

16 July 2021

The Hon Kevin Anderson MP
Minister for Better Regulation & Innovation
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

RE: COVID-19 & THE NEED TO SUPPORT STRATA RESIDENTS

OCN appreciates and supports the NSW Government's decision to introduce a requirement for facial covering when on indoor common property of residential strata schemes. Further, OCN commends the translation of the Mask Mandate poster into many languages.

The strata sector is a complex one – a mix of private and communal ownership and residence. OCN has consistently championed the democratic right of owners corporations to self-govern within the scope of the *Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 (NSW) (SSMA)*.

However, the Delta variant is highly transmissible and strata committees and community associations are concerned regarding the possibility of the spread of infection within their communities.

Many of our members are urgently requesting guidelines or recommendations to assist in the regulation of their common property. In the current times of health risk and general uncertainty, it is difficult for those managing strata schemes to provide guidance and put in place protocols to protect their communities as there are many different views on the powers of the management to mandate compliance. The Act is silent on these matters, leaving owners corporations uncertain of their rights and obligations. This burden and anxiety is in addition to the personal anxiety already being experienced. OCN believes it is unreasonable to expect private citizens to bear this burden alone.

OCN calls upon the government to provide clear direction and communication on matters relating to, amongst other things, common property and use of facilities within a scheme such as pools and gyms. Specifically, OCN seeks clarity on matters such as appropriate and/or additional cleaning, a booking or roster system, advice on the square meter rules and a limit on the number of people using the facility at any one time and use of QR codes.

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These facilities are not subject to any directives at present as they are effectively private property, yet used by multiple individuals. In the absence of this direction, many schemes are unclear on how to effectively protect residents. OCN supports the rights of owners corporations to self-manage for the purpose of supporting residents with their mental and physical health. However, guidelines, support and additional governance support will enable owners to balance individual rights with protection.

Finally, this current situation is a clear case for the critically important Strata Portal to be live, to provide government with a direct communication channel to contact and provide advice to each strata. The unique needs of strata schemes need to be considered and represented during these occasions.

OCN would be pleased to work with the Minister to contribute to the formulation of such recommendations.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Stiles". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Karen Stiles

Executive Officer