



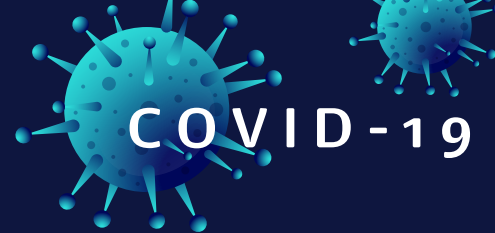
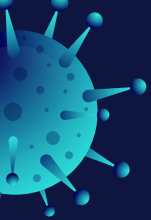
# COVID-19

## COMPLETE GUIDE

FOR STRATA MANAGERS, STRATA OWNERS  
& SUPPLIERS

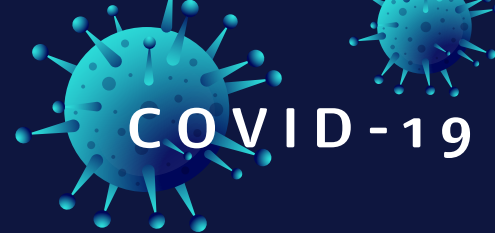
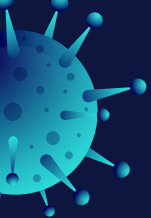


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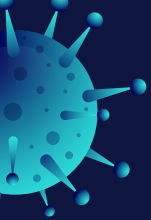


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## Preface

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the information provided is up to date and correct, the rapidly changing nature of this pandemic and introduction of new initiatives and Government advice may make some information in this guide redundant.

## The Great Strata Challenge

SCA (NSW) is the peak representative body for the broad strata sector in NSW.

As the realisation sinks in that firmer lockdowns and isolation rules are already here, we must now quickly turn our minds to how our high-density ecosystem will support, sustain and survive such intense demands. Over 2 million people in Australia live in strata communities that were originally designed for lifestyle, amenity and convenience.

We are now forced to shelter in our apartments and home, and the need for adaptive solutions to work with our strata communities has never been more critical. The economy is being placed into hibernation, but strata cannot hibernate. We are facing an unprecedented challenge and must have a coordinated effort to get through this.

We must prepare our communities and infrastructure to establish networks and rely on each other. At the centre of these massive challenges is the professional strata community, led by strata managers, building managers and service providers. They are being forced to adapt, innovate and problem solve on the run, with a huge responsibility and obligation to provide hope, support, and service to millions of residents searching for answers and navigating a myriad of competing priorities.

The uncertainties facing strata managers are infinite and become magnified when exposed to the higher density challenges that we face. Buildings and communities were not designed for isolation or long-term habitation. This additional time inside puts intense pressure on sanitation and waste, not to mention social cohesion and behaviour to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of residents. Strata management is not an essential service, it is a critical service - not just now, but as our economy and communities rebuild after the crisis.

Strata are communities of people. There will be cashflow challenges, compliance issues and behavioural problems. Most of these will have no precedent, legislative solution or rule book. We cannot forget that strata is still afflicted by past problems of defects, flammable cladding, behavioural challenges, and complex compliance obligations. These have not gone away- they are ever present reminders of the minefield that await strata communities juggling isolation and adaptation to today's problems and tomorrow's unknowns.

The strata industry is responding like it never has. We are under revenue pressure like all businesses in today's economy, with services and resident demand under intense strain for innovation, solutions and support. We're up for challenge and will need communities to support these endeavours. Strata Community Association (NSW) as the peak representative body in strata is collaborating with State, Federal and international counterparts to implement virus control strategies to educate and support our members. We are lobbying Government, creating resources, streaming webinars and advocating solutions – at a business level the same resourcefulness is being applied to craft solutions for clients.

There has never been a time for more kindness, acceptance, flexibility and support for each other. Whilst isolating is our personal responsibility, surviving and thriving through the long night in strata will require a village response.

## Introduction

Strata Community Association (NSW) is the peak industry body for Strata and Community Title Management in New South Wales. Membership includes Strata Managers, support staff, committee members and suppliers of goods and services to the industry.

SCA (NSW) has in excess of 3,000 members who help oversee, advise or manage a combined property portfolio with an estimated replacement value of over \$400 Billion. SCA (NSW) proudly fulfils the dual roles of a professional institute and consumer advocate.

At a state level, we're experiencing economic hardship and uncertainty; but rest assured, for now, it's business as usual for SCA (NSW), and we'll be working to ensure the Strata Industry continues operating as effectively as possible (within the Government enforced restrictions), to support the millions of residents who reside in strata titled properties.

