OCN Subscriber Update

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF STRATA OWNERS

April 2024

Dear

Here we are, with one third of the year behind us, and OCN is busy advocating for owners on a number of fronts, including fire safety reforms which are building along in the background. But we haven't forgotten to provide accurate, up to date information on issues of interest. There's some great webinars coming up.

As OCN works tirelessly to strengthen consumer protections and equip owners to better protect themselves, please consider joining OCN eligibility criteria apply.

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."*
> **Jane, Ashfield**

Have your say...

NSW Strata & Property Services Commissioner

Campaigning for OCN culminated in the appointment of a NSW Commissioner in 2023. However, he lacks the resources to ensure the integrity of this fast growing sector.

Recent ABC coverage confirms the need for effective oversight of the industry and support for owners. Currently just 16 'inspectors' cover the entire property sector (real estate, strata etc) across NSW. Bad players are being allowed to operate without consequences. Where are the practicals? Where is the owner support?

Contact your Local Member today to ask what funding will be in the 2024 budget to increase resources for the areas of Government responsible for the Strata sector.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-03-13/ordinary/13362370

Members Only!

The member portal has a **wealth of resources**.

Members can purchase electric vehicle, e-Bike/scooter, fire safety, pet, renovation and short-term letting **by-laws for just $220** from the **OCN shop**.

And, OCN members can take advantage of a growing suite of OCN special member offers.

> *"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."*
> **STHM, Pelican Point**

Upcoming OCN Events...

Thursday 16 May, 12pm - 1pm AEDT - Mould Control & Waterproofing (online)

Winter is coming... hear from experts in waterproofing, diagnostics, remediation and construction for your building! You will learn about:

- Waterproofing case studies
- How you can get on top of this costly problem

Register>> HERE

Thursday 20 June, 12pm - 1pm AEDT - New Builds, New Beginnings (online)

This free online webinar will include:-

- Importance of the first AGM
- Latent building defects insurance
- Creating a culture of respect and pride
- Stealthy by-laws, protocols, and resident education

Registrations open soon!

Tuesday 23 July, 4pm - 5pm AEDT - Design & Building Practitioners (DBP) Act Impact on Remedial Works (online)

This free online presentation will include:-

The DBP Act 2020 and related regulation and how it applies to emergency remedial building works - exempt development - planning approvals and how they apply to remedial building work projects - Strata remedial building work case studies.

Registrations open soon!

Past Events

OCN's members can access valuable recordings on topics as diverse as shared solar for individual apartments, changing your strata manager, electric vehicle and e-bike charging, and emergency preparedness.

> *"Thanks for the link to the waterproofing webinar. I couldn't make it but but watched it later. I found it very informative.*
> **Neutilla, Pyrmont**

OCN Advocacy and Policy

NSW Fair Trading

OCN met with Minister Chanthiwang to discuss the critical need for strata owner education and support, highlighted by some industry practices exposed by the ABC. We are ready and willing to assist, but government must take the lead in this important area if they continue to push for higher density living.

We also attended the second Ministerial Strata Stakeholder Roundtable, where a variety of issues were canvassed, including the need for adequate resourcing and powers for the Strata Commissioner.

NSW Strata Commissioner

Our quarterly meeting with the Commissioner focused on the need for powers to, amongst other things, uplift dispute resolution and refer dysfunctional schemes to NCAT for compulsory management. Widespread failure to maintain and repair buildings is impacting availability and affordability of insurance, as well as posing a health and life safety threat to residents.

Following unsuccessful individual attempts, we united the Australian College of Strata Lawyers, Australian Consumers Insurance Lobby, Retirement Village Residents Association and CIA National to call for adequate resourcing of the Strata Commissioner to deal with this fast growing housing sector.

Overdue Levy Recovery

The NSW Strata Commissioner convened a second roundtable to discuss a better way forward with debt recovery. With a focus on providing a better experience for owners, especially those experiencing hardship, the Commissioner brought together owners, strata managers, strata management software companies, debt collectors, financial counsellors, financial rights legal centre, the Australian Financial Securities Authority, and the banking association (banks have mature financial hardship procedures) to look at current practices and future opportunities. It was good to be part of a collaboration to reduce harms, whilst protecting owners corporations from deliberate non-payment of levies.

Far North Australia Cyclone Reinsurance Pool (CRP)

ACIL, OCN, UDAQ, and North Qld Strata Action Group met with the ACCC Insurance Monitoring branch to discuss the fact that insurers are not offering policies to new clients, or some incumbents, despite being part of the CRP (government guarantee).

It was also reported that a large insurer has an agreement with a large strata management company to only offer cover to their clients. If true, this allegation requires urgent investigation by authorities.

