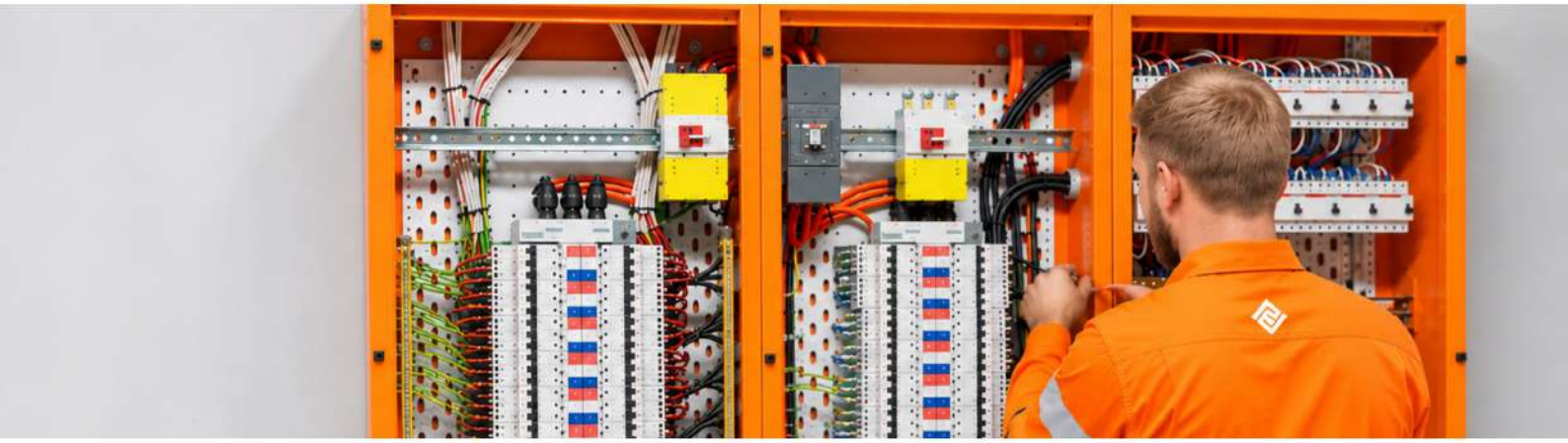
PLATINUM
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COMMERCIAL SWITCHBOARD UPGRADES

Switchboard Upgrade Readiness: What to Check Before You Start

The switchboard upgrades that run smoothly are the ones where the facility manager asked the right questions before procurement, not during construction.

Drawing on Platinum Electricians' upgrades across council buildings, aged care facilities and retail portfolios, this guide summarises the readiness checks to complete between recognising the need for an upgrade and issuing the scope of works.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Assess readiness before issuing the scope — confirm site, team and contractor are aligned on conditions, constraints and compliance obligations, separate from the technical design
- Start with a condition assessment by a licensed electrician — asbestos-backed panels, inadequate fault ratings, thermal damage and poor access can each change scope, timing and cost
- Plan for current and future loads — measure actual demand, allow for EV chargers, solar and batteries, and confirm supply arrangements with the network provider before finalising the design
- Map critical systems early — access control, CCTV, fire panels, BMS and nurse call systems may need temporary supply or UPS cover during the changeover
- Plan the shutdown, not just the upgrade — a continuity plan covers duration, timing, temporary supply and stakeholder communication
- Keep records and choose a contractor with comparable experience — baseline documents before, and updated schedules, test results and certificates after, support future maintenance and audits

WHAT IS A SWITCHBOARD READINESS ASSESSMENT?

A readiness assessment is the structured process of confirming that your site, your team and your contractor are aligned on the conditions, constraints and outcomes of a switchboard upgrade before work begins.

For commercial, government, healthcare, aged care and retail sites, it is where operational priorities and technical requirements meet — confirming the upgrade will deliver what the building needs, within the constraints the business can accommodate.

Design, Readiness — and the Standards Behind Them

Technical design

Determines what the new switchboard will look like

Readiness assessment

Determines whether the site is prepared for the disruption, compliance obligations and operational demands

Compliance triggers

Modifying or replacing a main switchboard triggers requirements under AS/NZS 3000 and AS/NZS 61439

CONDITION FINDINGS THAT CHANGE THE PROJECT

FINDING	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	IMPACT ON THE UPGRADE
Asbestos	Backing boards in installations predating the late 1980s	Licensed removal before any electrical work begins, adding time, cost and specialist coordination
Rewireable fuses	Ceramic rewireable fuses	AS/NZS 3000 prohibits their reuse
Fault rating	Supply upgrades that lifted fault levels beyond the board's rating	The existing board may not be usable as temporary supply during staged works
Thermal damage	Scorching, melted insulation, discoloured terminals	Active degradation that limits how long the board can safely stay in service
Poor access	Cramped voids, storage areas, insufficient clearance	Relocation joins the scope — AS/NZS 3000 requires main switchboards to be safely and readily accessible

Document findings with photographs, test results and condition ratings — they become the baseline for measuring the upgrade and the evidence for compliance records.







