

# STRATA & COMMUNITY LIVING

Brought to you by



AUTUMN 2013



## Smoothing the path to the NBN for apartment dwellers

STRATA COMMUNITY AUSTRALIA (SCA) HAS ANNOUNCED A NEW INITIATIVE TO SMOOTH THE PATH FOR THE INSTALLATION OF THE NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK (NBN), WITH ALL ITS BENEFITS, FOR MULTI-UNIT RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES.

SCA will be collaborating in a six-month pilot with NBN Co to assist in obtaining contact details for owners corporations and bodies corporate of multi-dwelling units to gain the necessary information and approvals to cable the buildings and install NBN equipment as the rollout gets underway in an area.

Every Australian home, apartment and business will be connected to the NBN by 2021, either by fibre optic cable, fixed-wireless or satellite.

NBN Co has been set a target by the government to connect up to 93 per cent of premises to fibre and it is expected that more than one in five of these premises will be in multi-unit strata type settings. As every building is different, NBN Co and its contractors will need to liaise with building owners and authorised representatives of the strata schemes to assist with building access so that tailored cabling solutions can be designed and installed through common areas to each unit or apartment.

"Simply making contact with owners corporations can be challenging because there is no publicly available register or listing of office bearers, committee members or authorised

representatives such as strata managers," SCA CEO Mark Lever said.

"Also, these positions do turn over regularly and NBN Co needs to be talking to the right people at the right time."

Mr Lever said the vast majority of multi-unit buildings, other than very small two, and three-unit developments, engage strata managers to deal with these types of issues and the majority of those are members of SCA's state and territory affiliates and chapters.

He said the pilot would see SCA members in rollout areas invited to log on to register contact details for each building scheduled for installation, in a secure and confidential online environment, via SCA's national member database system. Non-members and self-managed buildings will also be directed to the portal to provide secure and confidential contact information.

"The last thing anyone wants is for households to miss out on the benefits of the NBN simply because no-one could be contacted to assist with building access. A standard installation into a multi-unit residential community is free, as is ongoing maintenance of the NBN equipment

and cables, so there is no cost to the building and no reason not to get on board."

Mr Lever added that a key message for all strata communities would be that free installation will only be available for a limited time.

Once the rollout has been completed in the area, for NBN Co to have to go back and connect a property at another time will incur a cost. SCA and NBN Co would like to avoid this as much as possible.

"We want all strata schemes to take advantage of this service and get connected. Recent anecdotal evidence suggests that apartment buyers are increasingly looking for properties that are connected to the NBN and that they are willing to pay slightly higher property prices to secure such access."

The first group of strata buildings ready for installation have been posted. Members servicing those areas will be alerted by email and non-members should check the website page [www.stratacommunity.org.au](http://www.stratacommunity.org.au) regularly for updates.



# Building code changes

THE AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (AMA) HAS CALLED ON THE NSW GOVERNMENT AND STRATA ORGANISATIONS TO SUPPORT LEGISLATION MAKING IT ILLEGAL FOR APARTMENT WINDOWS TO OPEN MORE THAN 10 CENTIMETRES, ACCORDING TO A REPORT IN THE DAILY TELEGRAPH ON 25 JANUARY 2013. THIS FOLLOWS A RECENT SPATE OF CHILDREN BEING INJURED AFTER FALLING FROM WINDOWS.



“It is easy for a child bouncing on a bed pushed up near an open window to fall out .”

With more families choosing to live in apartments for a variety of reasons such as being closer to the city (and work for the parents) or because it's less expensive than detached housing, issues such as the dangers of open windows are going to become more common. This is mainly in part because a lot of apartments were not built with family accommodation in mind.

A lot of apartments have smaller second and third bedrooms meaning that all space is used. It is easy for a child bouncing on a bed pushed up near an open window to fall out and while it's still warm weather windows are going to be open increasing the potential for more frequent accidents.

SCA (NSW) recently received an update from the Australian Building Codes Board that from 1 May 2013, a new code will take effect requiring the windows in all new buildings that are two metres or more from the ground level to be fitted with a suitable screen or limited opening so that a sphere of 125 millimetres cannot pass through.

The changes to the Building Code allow for a lockable mechanism to enable the window or screen to be removed, unlocked or overridden. A barrier is not required for windows 1.7 metres above the floor.

This also applies for buildings undertaking a window replacement program.

Window locking devices are readily available from hardware stores and for as little as \$10 per device you can lock your windows 10 centimetres open, which is enough to prevent a child falling out. Remember also that fly screens are not appropriate barriers as they will not hold the weight of a child.

