

STRATA & COMMUNITY LIVING

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Tune in, don't drop out

As the final step in the move to digital-only TV, some channels will change frequencies in a process known as the retune. The retune will free up broadcasting spectrum that will be used for new services, such as mobile broadband. Different areas will need to retune on different dates from now until the end of 2014. There are a few key points you need to consider when the retune takes place in your area:

- The retune may affect TV services and you may need to take action to ensure you continue to receive all free-to-air TV channels.
- Many strata buildings receive television signals through a shared antenna system or Master Antenna Television (MATV) system. This system is used to distribute TV signals to individual units throughout the property.
- You may need to consider whether your property's MATV systems can be adjusted (or retuned) when the retune occurs and seek advice from a TV service technician to determine the best course of action if you are unsure.
- Fact sheets are available at the retune website (www.digitalready.gov.au/retune).

Just like the switch to digital-only TV, the retune is being carefully planned to make sure the change is as easy as possible. In some locations, two signals may be run to help people get ready for the retune – this is known as a simulcast.

Simulcasting will occur for a short time (between 1-3 months) in some areas that are densely populated with high-rise buildings (sites such as Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and

the Gold Coast), to allow for any work required on shared antenna systems in those buildings to be completed.

The retune (including simulcasts) for the main transmitters in Adelaide and Perth have already taken place. After the retune date viewers will only receive one of each TV channel again.

If any property you manage is planning forthcoming changes, replacement or upgrades to TV reception equipment, you should check with your TV services technician about how this equipment will be affected by the retune.

To find out the retune date for a specific address, visit www.digitalready.gov.au/retune or call the Digital Ready Information Line on 1800 20 10 13 (8am – 10pm AEST seven days per week).

If you would like to look up general details on transmitters in your area, including the most up to date information on retune dates, the channels which are changing, expected outages and simulcast periods, use the mySwitch tool available at myswitch.digitalready.gov.au

For those in the Sydney metropolitan area the switchover date is 3 December 2013 so make sure you're digital ready.

Beware the dodgy builder



Words by Ollie Hogue

Home maintenance scams

Beware of dodgy builders and home maintenance scams, with an increase in reports warning of unlicensed and illegal builders on the look-out for work.

In Sydney, a man who promises to complete home building and maintenance work at low prices is wanted for allegedly ripping off vulnerable residents. He is reported to have been touting for business throughout North Bondi, Surry Hills and Marrickville.

One victim, who was door-knocked by the man, asked for more time to consider yet five minutes later the man was up a ladder, ripping plaster off their home's fascia, the report said. Another victim engaged the man to paint his roof, however there was spilt paint, uneven coverage and damage to the roof, and the job was never completed.

In Newcastle, NSW Fair Trading have warned of an unlicensed builder who may be trying to trade despite an interim order stopping him from carrying out any building work. The man was recently fined in court for work relating to substandard fencing and renovating work.

The most common scenario that scammers try, according to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commissions' SCAMwatch website, is to sell you home maintenance services, like roofing or gardening services, and then bill you for additional work that you did not agree to.

Investment seminars and real estate scams

While a great deal of property investment advice can be legitimate and beneficial, it is important to look carefully at what an investment scheme or seminar is offering, the ACCC also warns.

Investment seminars and real estate scams often make money by charging you attendance fees, by selling you over-priced reports or books and by selling property and investments without letting you get independent advice. Seminars that try and convince you to follow high-risk investment strategies, such as borrowing large sums of money to buy property or promoting investments that involve lending money on for no security—or with other risky terms, should also be avoided.

If you attend an investment seminar, never sign-up for anything on the day and always seek independent professional advice before making a decision.

End of financial year scams

The end of financial year is a common time for scammers to target unsuspecting small business owners, says the ACCC. The most complained about small business scams relate to false invoices for goods or services such as advertising, directory listings, domain names and office supplies.

