



SPRING, 2012



STRATA & COMMUNITY LIVING

Strata vision: looking to the future

QUESTION: WHERE CAN YOU GO TO GET MORE INFORMATION, SHARE STORIES AND HEAR FROM STRATA EXPERTS?

ANSWER: THE SCA (NSW) LOT OWNERS DAY – 20 OCTOBER 2012.

Each year Strata Community Australia (SCA) (NSW) holds a Lot Owners Day as part of its Annual Convention. Apartment owners are invited to join in the fun, hear from some great speakers on all things concerning strata schemes and meet the people who provide some of the services to you.

“This year lot owners day will be on 20 October at the Sofitel Wentworth, Philip Street, Sydney from 9.00am. We are pleased to welcome guest speaker Jimmy Thomson – Flat Chat columnist on the Sydney Morning Herald.”

Jimmy will open Lot Owners Day and host a panel later in the afternoon. He is looking forward to meeting other apartment owners and hearing your stories.

Come and hear also from a variety of industry experts on issues such as corporate governance, defects and managing renovations. There will be two panel sessions which promise to have some lively debate – the first around teamwork and creating a harmonious environment, and the second is our famous “Ask an expert” session.

The cost – just \$55 (ex. GST) – for the entire day includes sessions, morning tea, and lunch.

Plus you get entry to the trade exhibition. This is where industry suppliers showcase their products and services so you can talk to a variety of experts in the strata industry on issues ranging from insurance to building maintenance.

SCA (NSW) strata manager members will also be on hand to answer your questions. All up it will be a great day out and the only opportunity in NSW to meet so many other lot owners and strata industry experts.

So register now online at <http://nsw.stratacommunity.org.au/page/events/sca--nsw--convention---strata-vision/>

2012 Strata Community Awards for Excellence – new category for lot owners

This year for the first time, the strata community awards have been moved to coincide with the convention and a new category of award has been launched specifically for owners corporations and executive committees.

Not only are lot owners invited to come to the gala dinner (at a cost of \$200 for members and \$240 for non-members ex. GST) but now you can also nominate for an award.

The new Strata Owners Community Award recognises owners corporations and executive committees that have created and manage harmonious communities.

To enter this award you need to be:

- A strata manager nominating a strata scheme or committee
- A member of an owners corporation or executive committee

A submission is required and the nominator must be a member of SCA (NSW). Remember now lot owners can join SCA (NSW) and get their strata manager to pay the small nominal fee. Join up today by calling 02 9492 8200

If you would like further information about the 2012 Strata Community Awards for Excellence go to <http://nsw.stratacommunity.org.au/page/events/2012-strata-community-awards-for-excellence/>



Prepare for Spring with your own apartment makeover

NOW THE DAYS ARE GETTING LONGER AND THE AIR WARMER IT'S THE PERFECT TIME FOR AN APARTMENT INTERIOR DESIGN MAKEOVER. AND VIRTUALLY ANY BUDGET CAN RESULT IN A BEAUTIFULLY REVAMPED APARTMENT WITH JUST A LITTLE IMAGINATION.

Finding nonpermanent ways to update your apartment is instrumental to making a rental feel like home. Ask your landlord if you have permission to do some cosmetic renovations and if so, have it put in writing. Make sure you check your rental agreement and any council building restrictions before you start any apartment interior design work.

On the off chance you are not granted permission from the landlord, don't be disheartened, there are so many clever options for you to update your space by adding colour with new cushions, maybe new artwork or a mirror for the wall and even old furniture will look happy again with a new coat of paint. Colour sets the mood and is a great way to reflect your personality into your home environment.

And don't be shy with introducing plants, either indoors or outdoors, to add colour and texture to your home. See your local nursery for suitable options, the selection is endless!



If you are the owner of the apartment, the choices are far greater when deciding on a revamped interior design. Because apartments tend to be smaller than houses, it is wise to be space conscious when making any improvements to keep the apartment clear of clutter.

When renovating, be energy efficient too. Make the most of natural light and use clever tips like a strategically placed mirror to bounce light and give the illusion of a greater space. It will help you save on power costs as well as helping the environment.

Don't make home improvements your secret

Strata managers have plenty of stories about apartment owners making changes to their apartments that have had to be reversed. One such story involves an owner who demolished the sliding doors on his balcony and installed bi-fold doors without permission. He was required to remove the new doors and restore the balcony to its original condition.

All renovations, major or minor, require approval by the owners corporation at a general meeting or at the very least by its executive committee with no more than 25 percent against the works. All approvals granted by owners corporations must spell out that the approval is also subject to council approval where required, and owners are obliged to seek advice from council themselves as to whether this approval is required. It may be that some owners' modifications may also require the owners corporation to lodge a development application. Or in the case of a historically-listed building, owners will require sign off from the NSW Heritage Office.

If in doubt contact your strata manager and local council and talk to them about your plans. That way you are getting the best advice from independent, impartial parties.

Remember when in doubt always ask your strata manager for advice.

Be pool safety savvy

COMMUNITY LIVING IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE OPTION FOR FAMILIES, PARTICULARLY IF THE STRATA SCHEME HAS ITS OWN SWIMMING POOL OR SPA. BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT ALMOST 300 CHILDREN AGED UNDER FIVE DROWNED IN THE PAST NINE YEARS, WITH MANY LOSING THEIR LIVES IN SWIMMING POOLS.