## Our Work in Crisis

Our communities, state and nation are experiencing a pandemic unlike anything we've experienced, and we're monitoring and reporting on the situation very carefully.

On behalf of SCA (NSW), we stand behind our members, our stakeholders and our community as we tackle the outbreak day-by-day to ensure we deliver the most up to date information available.

We would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to all those involved in stymieing the threat and spread of the virus and providing vital care and support to those affected.

With daily updates and restrictions from the Federal and State Governments, it is proving a difficult task to keep on top of events as they unfold. Nonetheless, SCA (NSW) has continuously monitored and reported on COVID-19 and its impact on our members, stakeholders and the community.

We must stress that this is fluid advice and whilst we will continue to provide factual advice from Government and relevant health organisations, several uncertainties remain which could result in updated advice.

Rest assured that we have ongoing dialogue and are raising concerns to provide as much clarity as possible.

Our team is 100% committed to delivering service as usual to all members and stakeholders. Whilst we are working remotely, please understand we're business as (un)usual.

We hope the information provided here can be used as a reference for members as a preliminary source tool and will be updated as often as possible. We have collated information from several Government and health agencies, organisations, associations and communities to ensure that our members

are receiving the most update to date information as possible, and to help disseminate the ideal policies and procedures for strata during this trying time. Hyperlinks are added in blue throughout the document for convenience.

## Section 1: Advice for SCA (NSW) Members and Strata Managers

As many members have asked us about of the status of strata management services following the statements made by the Prime Minister, it is our view that it is likely that the role of strata, building managers and service suppliers would be deemed essential and would therefore not be subject to the closures that are currently being imposed on non-essential services.

SCA (NSW) is seeking clarification on whether building managers should be explicitly confirmed as an essential service due to their critical front-line service. A paper supporting this critical definition and the continuation of the strata ecosystem has being prepared for Government and stakeholder information, reinforcing the importance of the business as usual approach to maintaining the buildings in which we live.

### Building Managers

If the Building Manager needs to self-isolate off site, it would most likely be considered sick leave. They may have to organise a contractor to complete necessary work.

Building Managers should try to advise their buildings of any precautions they want to put in place, such as no contact, deliveries, extra cleaning, etc.

### Common Areas

We encourage all Owners to minimise use of any common areas or shared facilities to protect themselves and protect the community from the spread of the virus.

The common property must still be maintained and in good condition.

### Cleaning

The following document is the Australian Government Department of Health Cleaning guide. We highly encourage all cleaners, caretakers, Building Managers and Strata Managers to reference this when discussing cleaning plans.

It can be found [here](#).

If Committees are concerned, ask your cleaning company to:

Increase number of cleans, length of clean, what gets cleaned; and  
Send you their Coronavirus cleaning plan that outlines how they are handling the situation.

## Finances

Have conversations with owners if they can't pay their levies before issuing demands. Some owners may have lost their jobs or have been reduced to only minimal hours each week or may rely on income from short-term letting guests.

You may wish to work with committees and owners to pass a resolution to waive interest and implement formal approved payment plans or an 'informal' payment plan if appropriate at this time. This should be decided on a case-by-case basis.

## Increased Building Loads

It is to be expected that buildings will face increased building loads at this time and managers and Committees should start taking steps to mitigate these increased costs if they haven't already.

With more residents working from home and others following self-isolation measures, it's likely that buildings will see a spike in water and utility consumption, as well as other services.

In preparation for a prolonged lockdown, managers and Committees should consider how they will manage:

- Additional cleaning and garbage services
- Increased water and utility bills
- Likelihood of increased expenses for plumbing and other under pressure infrastructure maintenance

## Cashflow Management

Responsible cashflow management will be paramount not only in the immediate future, but in the months to come as health and governmental agencies predict we'll be dealing with the impacts of the pandemic for many months.

Due to the economic fallout of COVID-19, Owners and Tenants may seek financial relief if they are out of work or their income significantly reduced.

Owners may be asking for exemptions or deferment of levy payments, which unless Government provides some assistance or passes legislation, can only be dealt with on a building per building level.

The building loads outlined above will also affect cashflow if schemes haven't budgeted for this contingency and as noted, it is likely that some Owners will fall into arrears at the same time.

SCA (NSW) is lobbying Government to place temporary exemptions on schemes from complying with section 76(2) of the Management Act (transferring funds between Admin and Capital Works Funds).

We endeavour to keep members and stakeholders informed of this situation as it unfolds.