If you come across a scam please let us know so we can share across the industry and stop anyone becoming a victim. Contact insidestrata@stratacommunity.org.au

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Help available to understand strata

Understanding strata with all its rules and by-laws can be tough especially if you've spent a long time living in a detached house. The first thing to remember is that just because you own the apartment does not mean you can do whatever you like in it. Community living simply does not work that way.

To help people understand living in strata, the members and staff at Strata Community Australia (NSW) have put together a number of resources that are available free of charge and all are available through their website www.nsw.stratacommunity.org.au

Common property guide

Knowing what common property is and what it isn't is what keeps the lawyers in business. Lot owners are right to feel confused, so to help end that confusion, SCA (NSW) produced the Who's responsible? A guide to common property, which is available to download online under the consumer info tab.

The guide provides a list of items found within a building that could generally be considered common property. However, depending on the history of the building, renovations and by-laws, determining what is and isn't common property is a complex matter.

The guide says that in most cases you will need to refer to the strata plan and by-laws to determine who is responsible for repairs and maintenance.

Fact sheets

SCA (NSW) has a number of members who are dedicated to providing information and assistance where they can. Some of these members sit on the Strata Manager Committee or the Strata Services Committee and continuously work on providing and updating fact sheets – all of which are free online.

Do you need to know about Annual General Meetings? There is a fact sheet for that. More are being produced on a range of topics so keep checking the website.

Executive committee training

Did you know that SCA (NSW) provides free online training for owners who decide to take a role on their executive committees?

You didn't? The program which was funded by NSW Fair Trading aims to provide executive committee members with the tools and knowledge to carry out their roles as Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and so on.

The training covers the following topics:

- Governance and Ethics
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Strata Plan Interpretation
- Administrative Matters
- Communication.

SCA (NSW) is looking at a second round of training so keep an eye out and if you haven't done the first then why not give it a go. You will definitely learn something and it could make your time on the executive committee just that bit easier.

Other resources not online

SCA (NSW) also holds regular seminars for lot owners. These are free and held in the North Sydney offices. They cover a range of topics and are always presented by subject matter experts.

Dates and topics are posted on the website. Make sure if you do want to go along to a seminar that you ring and book your place as seats are limited and often very popular.

Finally don't forget the annual Lot Owners Day which is held each year in conjunction with the SCA (NSW) annual convention where your strata manager is sure to be attending some educational workshops (in NSW strata managers are required to undertake professional training courses each year as part of their licensing).

This year the event will be on 2 November in the Sydney CBD. More information has been provided over the page.

Strata round-up

There's a lot happening at the moment in strata so here is a round-up of things you need to know.

New pool legislation

Since 29 April 2013 all swimming pools in NSW are required to be registered at www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au. Registration online is free and owners have until 29 October 2013 to register their pools or face fines if they fail to comply.

Registration and self-assessment is a fairly easy process. Owners are required to enter their name, address, contact details, the type of pool, and the approximate age of the pool. Then they will need to complete a self-assessment checklist about their pool which also assesses if the pool fence meets the appropriate Australian Standards.

Lot owners note that from 29 April 2014 you will need a pool compliance certificate to sell or lease your properties. The owners corporation or strata manager will hold the compliance certificate on behalf of all unit holders and make it available to pool owners when or if required.



Strata Owners Day – Saturday, 2 November 2013

This year's Strata Owners Day, located at the Sofitel Wentworth Hotel, will feature Flat Chat Live with Jimmy Thomson.

Come along and ask your tricky strata question and have it answered by our panel of experts.

Jimmy promises some fun and lively debate about strata but always has a joke or two up his sleeve to lighten the mood.

The day also includes sessions on working with your strata manager, future changes and the very popular renovation rescue which is also back by popular demand.

Attendees will be provided with morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and a goodie bag plus access to some great strata industry services and experts. Cost for the day is \$66 (inclusive of GST).

You must register and pay online at www.nsw.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 Web: www.nsw.stratacommunity.org.au

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EDITORIAL CONTACT: SCA (NSW) Ltd, PO Box 347 North Sydney NSW 2059

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