

STRATA & COMMUNITY LIVING

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SPRING 2014

Waterloo apartment block wins award

Paul Culbi collects the award on behalf of his owners corporation



On Friday, 18 July this year around 370 members of Strata Community Australia (NSW) attended the glamorous 2014 Whitbread Strata Community Awards.

This year, there were nine categories and of most interest was the Strata Owners Community Engagement Award which saw five finalists battle it out for this prestigious honour. The award went to a strata scheme in Botany Road at Waterloo managed by strata managing agent Paul Culbi. The scheme has 34 lots and a mix of owners and tenants.

Paul was happy to share some of the secrets of the success of this property which came as a result of finalising a defect claim.

"After so much work, we felt it would be a good thing to enter the award," Paul said.

"The executive committee of the building are actively creating a well-maintained and smoothly running building. They recognise the importance of communication and engagement and actively seek residents and owners for various sub committees."

Some of the projects the building has recently completed include:

- Arranging a pick up both for e-waste day
- Community gardening
- Working bee to set up courtyard seating
- Engaged residents in carpet replacement, hallway and door painting with great success
- Installation of energy efficient lighting in common areas
- Installation of new locks on mailboxes to deter thieves
- Education campaign to deter non visitors from using the visitors parking area plus the approval of long-term parking for longer term visitors

- Creation of a Facebook page to mirror the bulletin board
- Tripling of the bike parking facilities

Paul says the projects would never have been completed without the engagement and co-operation of residents and owners. Everyone including tenants are encouraged to get involved in the various projects.

"The processes have been challenging but the key is good, clear communication. Ensuring everyone understands that they collectively are responsible for the common areas has led to people realising they are a community rather than a collection of strangers who happen to live in the same building."

If you're thinking of entering the awards next year, Bill Coles, SCA (NSW) Director and one of this year's judges, said the key thing is to be precise and clear what you are doing to create harmony and better living solution with your residents and building.

"The things that stood out for the judges about this property were the sense of harmony and communication with residents. They created a Facebook page, have a community gardening scheme, and undertake working bees that all promote the ideals of community," Bill said.

"The other entrants also showed a similar commitment to community by creating better places to live and some had undertaken conversions of unused deteriorated areas."

The 2015 Awards will open early next year so if your scheme has achieved some terrific things make sure you share it with us and nominate for an award.



City Futures launches major strata survey

On 11 August the City Futures Research Centre at UNSW Australia launched a major community survey that aims to investigate public attitudes to the redevelopment of areas of privately owned strata titled housing.

SCA (NSW) has been partnering with City Futures Research Centre at UNSW Australia on a research project called 'Renewing the Compact City'. The project aims to investigate the key challenges facing strata owners and other stakeholders when trying to undertake major renovation or renewal of existing strata units. In particular, this research aims to develop viable solutions to effectively and efficiently redevelop older multi-unit strata that are both inclusive and fair. Other partners on this project include UrbanGrowth NSW, Australian College of Community Association Lawyers, the Owners Corporation Network of Australia and NSW Fair Trading.

Urban renewal has emerged as a fundamental issue facing Australian cities in coming decades. Many strata apartment blocks in NSW are in need of major repair and upgrading or are located in areas the Government has identified for urban renewal. The current planning and legislative context means that it is very difficult to wind up strata schemes to allow these apartment blocks to be redeveloped.

Strata cancellation and renewal was highlighted as an important issue in the NSW Government's position paper on strata title law reform, released in November 2013. The position paper proposes to amend the legislation and introduce a process that will allow collective sale and renewal of strata schemes with less than unanimous support.

There are also a number of practical barriers to redeveloping strata schemes that will affect owners and residents in a number of ways. The social profile of strata residents and broader affordability pressures in the housing market present some significant issues for renewal.

Establishing an effective process now for managing strata scheme renewal that takes into account the views and attitudes of strata residents and owners will be critical for ensuring the reinvestment in existing strata can occur.

City Futures invites anyone who currently owns or lives in a strata unit to participate in the survey. To complete the survey, or find out more about this research, please follow the links at www.cityfutures.net.au or contact Dr Laurence Troy at strata.survey@unsw.edu.au.



Strata Owners Day at the SCA (NSW) Convention

Mark 25 October 2014 down in your diary and come along to the annual Strata Owners Day at the SCA (NSW) Convention. If you've never been to this event this is your chance to get information, meet other strata owners, strata managers and service providers.

This year it is being held at the Sydney Hilton Hotel right on George Street surrounded by public transport so it's easy to get to and the price is great. For just \$66 (including GST) members and \$80 (including GST) for non members you get morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea plus access to the strata industry trade exhibition and a goodie bag.

The best part of the day are the sessions and if you regularly read Jimmy Thomson's Flat Chat column in the Fairfax newspapers – Sydney Morning Herald and Australian Financial Review – then come along to Flat Chat Live.

Hosted by Jimmy, this is a panel session with experts from the strata industry, which takes questions and tries to answer them – injected with a little humour only a Scotsman can deliver.

The panel will consist of a representative from NSW Fair Trading, a lawyer, a builder, an insurer and two strata managers so throw your worst case scenarios at them and see how they would resolve them.

As if that wasn't enough for one day we also have sessions on self-managed schemes, defects and risk management. Plus we talk to the finalists and winners of the Strata Community Engagement Award category, 2014 Whitbread Strata Community Awards, who will be discussing how they have achieved community harmony with some great stories. It is entirely possible that you can also achieve a harmonious community, if you haven't already. And next year you might be one of our finalists ...

Feedback from previous years has been very positive with attendees encouraging owners and tenants in their strata scheme to come along. Some have said that the day provided valuable contacts and information that can be taken home and put into practice.

You must register either at <https://www.etches.com/ereg/index.php?eventid=98950&> or phone (02) 9492 8200.

Strata news

Here's the latest news from the strata industry:

Strata Owners Seminars



If you need information about living in strata then our Strata Owners Seminars may help you. All seminars are free for SCA (NSW) members and \$20 (ex GST) for non-members. Registration is a must as places are limited. They take place in the SCA (NSW) offices in North Sydney which are close to North Sydney station and the bus routes. There is also parking at the nearby Greenwood Plaza.

The next session will be on 17 September from 4pm to 6pm. The topic is executive committee induction presented by Strata Manager, Melissa Truscott.

A seminar is also planned for 19 November on financials and sinking funds. These sessions may be subject to change so please check the SCA (NSW) website for more information.

Government update

Regular readers will know that the NSW Government has spent a few years on consultation with various stakeholders including strata owners, as part of its review of the Strata Schemes Management Act.

SCA (NSW) has been informed that the new Bill which was ready for introduction to NSW Parliament has now been put on hold pending a review of the community titles laws.

SCA (NSW) is of the view that these laws need to remain separate and will be recommending this once the consultation process begins. No news at the time of writing on when that might be.

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Dealing with an emergency



Members, including strata owners, were invited to attend an Industry Briefing Session on dealing with an emergency presented by an insurer and lawyer.

Do you know what to do if you are faced with an emergency in your building?

There are a number of things you will need to consider such as where will residents stay if the building is uninhabitable? Do you have a communications plan that ensures all owners and residents know what's happening? Is your insurance adequate?

SCA (NSW) filmed this event which is available on its website. Take the time to watch and listen to this important briefing session and consider what you need to do to prepare for the worst.

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