Management (Standard Module) Regulation 2020 ss 186 and 187. The Accommodation and Small Schemes Modules contain equivalent provisions under their own numbering.

Dollar thresholds are not indexed and are set by regulation. Confirm the current figures before relying on them.

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Talk to us

If this raises a question about your scheme, we are happy to help.

Estate Plaza Body Corporate Management (part of Century 21 Coast to Coalfields)

Upstairs, Shop 5, 68 Sydney Street, Mackay QLD 4740 | 07 4837 1788

bc.nq@century21.com.au | estateplaza.com.au