## Strata Committee Meetings

All face to face meeting should be limited in accordance with Health orders. Alternative means of meeting attendance should be used until such time as the social distancing obligations are lifted or



safe meetings can be held- likely following updated Government advice. This directly relates to strata committee and general meetings held on site or at office venues.

SCA (NSW) has briefed NSW Fair Trading on the potential impacts that may result from deferring meetings. We are also holding ongoing discussions regarding the broader impact on service providers and services to strata schemes.

## Section 2: Advice for Owners and Occupiers

### Self-Isolation

We have worked with some communities who have organised volunteers to drop off groceries or other essential items to the elderly or people in self-isolation in their building. If you would like to implement something like this, contact your Strata Manager to work out the logistics.

We encourage all Owners to notify the Committee or Building Manager if you are in self-isolation as a precautionary measure and to reach out if you are left without any support and need something like groceries.

### What if someone is not self-isolating as they should be?

If someone is required to be in quarantine and does not comply, we are viewing that this is a criminal offence. This should be a Police issue, not an Owners' Corporation issue. Fines can be issued by the Police if someone does not self-isolate.

Self-isolation is not an enforced quarantine, there is a difference. Self-isolation is a community and health-based preventative measure. Quarantine is enforced.

You should try to provide evidence when calling the Police, don't just call them because you think someone is breaking the rules.

### Should I disclose to the Owners' Corporation or Building Manager that I have been infected with COVID-19?

Yes, you should disclose to your Strata Manager or Building Manager if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Your identity and specific location will be kept confidential, but it does allow management to notify any of the service contractors who may be impacted by your circumstance and give them the opportunity to manage their own Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) as required.

In addition, there are duties under the Workplace Health & Safety Act for which an Owners Corporation is responsible with respect to the common property and contractors that service the building. As all lot Owners share the common property as Tenants in common, those duties for disclosure will extend to you as an Owner or as a Landlord.

## Precautions that can be taken in your building

It is a legislative requirement that Owners' Corporations must act responsibly. It is recommended that all Committees work on the basis that there may be someone infected within the building and take any necessary precautions. Individuals are urged to take a large amount of responsibility in following government guidelines.

- Install hand sanitiser at all lifts, reception areas, etc. We understand supply is hard to get now and are working on finding solutions / suppliers for our clients
- If possible, use knuckles or elbows to press elevator buttons and to open doors
- Install signs in the lifts, lobbies, etc.
- Ensure all roll information is up to date. Give notices in the mailbox, under the door, via email, etc. that outlines what precautions are being put in place by the Owners' Corporation (hand sanitiser, extra cleaning, signs in the lifts).

Review our [infographic](#) on keeping your apartment communities safe.

## What type of Policies may my Committee create?

The Committee is responsible for the management of the common areas and facilities and may need to create additional policies to manage the COVID-19 crisis.

### **These new policies may include:**

#### **Delivery of parcels to your unit**

You may be required to instruct the courier to leave the parcel at the front of your apartment door, not in the lobby area. You will need to arrange how they get access to your floor, etc.

#### **Visitors and visitors parking**

To manage the risk of exposure to other residents, the Committee may recommend restriction on the number of social visitors in line with government protocols, but certainly the visitor's carparks will be restricted for use by essential services like Doctors and Medical Services as a priority, etc.

#### **Rubbish/waste**

You may be asked not to use the chute or rubbish room and to double bag the rubbish from your bin. Alternate collection methods may need to be implemented while you are house bound.

#### **Mail**

The Committee may require you to make alternate arrangements for the delivery of mail.

#### **Shared facilities**

The Committee may determine the temporary closure of shared community facilities, such as pools and gyms, or provide limitations on their use.

#### **Shared laundry facilities**

Restricted use and/or closure of facilities may extend to communal laundries if residents do not adhere to the Government guidelines. Residents should be encouraged to take protective measures, such

as wearing gloves, washing their hands, not touching their face and disinfecting all surfaces of the machines they use. Maintain social distancing. Recommend use of the hot water setting and use of laundry detergents that contain a bleach compound. To ensure delicate items aren't damaged, use delicate bags, etc.

### **Meetings & Communication**

The Committee may implement new meeting and communication protocols to minimise the potential spread of the virus and enable decisions of the Committee to continue to be made by an alternate means, such as via teleconference, online meetings, ballots, etc.

### **Building Maintenance & Services**

The Committee may determine to increase or reduce services to the building to minimise risks to residents, such as changes to cleaning regimes and waste collection; for example, if all residents are staying home and the rubbish generated increases. Committees may also consider employing security guards if there is a power failure and the entry/exit security systems stops working or garage doors, etc.

