February 2024

Dear

It's been an action-packed month in the advocacy space. But we managed to squeeze in a webinar on e-bikes, e-scooters and lithium ion batteries - our most popular yet with over 1,000 registrations! If you missed it, the recording is in the Member Portal on the website. Join OCN to access it.

Cheers, Karen Stiles
Executive Director

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OCN in Action!

OCN In the Media | **OCN Submissions** | **OCN Policy**

"OCN is an organisation I believe in, that performs an important role."
John, Ashfield

NSW Short Term Rental Review

The NSW government is seeking feedback on the planning policy and regulatory framework for short-term rental accommodation and on options to encourage the supply of long-term rental accommodation and improve housing affordability in NSW.

You can complete the questionnaire or make a submission **before 14 March.**

https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/draftplans/exhibition/discussion-paper-short-and-long-term-rental-accommodation

Recognising Trees as Natural Assets

In response to reports of illegal tree killing and vandalism massively increasing across Sydney in 2023 with more than 1,000 reports of trees being damaged or killed (SMH article, Dec 27, 2023) an e-petition has been set up. The petition needs 20,000 signatures to be presented to the NSW Parliament. Any NSW resident can sign the petition.

NSW Councils can issue fines for incidents of tree vandalism of just $3000 for individuals and $6000 for companies (this compares fines of up to $80,000 due to recent reforms in the ACT which came into effect on 1 January 2024).

Fines can reach $1 million for individuals and $5 million for companies if successfully prosecuted through the Land and Environment Court. However, Councils aren't resourced to carry out the criminal-level investigations required that would normally be the job of the police.

If you're concerned about the loss of trees you can sign the e-petition.

https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/Pages/ePetition-details.aspx?q=spDO_eQ0f3NWsj0g5VtjWw

Members Only!

The member portal has a wealth of **resources**. Members can purchase electric vehicle, fire safety, pet, renovation and short-term letting **by-laws for just $220** (some are available to non-members for $440). And, members can take advantage of a growing suite of OCN **special member offers,** such as free consultations, free roof assesments, committee governance reviews.

"Membership of OCN has enabled our community to follow and learn from discussions on matters of common interest and the committee is keen to retain the connection. Thanks for all the work that you do for OCN and its members."

STEVE, Pelican Point

Thursday 21st March 2024, 12pm-1pm AEDT (Free Webinar) - Strata Disaster!

Our Chief Resilience Officer will reveal insights from our national survey and present a snapshot of current practice emergency planning in apartment buildings.

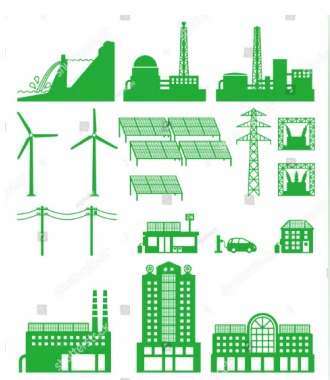
You'll learn why it matters, how it can save your scheme money (or cost you money if you aren't prepared) and what tools and support are available to get you started.
Register:> HERE

Past Events

OCN members can access valuable recordings on topics as diverse as managing lithium ion batteries, fire safety, changing your strata manager, and how new legislation impacts remedial works.

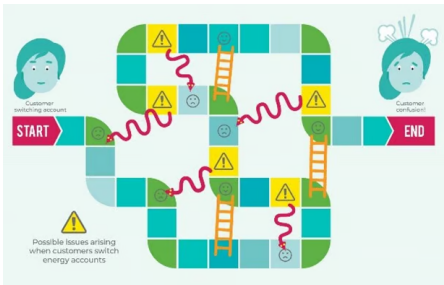
" Thanks for the link to the waterproofing webinar. I couldn't make it live but watched it later. I found it very informative.

Neville, Pyrmont



Electrification of Residential Strata

OCN was invited to appear before the federal Senate Inquiry into Residential Electrification. While we await the Inquiry transcript we are liaising with allied organisations to agree the best way to incentivise strata schemes to make the switch from gas. **Read our submission:> HERE**.



Embedded Networks

In January OCN made a submission to the NSW review of embedded networks by the Independent Pricing And Regulatory Tribunal(IPART). In February we made a second submission to the Australian Energy Regulator calling for strict controls on developer-initiated embedded networks that only profit the developer, and cause harm to owners and residents. **Read all our submissions:> HERE**

NSW Consumer Energy Strategy

OCN also made a submission on this draft strategy, calling for strata titled properties to be an integral part of the strategy. **Read submission:> HERE**

Short & Long Term Rental Accommodation Review

And, finally, we made a submission proposing tighter regulation of short term letting in strata titled buildings:

- Allow access to the Register by an Owners Corporation.
- Expand the Code of Conduct to address a greater remit of identified concerns to neighbours, other lot Owners, and Owners Corporations.
- Authorise council inspectors to inspect residential premises suspected of being used for short-term letting.
- Allow councils to ban short-term letting through development application.
- Ensure that any alternative planning pathway used to govern short-term letting in strata schemes is not used to subvert other regulatory frameworks.

