

NSW 2023 State Election *OCN ACTIVITY & OUTREACH TO DATE* *21 March 2023*

OCN is asking key politicians and candidates across NSW to commit to a **Better Residential Strata Future** and to enact the actions we recommend in our policy program in the new parliament. Our policy program describes the issues and actions. Find it [here](#).

OCN raises ten key issues that face the strata sector and recommend government actions that will usher a future where we have *climate ready, resilient and empowered communities living in defect-free buildings*.

Our Key Issues and Priorities for Government

1. Appoint a Senior Minister
2. Ensure dedicated and specialist government resources
3. Educate
4. Empower consumer representation and the provision of data and insights
5. Plan for Net Zero emissions
6. Accelerate the electrification of strata buildings and adoption of Electric Vehicles
7. Ensure emergency preparedness
8. Update legislation to protect consumers
9. Ensure all new buildings are defect free
10. Resolve all major defects in existing building

HOW YOU CAN HELP ? Write or talk to your local MP/candidates

Need guidance on what to ask your local candidates? See [here](#).

Outreach

OCN has requested meetings with relevant Ministers, Shadow Ministers, and Local Members in the top 21 strata electorates - see table below.

Specific Engagement to Date

Hon Victor Dominello, MP

Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government

Member for Ryde (49.1 % strata residents per 2021 Census)

Hon. James Griffin, MP

Minister for Environment and Heritage

Member for Manly (55.9% strata residents per 2021 Census)

Mr Alex Greenwich, MP Member for Sydney (81.2% strata residents per 2021 Census)

Letter of Support received - see below

Ms Yasmin Catley, MP, Shadow Minister for Customer Service

Hon. Michael Daley, MP Shadow Attorney General, Member for Maroubra (47.5% strata residents per 2021 Census)

Mr Tim James, MP Member for Willoughby (52.4% strata residents per 2021 Census)

Ms Jenny Leong, MP Member for Newtown (56% strata residents per 2021 Census)

Chris Minns, MP

Opposition Leader

Member for Kogarah (42.5% strata residents per 2021 Census)

Met with proxy

Hon. Anthony Roberts, MP

Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing

Member for Lane Cove (45.1% strata residents per 2021 Census)

Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC Shadow Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation

Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC Shadow Minister for Water, Housing and Homelessness

Stakeholders

including SCA (NSW), Property Owners' Association of NSW, REINSW, Tenants Union NSW, Property Council of Australia, Insurance Council of Australia, Green Building Council, Australian Institute of Architects, Choice, EV Council, Red Cross, Resilience Sydney

Media - Your Strata Property, Flat Chat

Labor has committed publicly to appointing a Strata Commissioner if appointed.

Top 21 NSW electorates based on highest strata populations

NSW STATE SEAT	PROPORTION OF APARTMENT DWELLINGS
Sydney	81.2%
Heffron	74.5%
North Shore	73.6%
Parramatta	71.6%
Vaucluse	67.4%
Coogee	67.4%
Newtown	56.0%
Manly	55.9%
Strathfield	55.3%
Summer Hill	54.4%
Rockdale	53.1%
Drummoyne	52.8%
Willoughby	52.4%
Ryde	49.1%
Canterbury	48.1%
Maroubra	47.5%
Balmain	45.4%
Kogarah	45.2%
Lane Cove	45.1%
Bankstown	37.6%
Wollongong	36.4%

Fast Facts

- The Owners Corporation Network of Australia is the peak consumer body representing and advocating for your strata rights and interests.
- OCN is independent and only represents the interests of owners and occupiers of residential strata, community title and company title schemes.
- More than ONE in FIVE people across NSW live in Strata and Community titled properties. By 2040 50% of Australians will be living in strata.
- 84,000 strata schemes in NSW. Valued at more than \$404 Billion. Employing nearly 3,000 people.
- 97% of strata schemes have less than 50 units. But the remaining 3% of schemes house 36% of strata residents in very large, complex buildings. The sector is very diverse.
- Strata is a unique living and economic sector in NSW that demands a distinct approach from government.

18 January 2023

Karen Stiles
Executive Director, Owners Corporation Network

Dear Karen

OCN 2023 State Election Policy Platform

I refer to the Owners Corporation Network (OCN) priorities for the 2023 State Election and thank you for all the work you do for apartment owners and residents.