SCA (NSW) urges all members to be patient and accommodating of policies Committees create to help protect you and your neighbours.

### **Technology for Strata:**

Working from home may be a new experience for many of you, but thankfully there are plenty of apps and information out there to help you stay connected with your colleagues.

#### **Technology to run meetings**

Keep on track with team meetings run through [Zoom](#), [Webex](#), [Microsoft Teams](#) and [Go To Meeting](#). You can also use [Skype for Business](#).

#### **Technology to keep up to date and collaborate**

Email is probably the least responsive way to get through this crisis, especially when it comes to working together as a team. This is because anything you attach creates versions which can quickly become out-of-date and all require uploading and downloading to be edited, which is time-consuming. Enhance your daily team stand-ups with collaboration tools like [Slack](#) which is essentially a chat room for your business and allow the conversations to continue and decisions to be made.

#### **Technology to share documents**

There is a myriad of apps to support document sharing. [Dropbox](#) is easy-to-use and free to setup and [Google Drive](#) is very popular too. If you're a Microsoft user, now might also be the time to explore [OneDrive](#), which is part of your Office365 account. Each will allow you to upload and/or create documents and share them with others in your team, who – depending on your permissions – can also edit or comment.

#### **Technology for team projects**

Check out tools like [Monday](#), [Asana](#), [Trello](#) or [Basecamp](#). Your team will be able to see updates in real

time, share links to files and they're all easier and much more visual, which means you can see where things are at a glance even on your phone.

Technology for team training

Use [Zoom](#) to organise webinars – you can share your screen and run through slides or PowerPoints and even record proceedings. If you need to record videos for training, check out [Loom](#). You can use it on any website and record both your actions and your own face, so it's a great way to step people through processes.

## Section 3: Communication and Support

This unprecedented situation presents us with an opportunity to pull together and support our communities in an hour of need.

Our advice is to keep the communications concise and consistent, and make sure your messaging is clear.

The long-term effects of isolation, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, will be acute, so we would encourage safe community engagement to ensure we combat loneliness.

### Social Implications

Strata Managers and Building Managers are being asked to deal with circumstances that few will have experienced before or had appropriate training in.

As people come to terms with the new normal with many facing added pressures, such as job loss and economic hardship, strata communities will likely see spikes in undesirable behaviour as people grapple with anxiety and uncertainty.

Strata Managers and Building Managers may be confronted with:

- Angry, aggressive or coercive language or behaviour from those people who are under extreme financial pressure
- Experience overseas shows that the instances of domestic violence increases as restrictions on movement are enforced
- With everyone at home, noise complaints and other by-law breaches will increase – many schemes may already be dealing with this
- Self-harm and suicides are also likely to increase

SCA (NSW) has a zero-tolerance policy for aggressive language or behaviour that intends to cause emotional or physical harm.

Managers and Committees are encouraged to circulate communications policies to residents that promote calm and considerate interaction between people.

The onus is on every individual within strata communities to treat each other with kindness, respect and patience during this trying time.

## Counselling

For any person experiencing distress during COVID-19, there are a range of support services, including online and over-the-phone counselling – see our resources section below.

If you need emergency assistance phone 000 for police, ambulance or fire services.

More information on health and mental health services during COVID-19, can be accessed [here](#).

## Section 4: SCA (NSW) – How We’re Responding

### What closures mean for Strata:

In accordance with advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) who advise our National Cabinet, SCA (NSW) has developed recommendations.

#### **Our recommendations are:**

- All Owners’ Corporations should close any shared facilities that come under the new Government restrictions. This includes gyms, indoor and outdoor pools and sporting activities. This will apply to apartment blocks and we encourage all Owners follow these new restrictions. Your Building Manager or Strata Manager will be able to assist in locking these facilities, sending correspondence to Owners or putting signs up if required.
- If your community has any shared facilities not included in the restrictions, we highly encourage all Owners to follow social distancing guidelines and sanitize high touch areas, such as elevator buttons, regularly. As more and more restrictions come in place, we will start to see more people in your communities working from home or in self-isolation, so there may be an increased number of people using lifts, etc. We encourage Committees to work closely with their managers on a case by case basis.
- If you are currently in the process of selling your lot, real estate auctions and open house inspections are included in the newest restrictions. Your real estate agent should be in contact with you regarding the same. Private inspections are currently allowed with social distancing rules observed.
- We acknowledge that all buildings are different and have different facilities and spaces. Our general advice is to follow ALL Government restrictions (gyms, pools, etc.), increase cleaning of high-touch areas (reception, foyers, lifts, etc.), follow social distancing recommendations and keep in regular contact with the community.

