

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION

November 2022

VICTORIAN STRATA RESIDENTS, OWNERS AND INDUSTRY JOIN FORCES FOR BETTER CONSUMER PROTECTION & SUPPORT AT 2022 ELECTION

Ahead of this year's state election, we are endorsing two key policy recommendations aimed at improving support for the **1.6 million (1 in 4) and counting Victorians who own and live in strata-titled properties such as apartments and townhouse complexes.**

Strata living, where owners corporations (formerly known as bodies corporate) govern the administration and maintenance of the common property, is inherently complex, and requires residents, owners, and industry alike to understand how they are affected by legislation and regulations, so that the best possible decisions can be made.

Currently, Victorian lot owners, residents and members of OC committees cannot seek impartial and accurate information and general advice about matters affecting an owners corporation, prior to either seeking legal advice out of pocket, or escalation to already-backlogged dispute resolution avenues, such as the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

The establishment of a dedicated Strata Helpline, overseen by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and expertly supported by Strata Community Association (Vic), can concurrently reduce the administrative burden placed on VCAT and costs to lot owners and residents, while providing the knowledge and guidance they need about their owners corporation, both being critical to ensuring confidence in strata living in future.

Of further importance to ensuring confidence in strata living as the sector grows in coming decades is ensuring that Victoria implements an effective best practice benchmark applicable to the **strata industry, which currently employs nearly 3,000 people, and contributes to \$1 billion in economic activity on an annual basis.**

Owners corporations in Victoria should have peace of mind in the knowledge that their manager is qualified to provide service of a consistent and satisfactory standard.

Accordingly, we call on the Government to **establish a working group towards implementing a minimum standard of education for owners corporation managers in the next term of government, in alignment with Victoria's commitment to the Australian Mutual Recognition (AMR) scheme.**

It is our hope that both of these recommendations are investigated and ultimately implemented by the next government, building on recent reforms to the *Owners Corporations Act 2006* and associated regulations, and further improving strata living in Victoria in the years to come.