NSW Land Registry

OCN attended the quarterly roundtable with the NSW Registrar-General and Land Registry Services CEO, to make its stringent case to date for reinstatement of Certificates of Title (no longer issued), along with greater transparency and client support to navigate myriad complex new electronic processes.

After 3 years of "consultation" LRS is clearly focused on recouping the $2.600ish paid for the lease in 2017, and the Registrar-General's office is focused on shifting responsibility to others. It remains with OCNL once again, to remind everyone of the public good.

The 35-year lease to run the NSW profitable land titles registry was sold to a consortium in a move heralded by the then NSW Premier as a "massive infrastructure boost" and by almost everyone else as a bad idea. It appears everyone else could be right.

> *"Keep up the great advocacy work you do."*
> **CRAIGEA, Five Dock**

What's happening in the Strata Sector...

Upcoming Events

Wednesday 8 May, 6pm to 6:45pm (online) - Rooftop Solar

Do you live in the Sydney LGA? Thinking about rooftop solar, or interested in finding out what other apartment buildings are doing? The City's quarterly strata social will talk all things rooftop solar. **Register>> HERE**

Saturday 1 June, 10am - 4pm - High Life Expo (Melbourne)

This free, face to face expo is for people who live in or own apartments and units, and the people that help manage them. It will include:

- A day of **in-person workshops** and seminars with experts in strata, sustainability, accessibility and government issues
- A **trade exhibition** with over 100 on show:
  - quality suppliers and installers of energy efficiency and sustainability products
  - sustainability staff from our partner councils
- Special **online events**

Learn how to implement sustainability and resilience solutions for your apartment, unit, building, or strata community. Learn more and register>> HERE

National News

Strata Insurance

The Australian Consumers Insurance Lobby (ACIL) has made a submission to the Federal Government Inquiry into Standard Insurance Definitions & Cover, calling for fundamental reforms that prioritise consumer interests and urgently address longstanding detrimental effects such as underinsurance and policy complexity. **Read their submission here>>** https://www.acilobby.org.au/news

ACIL also released a comprehensive report following a nationwide survey on strata insurance practices. **Read report here (second item)>>** https://www.acilobby.org.au/news

Got an insurance complaint? The Australian Financial Complaints Authority provides consumers with fast, free and independent dispute resolution - https://www.afca.org.au/make-a-complaint/insurance

NSW News

Strata Hub Reporting

If your two-bit scheme has already completed their first annual report then reporting each year will be a simpler and quicker task thanks to pre-filled information on the Strata Hub. Most of the information you will need to complete your reporting each year will be part of your AGM documents, including the financial statements.

Remember, **all strata schemes** including two-lot schemes **must report** each year **within 3 months of holding their annual general meeting (AGM)**. You must also keep clear and up-to-date records.

If you're unsure how to hold an AGM, you can read NSW Fair Trading's Simple guide to holding an AGM in a two-lot scheme. This article will also help you make sense of strata annual reporting for your two-lot scheme. For example, some two-lot schemes don't need insurance coverage for the whole complex. If so, you can simply select 'scheme is exempt' when you report.

Read more>> **https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/fair-trading/news/how-two-lot-schemes-can-easily-report-each-year**

Queensland News

Beware Excessive Strata Management Costs

Look Up Strata published a short video about the importance of committee attention to detail when it comes to the financials and contract fees prior, after Ross Anderson's body corporate noticed a number of unusually high fees (his $16,000 for 5 emails!) for the simple task of distributing emails to owners. Ross advised "In the strata world, particularly with our money, you have to be looking at the time. Asking questions, keeping an eye on it."

Learn more>> https://www.lookupstrata.com.au/that-fish-body-corporate-charges-16k-strata-manager-send-five-emails/

Body Corporate Legislation Changes From 1 May 2024

Changes to the *Body Corporate and Community Management and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023* (the Amendment Act) will come into force **1 May 2024**.

The Amendment Regulation can be found at Body Corporate and Community Management Legislation Amendment Regulation 2024

The Explanatory Notes for the Amendment Regulation can be found at: Body Corporate and Community Management Legislation Amendment Regulation 2024 explanatory note

The changes:

- Applies a 21 day limit on a body corporate committee to decide whether to give a notice to the owner of a lot to provide a copy of a tenancy agreement
- fees payable for inspecting or obtaining the body corporate records of schemes within a layered arrangement of community titles schemes
- the way in which a body corporate must give documents or other information it is required to give under the BCCM Act to an owner or other person
- a body corporate, a committee for a body corporate, or an owner of a body corporate record if the body corporate and the person who has requested the copy do not agree on how the copy will be given
- removes references to the body corporate seal due its removal as a requirement; and
- allows a community titles scheme to give a notice to the original owner (usually the developer) to request that certain documents be given if they were not provided at the time the original owner was required to give the documents.

OCN THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF STRATA OWNERS

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