"Keep up the great advocacy work you do."
VANESSA, Five Dock

Upcoming Events

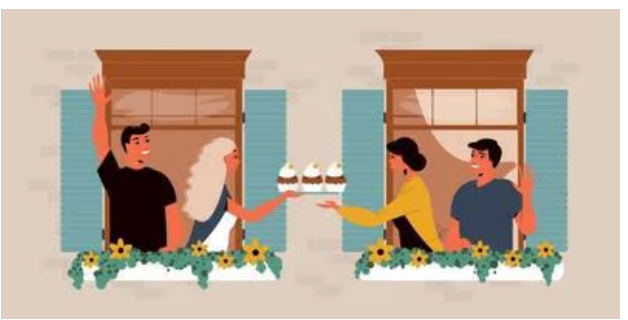
Wednesday 6 March 2024, 12:30pm - 1:30pm (free webinar Part 1)

OCN partner Strata Plus is hosting a webinar on Elevating value and reducing costs through sustainability and efficiency. OCN's Wendy Showyin is a sustainability champion. She will be joining Wattblock, Sustainability Now, the City of Sydney and City Futures Research Centre for two jam packed sessions. **Register for Part 1:> HERE**

Wednesday 13 March 2024, 12:30pm – 1.:30pm (Part 2)

Register for Part 2:> HERE

National News



Neighbour Day 2024

Neighbour Day on Sunday 31 March provides the perfect opportunity to increase social connection in your local areas. You can celebrate in a variety of ways including hosting or supporting events that assist and engage your communities. **Read more and get helpful resources** here:> https://neighbourseveryday.org/day-of-action/

NSW News

Strata & Property Services Commissioner

A plan to build millions of apartments across Sydney will falter without major changes to the laws underpinning ownership and management of the properties, the state's new Strata Commissioner has warned.

"The whole issue around housing supply, around affordability, and ultimately social and economic wellbeing, requires strata to be successful and requires people to have confidence in strata, and I guess the concern is there are areas where confidence is waning," Commissioner Minns said. **Read full article:> HERE**

As an example, OCN attended a meeting at NSW's second largest strata scheme where the Strata Commissioner addressed owners on the legal requirement to maintain and repair their building assets. This scheme, spanning multiple buildings, presents an opportunity for the government to review the entire strata paradigm from planning/scheme establishment through its entire legal life.

OCN has also met with several State members of parliament, to urge the government to adequately resource the Strata Commissioner. Almost three million people are expected to live in apartments, townhouses or villas by 2040, as a result of the NSW government's "go up, not out" housing strategy. This housing must be underpinned by reforms pushing better consumer education, tougher professional standards, and streamlined dispute resolution, as well as protections for owners blindsided by major repairs costs.

Energy Complaints Rising

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW has reported a 61.7% increase in complaints in Q3 2023 compared to Q3 2022. The vast majority of those complaints relate to billing, and electricity in particular. Read more:> **HERE**

Project Remediate Accelerating Flammable Cladding Remediation

Positive updates on construction and building initiatives can be rare. Therefore, it's particularly pleasing that the replacement of flammable cladding on high-risk Class 2 buildings has seen a significant increase entering 2024.

In January and February, remediation works commenced on an additional 11 buildings as part of the Project Remediate program, bringing the total under construction to 21. Among these new projects, five are situated in densely populated areas of inner-city Sydney, while others spread from Warwick Farm to Newcastle.

Across these 11 projects alone, remediation contractors will replace over 17,000m2 of flammable cladding. Most importantly, in the process they'll help protect 950 apartments and around 2,500 homeowners and tenants.

How Aquillon saved energy and increased its NABERS rating

Built in Camperdown in 2004, Aquilon has 129 units and is one of 11 strata schemes that form the City Quarter Community Association. The owners corporation received 2 green building grants from the City of Sydney, one in 2017 and one in 2022. The initial report identified several ways the building could improve its energy efficiency and performance, one of which had a payback period of only 10 weeks!

What it changed

- Common area lighting was upgraded to LEDs with integrated sensors
- The existing carbon monoxide monitoring system was reinstated in the carpark
- Switched to purchasing 100% GreenPower for common areas

Results

- Avoided more than 200 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions a year
- From May 2017 to May 2022 electricity use dropped by 60%

"The green building grants allowed us to greatly reduce current energy use and provide the platform to further investigate programs that will be of long term benefit to residents and the climate going forward." Said Ken Saville, strata committee member

Queensland News

Calls Grow for Drug Testing of Properties for Sale or Rent

There are calls for mandatory drug screening of Queensland rental properties. Real estate group Ray White says the problem is so bad the laws should be changed. Watch news segment:> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNe7C70GMAA

Green Power

Construction has started on one of Queensland's biggest publicly owned batteries, which will form part of a Clean Energy Hub at the Swanbank Power Station Precinct near Brisbane.

The $330 million battery is being delivered by government-owned electricity generator CleanCo in partnership with Tesla and Yurika, which is part of Energy Queensland.
It will be constructed on the site of the former Swanbank B coal-fired power station.
The battery is designed for around the clock operation and can store enough energy to power more than two-thirds of Ipswich for two hours each night.
https://www.governmentnews.com.au/work-begins-in-qld-on-330m-publicly-owned-battery/

Victorian News

Disconnect between council and residential strata

In recent years, the landscape of Victoria, especially in Docklands, has been reshaped by the rise of strata-titled properties. Yet, despite their prevalence, there is a glaring lack of understanding within local council about how residential strata operates. This deficiency is evident in the design of the City of Melbourne's Connected Neighbourhoods Small Grants. Read more:> **HERE**

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