RESOLVE CAPACITY AND LOAD BEFORE DESIGN

1. **Measure actual demand**
   Identify every connected load and measure real demand, not just nameplate ratings

2. **Compare against existing ratings**
   Check demand against the main breaker and busbar capacity — if it approaches or exceeds them, the upgrade is load-driven and the incoming supply may also need upgrading

3. **Check ways, fault current and supplementary supplies**
   Confirm spare ways and busbar capability for prospective fault current; where solar or batteries connect, verify busbar current ratings and temperature rise under AS/NZS 3000 and AS/NZS 4777.1

4. **Confirm supply arrangements early**
   Agree arrangements with the distribution network service provider before finalising design; NSW supply upgrades must integrate a compliant Service Protection Device



Future Loads to Allow For

- EV chargers — on Platinum Electricians' EV projects, the switchboard assessment is routinely the first step
- Additional air conditioning and commercial kitchen equipment
- Solar arrays and battery storage
- Data centre expansions and tenant fit-outs

MAP COMMUNICATIONS AND DATA DEPENDENCIES

Identify which systems draw power from the board being replaced, which cable trays, conduits and risers are shared between power and data, and what a shutdown will affect. Early coordination with your IT and communications team allows for temporary supply, UPS provisions or scheduled failovers — and is the time to improve power and data separation.

Critical Systems to Protect

- Access control, CCTV and alarm monitoring — avoid security and compliance gaps
- Fire detection panels and building management systems
- Structured cabling and network equipment
- Healthcare and aged care: nurse call, patient monitoring and medication storage



PLAN THE SHUTDOWN, NOT JUST THE UPGRADE

A continuity plan covers four areas — duration, timing, temporary supply and stakeholder communication — and each depends on the type of site.

SITE TYPE	PRIORITY	WHAT TO PLAN FOR
Retail	No trading disruption	After-hours or overnight work windows
Healthcare & aged care	Continuity of care	Scheduling around patient care; backup systems tested before the primary supply is isolated
Government & education	Minimal service impact	Major electrical work often scheduled during holiday periods
Single-tenancy commercial	Short shutdown	A straightforward board replacement may need a shutdown measured in hours
Multi-tenancy commercial	Staged works	Separate tenancy boards, shared common areas and complex metering may need staged shutdowns over several days

Generators, temporary distribution boards and staged switching keep critical systems running. Tenants, security and alarm monitoring providers, IT support and the network provider all need to know what is happening and when.

COMPLIANCE DOCUMENTATION

Before the upgrade

Switchboard schedule, previous test results, certificates of compliance, site drawings and records of modifications — or create them if none exist

After the upgrade

Certificate of compliance, updated schedules and drawings, and test results for circuit protection, insulation resistance, earth fault loop impedance and RCDs

Retain the records

Evidence for future contractors, insurance queries, compliance audits, property transactions and the next round of upgrades

IN CONCLUSION

An upgrade is only as smooth as the planning behind it

Confirming the existing board's safety status, resolving capacity and load, mapping communications dependencies, planning for continuity and gathering compliance documentation before procurement means these factors shape the project rather than disrupt it.

The result is an upgrade delivered on schedule, with minimal operational impact and the records to support future maintenance, audits and expansion.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Which Australian Standards apply to a commercial switchboard upgrade?

AS/NZS 3000 and AS/NZS 61439, plus AS/NZS 4777.1 where solar or batteries connect. In NSW, supply upgrades must integrate a compliant Service Protection Device under the NSW Service and Installation Rules.

What safety issues are common in older commercial switchboards?

Asbestos-containing backing boards, rewireable ceramic fuses, fault ratings too low for current supply levels and thermal damage. Each can change the scope, timing and method of the upgrade.

Will the upgrade affect our security, BMS and communications systems?

It can. Involve your IT and communications team early so temporary supply, UPS provisions or scheduled failovers keep access control, CCTV, fire panels, BMS and clinical systems running.

How long will the power be off?

A straightforward single-tenancy replacement may take hours; a multi-tenancy building may need staged shutdowns over several days. Temporary supply can keep critical systems running throughout.

What should we look for in a switchboard upgrade contractor?

Valid licences in every jurisdiction you operate in, public liability and professional indemnity insurance, audited ISO 9001, 45001 and 14001 systems, comparable project evidence, detailed methodology documents, temporary power capability and a dedicated project manager.

PLATINUM ELECTRICIANS

SWITCHBOARD SITE ASSESSMENT

One call organises a clear, documented recommendation for your switchboard.

Platinum Electricians has completed switchboard upgrades across council buildings, retirement villages, leisure centres, healthcare facilities and multi-tenancy commercial properties — backed by local teams across Australia, 24/7 emergency support and a 25-year track record in commercial electrical projects.

- Condition, capacity and access assessment
- ISO 9001 | 45001 | 14001 certified systems
- Methodology, Emergency and Waste Management Plans
- Certificates, test results and updated schedules

Call us on 1800 752 846 | service@platinumelectricians.com.au