With most of my constituents living in apartments and my electorate having the highest proportion of apartment dwellers in the state, apartment reform is a priority for me. I have a long history of working with OCN to get outcomes for strata owners and occupiers and I welcome the OCN's insights and contributions to policy. Below are responses to the items in your policy review.

I share your concern that successive governments have failed to give strata the priority it deserves or recognise the complexity of the governance model, the potential financial and amenity risks, or the importance of upholding democracy. I regularly raise concerns with ministers about dysfunctional buildings where there are serious allegations of corruption or maladministration, only to receive standard replies that do not acknowledge the challenges with existing options. Strata owners are often being left with few genuine options to deal with problems. It can also feel like there is no true advocate for strata owners and residents in cabinet with decisions often favouring industries attempting to profit from strata such as developers and short term rental platforms. I have repeatedly called for a dedicated strata commissioner to help resolve disputes and advise on continuous reform and agree with OCN's suggestions for a senior minister, specialist strata adjudication and a standing strata law committee.

Poor regulation over the last two decades has made apartment defects commonplace and it is unfair that owners are forced to carry the financial and administrative burden to get them fixed. Following the Opal and Mascot tower exposés, the government has introduced much needed reforms including a Building Commissioner, and a defects bond and insurance, but more is needed until there is confidence that all new buildings are free from defects and all existing buildings have had defects fixed.

The Building Commissioner should be made permanent and tasked to create new measures that ensure all owners corporations dealing with defects are supported, and to advise on the next set of reforms needed following review of the success of recent reforms. The commissioner should also take the lead in industry transformation. Defects from flammable cladding need additional work with concerns that assistance is slow and advice about replacement products unclear. I have moved amendments in Parliament to improve consumer protections through warranties

and liabilities and agree new protections are needed to prevent unfair contracts and unfair treatment by insurance companies. Embedded networks which are locking apartment owners and residents into long expensive contracts for dirty energy so that developers can reduce their energy costs during construction are particularly unfair and archaic and must be abolished. I support a review of all laws affecting strata by 2027.

I was the first member of the NSW Parliament to raise concerns that the rise in apartments being converted from residential to short term holiday accommodation was impacting on strata costs and amenity, as well as housing affordability. My amendments to short term rental laws have ensured a mandatory register of participants to help enforcement but much more is needed to prevent the wholesale conversion of homes. I will continue to push for stronger regulations including lower night caps and removal of exemptions from existing caps for bookings over 21 consecutive days.

The future of the planet depends on greening every aspect of civilisation and as the fastest growing form of housing in the state, it is crucial that apartments transition to net zero over the next decade. I welcome the OCN's focus on making apartments efficient and sustainable. I support mandating net zero for all new apartment developments and measures to make homes more resilient against the impacts of climate change. Strong incentives are needed to make existing buildings more efficient, including ending gas connections and installing electric vehicle charging stations in car parks. OCN has the knowledge and expertise to lead the establishment of tools and guidelines for this transition and if I am re-elected, I will ask the government to fund the OCN to establish an expert group for this purpose.

Natural disasters such as flood and pandemic present unique challenges for apartment communities and I support requiring apartment buildings to develop resilience plans based on emergency planning guidelines established by the government. While I agree that these plans should be lodged through the Strata Hub by 2027, any date is provisional on there being adequate support to ensure owners corporations can feasibly achieve this target.

There are varying levels of knowledge about the rights and responsibilities of strata participants, and I share the OCN's call for sector-wide education for owners, committee members, agents and managers of the law.

The OCN has been crucial in advocating for and educating decision makers in Parliament on the needs of apartment owners. Without the support of the OCN, few advances in strata law would have been made over the last decade. I support government funding for the OCN and if re-elected, I will call on whoever is in government to provide \$250,000 a year including for data collection and research. I support continued development of the Strata Hub and making its information available for free for research.

The expansion to apartment living is an essential part of our future if we are to minimise environmental and social impacts and I hope to continue to work with you on reform to make apartment living more sustainable, affordable and fair.

Yours sincerely

Alex Greenwich

Member for Sydney

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alex Greenwich', written over a white background.