

OCN 2012 Activity Update

OCN, thanks to the enormous contribution of its voluntary Board members, the contributions of enthusiastic members to expanding our knowledge base and making credible submissions on a variety of topics, and the generous support of its sponsors, has accomplished a great deal in what has been a year of extraordinary government activity.

In particular, our sponsors have enabled OCN to engage its first employee, a 4-day per week Executive Officer, and take office space accessible to the many working parties, meetings, forums and round tables that have been a feature of 2012. And their expertise has assisted OCN in contributing in a meaningful way to the many government reviews.

OCN is the organisation government, industry and the media look to on issues of critical importance to strata living.

2012 in Numbers

- 10 – years of owner support and advocacy (established 2002)
- 10 – submissions made at State and Federal level
- 3 – meetings with the Fair Trading Minister’s office
- 2 – meetings with MLCs
- 3 – Home Building Act round tables
- 4 – Building Professional Board forums
- 13 – radio interviews
- 16 – print articles (80+ articles relating to strata generally)
- 1 – TV interview
- 2 – public seminars
- 1 – Strata research paper launch
- 7 – voluntary Board members
- 1 – staff member

Media Highlights

- <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/2012-10-28/4326458#transcript> (Damning report on certification incl. OCN, click through for transcript and audio files)
- <http://www.switzer.com.au/video/margaret-lomas-karen-stiles/>

Education / Events

Members Meeting, March	Topic: Strata Legislation Review.
Members Meeting, May	Topic: WHS & Residential Strata.
Members Meeting, August	Topic: When Your Building Receives a Fire Order
Members Meeting, November	Topic: Lifts
Public Seminar, October	Topic: Buying off the Plan
Public Seminar, November	Topic: Buying into an Older Building

Fair Trading Grant for Owner Education – Apartment Living Guides have been written and are being turned into a web based, owner-friendly format. OCN is collaborating with the City of Sydney on delivering owner and prospective owner education from strata cradle to grave.

Thanks to our sponsors

Principal Sponsors



Major Sponsors



Advocacy

- **Planning System Review** - OCN has made two submissions to this major review, with a further paper to be released in 2012. OCN is focusing on the need for quality assurance in all construction as well as adequate amenity and separation of short and long term lettings.
- **Strata Legislation Review** - The Fair Trading Minister is reviewing existing strata legislation with a view to simplifying and strengthening this framework. OCN made a submission and is meeting with Fair Trading regularly to ensure the outcome is practical and effective.
- **Home Building Act Review** – In 2011 Home Owners Warranty protection was cut from 7 to 2 years (non-structural) and 6 years (definition excludes almost everything). Fair Trading then undertook a review in 2012. OCN and SCA made a joint submission calling for increased consumer protection. The fatal Bankstown fire fuelled media interest in building defects, and overcrowding, with OCN featuring in print, on radio and TV.
- **Federal Phoenix Companies Inquiry** – OCN made a submission on builders using phoenix companies to avoid defects rectification responsibility, pointing out the impact this has on the community.
- **NSW Construction Industry Insolvencies Inquiry** – OCN made a submission on the need to prevent insolvencies, noting the impact on strata owners left with defective buildings.
- **NSW Tribunals Review** – OCN made a submission urging more qualified staff, more consistent findings, and a better process from complaint to appeals. The establishment of a super tribunal was announced in October and OCN will lobby for a better deal for strata owners and residents.
- **Federal Strata Insurance Inquiries** into National Disaster Response then Affordability of Strata Insurance – submissions made to both recommended residential strata access to the Federal Terrorism Pool. OCN subsequently met with Treasury and is optimistic that this will occur.
- **NSW Emergency Services Levy Review** – OCN put in a submission recommending abolition of this unfair tax.
- **NSW Fair Trading Minister’s Advisory Committees** - OCN now sits on the Property Services Advisory Council. Representations will be made to sit on the Home Building Advisory Council (currently 100% industry representation, providing Home Owners Warranty advice) and the Home Warranty Insurance Scheme Board.
- **NSW Land & Property Information - Strata Industry Working Group** - This committee, which includes surveyors, valuers, the Building Professionals Board, Fair Trading and CTTT representatives, the Law Society and Australian College of Community Association Lawyers, Real Estate Institute and SCA, provides access to invaluable strata data and is proactive in improving industry processes and owner outcomes.
- **City Futures ‘Governing the Compact City’ Report** - OCN was a founding sponsor of this research, the first of its kind in Australia. The launch, with critical findings on strata challenges eg 85% of new buildings since 2000 have defects, generated substantial media interest, much featuring OCN.
- **Building Professionals Board (NSW Planning)** – OCN is working closely with the BPB to develop better construction industry training, licensing and accreditation, and enforcement to achieve reliable certification.
- **\$1million Energy Efficiency Information Grant project** – OCN is working with Strata Community Australia, Sydney and Melbourne Councils and Green Strata to develop tools to help owners corporations reduce energy consumption and costs (a significant portion of the balance sheet).
- **City of Sydney - Smart Green Apartments** - OCN is actively involved on this proactive committee, which is trialing real life greening initiatives in several OCN member schemes.
- **Child Safety** – OCN is participating with SCA and the AMA in a group think tank on preventing children falling from windows.