Help SCA (NSW) and the AMA get the message out to owners and executive committees about the dangers of mixing unsupervised children with high rise windows and balconies. Make sure the balustrades on all balconies are regularly inspected and checked for defects and repairs carried out immediately. And if you are replacing your windows before 1 May don't wait for the Building Code to take effect, replace your old windows with those that meet the specifications and perhaps you'll be preventing a child from serious injury or death.

Find out more from the Australian Building Codes Board at [www.abcb.gov.au](http://www.abcb.gov.au).



# Ensure your building is fire safe

THE RECENT BUSHFIRES, FLOODS AND CYCLONES MIGHT HAVE LED YOU TO THINK “WHAT WOULD I DO IN AN EMERGENCY?” AND IF IT HASN’T, THEN IT’S A TIMELY REMINDER TO THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WOULD DO IF YOUR HOME WAS IN THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION.

While it’s not compulsory to have an evacuation plan in residential strata it does make sense to have one and to practice emergency evacuation procedures. By doing so it may just save a life.

If you had to evacuate from your building what would you do and where would you go? Do you or your neighbours need assistance to get out of the building? Who would provide that assistance?

It may be worth drafting an evacuation plan with your executive committee and regularly having emergency exercises to ensure the plan works.

Fire and Rescue NSW has a service which assists business and industry produce their plans and it may be that they would be willing to assist you strata scheme too.

Your building’s executive committee is also responsible for the annual fire statement which audits all fire and safety equipment in your building annually. It should check the following:

- automatic sprinkler systems
- emergency lighting
- exit lighting and signs
- fire dampers
- fire doors, shutters and windows
- fire extinguishers
- fire hose reels
- fire hydrants
- fire mains and water supply services
- smoke detectors and alarms
- stand-by power systems

Ask your committee members if they’ve done their annual report or speak to your strata manager if you have any concerns about whether this audit has occurred.

As the tragic Bankstown fire in September last year demonstrated (where one of the issues was a fire door left open), there are a number of things that people are just not aware of when it comes to their personal safety, especially when there is a fire.

The number one thing to be mindful of is if a fire door is left open it cannot do the job it was intended for, which is to contain a fire. An audit might pick up if a door is being regularly left open and may recommend signage reminding owners and tenants to keep the door closed.

It should be the number one priority of every building to ensure their fire safety audits are done regularly and they comply with any recommendations.

Let’s not have a repeat of what happened in Bankstown, ensure your emergency systems are in good working order and it may save a life.





# Consumer Awareness Seminars

If you're a member of an Executive Committee for your property or are thinking about living in a strata/community title property there are some things you need to know about strata and community living.

Strata Community Australia (NSW) holds regular Consumer Awareness Seminars to provide those living in strata insight into the rights, roles and responsibilities of owners and occupiers of strata title properties in NSW.

All seminars are free. The first for 2013 was held on Wednesday, 13 February and was on the issue of concrete cancer and covered everything about this issue from what it is through to repair options including strategically managing the physical and financial risks.

What is concrete cancer or concrete spalling is concrete that is breaking away. This can occur for a number of reasons and if left untreated can cause serious damage to your building.

By presenting topics such as this SCA (NSW) is assisting strata property owners to better maintain their most precious asset – their homes.

Seminars are usually held from 4.00pm - 6.00pm at SCA (NSW), Suite 802, Level 8, 99 Mount Street, North Sydney. They are free but bookings are essential. To find out what's on next go to [www.nsw.stratacommunity.org.au](http://www.nsw.stratacommunity.org.au).

Please always confirm your booking by calling 9492 8200 or emailing [kelly.denmeade@stratacommunity.org.au](mailto:kelly.denmeade@stratacommunity.org.au).

---

## Strata Community Australia (NSW) Ltd

PO Box 347 North Sydney NSW 2059 Ph: 02 9492 8200 Fax: 02 8904 0490

Email: [enquiries.nsw@stratacommunity.org.au](mailto:enquiries.nsw@stratacommunity.org.au) Web: [www.nsw.stratacommunity.org.au](http://www.nsw.stratacommunity.org.au)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means now known or to be invented, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information or retrieval system without written permission from the author or publisher, except for the brief inclusion of quotations in a review.

EDITORIAL CONTACT: SCA (NSW) Ltd, PO Box 347 North Sydney NSW 2060

DISCLAIMER: Please note the information enclosed is general in nature and cannot be relied upon as legal advice. Strata Community Australia (NSW) Ltd and its members disclaims any liability (including for negligence) to any person in respect of: anything; and the consequences of anything, done, or not done, by any such person in whole or partial reliance upon the whole or part of the information enclosed.

Strata & Community Living is a joint initiative brought to you by SCA (NSW); the peak industry body representing strata managing agents and others committed to the continual improvement in standards of strata management practice in NSW and your strata managing agent.



strata  
community  
australia  
(NSW)