

2016 Year in Review

2016 in Numbers

- 14 – years of owner support and advocacy
- 10 – government submissions
- 1 – government Board appointment
- 23 – print/digital articles (+ multiple reprints)
- 5 – radio interviews
- 1 – academic research partnership
- 6 – voluntary Board members
- 2 – part-time staff members
- ? – wonderful volunteers who assisted with meetings, seminars, submissions

Member Services

During the year, in between the ongoing government consultations and submissions, we have:

- Introduced weekly forum digests
- Alerted members to a number of potential dangers eg combustible Samsung washing machines, flammable materials, NBN impacts on lifts and fire alarms, loose-fill asbestos
- Held four member meetings and five seminars, covering a variety of topics:
 - February: Short-term letting – What Does it Mean to You?
 - March: Preparing Yourself for the New Legislation
Buying Off The Plan – The Pros & Cons
 - May: Unravelling the Mysteries of the NBN
 - June: Writing Effective and Reasonable By-Laws
 - July: Dealing with a Difficult Executive Committee
 - August: What You Need to Know About the New Strata Laws
 - September: New Strata Laws – Preparing for the Future
 - November: Solar Powered Electric Car Charging
- Presented on the building defects bond at the City of Sydney City Conversations, which is available on vodcast

Achievements

- NSW Fair Trading Complaints Register – this public register aims to change the behaviour by naming and shaming business that receive multiple complaints
- The ban on developers acting as strata manager for the first ten years of their building's life has resulted in the sale of Meriton's strata management business, providing hope for owners attempting to address defects and other issues

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Advocacy

- **Government Committees** - OCN sat on the NSW Building Professionals Board (regulates building certifiers) until it was disbanded in September, as part of government's closure of independent Boards. OCN is also a member of the NSW Fair Trading Strata Reference Group, the City of Sydney Residential Apartment Sustainability Reference Group, and the NBN Lift & Fire Alarm Migration Group.
- **Dedicated Property Commissioner** – OCN joined with the Real Estate Institute to call for a dedicated Property Commissioner. We almost succeeded, with the Minister establishing a Property Division within NSW Fair Trading, headed by a Deputy Commissioner with this single focus.
- **NSW Strata & Community Title Law Reviews** – OCN participated in numerous roundtables as government finalised the new strata laws, which come into force on 30 November 2016, and 1 July 2017 for the defects bond regime. OCN continues to advocate for a robust defects inspection process.
- **Parliamentary Inquiry into the Adequacy of Regulation of Short Term Holiday Letting** – OCN attended the Parliamentary Committee hearing in Sydney to speak to the position put forward in 2015 that short-term letting is incompatible with residential living and reduces housing stock. OCN continues to campaign for prohibition in existing residential buildings, along with transparency and accountability where short-term letting is permitted.
- **NSW Building Professionals Act Review** – OCN participated in Ministerial roundtables aimed to develop accreditation and regulation of the fire industry by the end of 2016, following damning findings that current practices caused unsafe buildings to be approved. OCN also partnered with industry to lobby for adoption of all 150 recommendations to clean up the construction industry. Fire regulations are only the first step to improve building standards and address insolvencies.
- **Reform of the NSW Home Building Compensation Fund** – following OCN's strong representations for more consumer protection, the government has announced it will close the current scheme and allow private insurers to offer individual risk-based cover aimed at pricing poor performers out of the sector.
- **Strata Schemes Register** – having been approached by the Australian Bureau of Statistics looking to access security buildings to collect census data, we have started dialogue with NSW Fair Trading about the need for a strata ASIC-style Register, with contact details updated annually.
- **BASIX Review** – OCN participated in NSW Planning roundtables looking at increasing building sustainability index standards, which have lagged behind other states.
- **Real Estate & Property Services Industry Reforms** – OCN joined forces with the Real Estate Institute NSW to call for improved training and CPD standards for real estate agents and strata managers. In response, the government has put out a reform paper for comment.
- **Qld Property Law Review** – OCN made a submission to the Dividing Fences & Trees Act review, and a joint submission with Strata Community Australia (Qld) and the Australian Resident Accommodation Managers Association on the ongoing Qld property review.