There's never a wrong time to review safety around pools, particularly the pool fence and latch. In fact, this is the perfect time to check the safety of your strata scheme's pool to ensure it is up to scratch before summer is upon us.

To combat the high rate of childhood drowning in backyard swimming pools, the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia launched a new Keep Watch campaign to target specific safety issues around pools.

Royal Life Saving's National CEO, Rob Bradley said the rising number of strata properties with pools means strata managers need to get pool safety savvy.

"Strata pools have specific risks just because of the potential numbers of children who can access them. The growth in apartments across Australia with pools onsite means many more people and many more young children are using those facilities, which increase the potential dangers."

"Some of the risks are obvious: a gate propped open or palings missing from a fence are easy to see. But you have to test the gate



to see if the gate is self-closing and self-latching first time, every time. If you put a bit of weight on the bottom rung of the gate, does it give way? Are any of the palings or posts in the fence loose, or are the screws getting rusty?"

A free Home Pool Safety checklist is available at www.homepoolsafety.com.au

Mr Bradley said there are steps strata managers can take immediately to improve the safety of pools in their portfolio like ensuring the pool fence is compliant with the updated Australian Standard 1926 and have the pool area audited at least every two years. Your local Royal Life Saving Branch does these audits regularly and companies including PoolWerx also provide this service.

"Children have drowned because they were able to get through a faulty segment of the fence that wasn't obvious on first glance.

"Check the pool has an easily visible and legible CPR chart. The Australian Resuscitation Council updated the CPR Chart in early 2011. A quick way of checking whether the sign is up-to-date is to look for the "S" step - send for help. If it isn't there, the sign needs replacing," said Mr Bradley.

Ensure the pool fence is well clear from any plants, outdoor furniture or wheelie bins as children could use these to help climb the fence. And as strata managers can't be onsite at every property all the time, residents need to be empowered to protect their own families and should be encouraged to do a CPR or first aid course.

Safety notices should be visible in common areas outlining the four key Keep Watch messages:

1. Active supervision – When around the pool keep young children within arms reach at all times, don't just watch from a distance.
2. Restrict access to danger areas – Don't prop the pool gate open.
3. Water awareness – Teach children basic water familiarisation; and
4. Know how to resuscitate if necessary.

Find Out More:

www.homepoolsafety.com.au

www.royallifesaving.com.au

www.kidshealth.chw.edu.au/projects/drowning-prevention/swimming-pool-fencing

Strata law review update

On 20 June this year, SCA (NSW) hosted an event in NSW Parliament House attracting 150 guests who all came to hear from the Minister for Fair Trading, the Honourable Anthony Roberts, MP, on the strata law review which is currently underway.

Stakeholders such as representatives from Government - NSW Fair Trading and the CTTT - and other stakeholders - OCN, UDIA (NSW), ARAMA, Australian Property Institute and City Futures - also attended this unique event.

The Minister praised SCA (NSW) stating that "Strata Community Australia deserves commendation for the roles it performs in providing information, training and education."

He also stated that "given the importance of the strata sector to the people of New South Wales, it is vital that the strata sector and the Government have a frank and open dialogue."

As an aside the Minister also revealed that he was now most certainly a passionate advocate for strata and lives in strata himself.

He then went on to say that the main aim of the review is to ensure that the appropriate laws are in place to regulate and manage the strata sector into the future.

The Minister stated that the GAP report raised a number of issues around people, pets, parties and that we could also add another "p" to that with puffing in reference to the issues people have with others smoking.

The next steps are the release of a discussion paper, forming part 2 of the consultation process in the near future.

In his final statement the Minister said "I want to make it clear that there is no set agenda for the review and all issues regarding the laws are on the table."

SCA (NSW) is currently waiting for the release of the discussion paper after which it will draft a submission on behalf of the industry. This is an exciting time and with a real opportunity for change.

Consumer Awareness Seminar

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.

Come along to a free seminar and hear from speakers provided by Strata Community Australia (NSW). They will give you insight into the rights, roles and responsibilities of owners and occupiers of strata title properties in NSW.

The next seminar is on the topic of "Levies".

Hear from Wal Dobrow from Sinking Fund Plans (Aust) Pty Ltd on budgets and budgeting, spending controls and reporting, extraordinary items and levy recovery actions.

Wednesday 19th September 2012

4.00pm - Registration

4.15pm - 6.00pm - Session

SCA (NSW), Suite 802, Level 8, 99 Mount St, North Sydney

Free but bookings are essential.

Please confirm your booking by completing the attached registration form or by calling 9492 8200 or emailing kelly.denmeade@stratacommunity.org.au

Strata Owners Chapter

Have you joined the SCA (NSW) Strata Owners Chapter (SOC) yet? As a member you will enjoy the following benefits:

- Free online executive committee training
- Invitations to events at special SOC member rates
- Networking opportunities with other lot owners, strata managers and suppliers
- Invitation to the complimentary Christmas party (subject to availability)
- 'Around the Grounds'- fortnightly e-newsletter from SCA (NSW)
- Access to the online directory of suppliers and strata businesses
- Access to fact sheets
- Use of the strata 'Works Agreement' template
- Membership certificate (electronic)
- Input into strata policy development
- Voting rights pursuant to the NSW Constitution

More information and access to the online application form are available at www.nsw.stratacommunity.org.au

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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.



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