

## MEDIA RELEASE

### OCN Calls for Health Strategy for Apartment Communities

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"Health NSW needs a clearer strategy for directing and supporting apartment communities", Karen Stiles, Executive Officer of Owner Corporation Network said today.

"The Chief Health Officer, Dr Chant, is rightly concerned about transmission in apartment buildings. Across Sydney these are chock full of residents." Karen Stiles said

"But the Public Health Orders treat a 40-storey high rise exactly the same as a free-standing home. That is a mistake. Strata Committees cannot manage a pandemic through by-laws. They are under enormous pressure.", she said.

"The Orders need to address Owners Corporations and Strata Committee directly as well as the individual home owner. And we need to face the fact that strata living is different. Right now, it's a confused mess."

"It's time to be more specific: stop the confusion about cleaning and waste removal; deal directly with facilities, stop random unnecessary worker onsite, and extend the mask mandate to outdoor common property areas. Even in the high risk 12 LGAs, the outdoor mask mandate was excluded for common property. That is nuts", she said.

"Inconsistent approaches by area health teams has also left Strata Committees not knowing where to direct deep cleaning. In a 500-lot high rise that is real problem", Ms Stiles said.

"The two-week pause on construction reduced noise, anxiety and the risk of transmission but it quickly reverted to "business as usual" under pressure from business", Ms Stiles said. "Tradies and domestic cleaners were allowed back in fully occupied residential buildings, untested and unvaccinated."

"There is no such thing as contactless work in a 3 storey walk up or a 40-story block. These standards are lower than an unoccupied building site", she said.

"Toronto, Canada has issued instructions to Condominium Boards and Victoria deals openly with apartment complexes. But in NSW the "residential premises" provisions are a mess", she said.

"We need to promote safer behaviour and reduce foot traffic in apartments to reduce the risk of transmission. But this relies on the Public Health Orders. Any strategy needs to understand the

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#### About OCN

The Owners Corporation Network of Australia Limited (OCN) is the peak consumer body representing residential strata and community title owners and residents. Strata is the fastest growing form of residential property ownership in Australia, and the growth of this sector raises increasingly important questions over property ownership and governance.

#### Media Enquiries

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way strata and Strata Committees work, the role of Building Managers and Concierge in large buildings and the casualised cleaning workforce," Ms Stiles said.

## Background

There are over 80,000 strata schemes in NSW, housing up to 2 million people. The population is diverse, with a high level of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The split between tenants and owner occupiers is approximately 60 per cent owner and 40 per cent tenants but many buildings have very high tenancy.

The quality of building, management and hygiene varies.

Greater Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong apartment buildings have got larger and more complex. Large schemes can house thousands of people, and be part of a multi-scheme development with shared facilities.

The number of strata schemes by LGA at June 2020 shows significant growth.

The Land Registry Service data at June 2020 show that the twelve LGAs of concern include thousands of apartment buildings:

- Bayside (2216)
- Blacktown (1555)
- Burwood (344)
- Campbelltown (1052)
- Canterbury-Bankstown (3939)
- Cumberland (2214)
- Fairfield (1010)
- Georges River (2304)
- Liverpool (1090)
- Parramatta (2436)
- Strathfield (404)
- or some suburbs of Penrith

### Media Comment:

Karen Stiles, OCN Executive Officer M: 0418 232 476

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