#### **What we’re doing:**

- We are informing our staff daily via remote means with any updates from the World Health Organisation and Australian and NSW Governments
- We have shared vital information about novel coronavirus, its symptoms, tips for reducing the likelihood of contracting the virus and reinforced the requirement for the practice of handwashing and general hygiene
- We have advised any staff who feel at all unwell to remain at home
- We have advised that we will enforce self-quarantine protocols for two weeks for any staff returning from overseas holidays

- We have informed members with upcoming meetings that we have the capacity to hold meetings via teleconference and video conference
- We have organised our education delivery service to be moved entirely online
- We maintain open communication with the Department of Fair Trading
- We have scheduled and run up to three webinars weekly for members and the community
  
- We have a business continuity plan, which has various levels and functions, such as remote working. We will continue to closely monitor the situation and will keep our staff and clients informed via email, and our website with any changes in our operations.

The strata ecosystem is more critical now than ever and the commerce of strata must continue to protect the safety of our residents.

In communities where the virus hits, it is deepening the consequences of operational cutbacks, pushing many of the burdens onto Building Managers and Strata Companies with reduced staff or minimal resources.

This is not a time to step back, it's a time to step up for our communities and members, and we're doing everything we can to ensure strata titled complexes are continuing to operate.

Our key focus is on the impact to our members, their employees, our customers and residents in strata and the impact on SCA (NSW) meetings and events, as well as the proximity in which many of our members reside.

## Section 5: General Information

### Current State Lockdown Measures (as at 14/04/2020)

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced a new stage of coronavirus restrictions, with the Government advising against indoor or outdoor gatherings of more than two people. He said it would be up to the states and territories to decide whether this measure was legally enforceable, but the NSW Premier quickly confirmed NSW would be policing the changes

As of 12am Tuesday 31st March, NSW residents now legally have to stay in their homes unless they have a "reasonable excuse" for leaving.

"Reasonable excuses" are broadly categorised as:

- Obtaining food or other goods and services
- Travelling for the purposes of work or education if the person cannot do it at home
- Exercise
- Medical or caring reasons.

The full list of reasonable excuses can be found [here](#).

Children who live across two households can continue to switch between houses.

NSW has also adopted the two-person gathering limit.

Beyond those essential reasons for leaving the home, the Government has provided a list which would “excuse” somebody being outside.

It includes:

- Fleeting an unsafe home, so to avoid injury or illness
- Dealing with an emergency or on compassionate grounds
- Providing care or helping a vulnerable relative/person
- Taking your child to childcare
- Attending a wedding (adhering to the five-person limit) or a funeral (adhering to a 10-person limit)
- Moving to a new house or moving between two places of residence
- Donating blood
- Fulfilling legal obligations
- Accessing support services such as employment services, mental services etc
- Fulfilling parental sharing arrangements of children
- Going to a place of worship or to provide pastoral care, if you are a priest, minister or member of a religious order.

The SCA (NSW), Board is urging members to heed government advice and to be patient with the increased level of lockdowns to help protect members and consumers in strata titled complexes during the escalating COVID-19 outbreak.

## JobKeeper Information:

As many of us own, operate or work within a small/medium business setting, the new JobKeeper payment announcement has brought some confidence back into a stalling economy. The Federal Government has announced a new \$130bn support package with a new JobKeeper payment – a wage subsidy to keep Australians in work.

### How much is the payment worth?

The federal government will pay eligible employers \$1,500 per fortnight for each eligible worker, about 70% of the national median wage.

JobKeeper is about \$400 a fortnight more than the \$1,100 JobSeeker payment with the coronavirus supplement for those out of work.

### Who is eligible for JobKeeper?

In order to receive a payment, both the employer and employee must meet eligibility criteria.

Eligible employers are businesses (including companies, partnerships, trusts and sole traders), not-for-profits and charities:

- With a turnover of less than \$1bn that have lost 30% or more of their revenue compared to a comparable period a year ago.
- With a turnover of \$1bn or more and with at least a 50% reduction in revenue compared to a comparable period a year ago.

- The big banks subject to the banking levy are not eligible.

Eligible employees:

- Were employed by an eligible employer at 1 March 2020
- Can be sole traders, full-time, part-time, or long-term casuals employed on a regular basis for longer than 12 months as at 1 March 2020.
- Are at least 16 years of age.
- Are an Australian citizen, the holder of a permanent visa, a protected special category visa, a non-protected special category visa who has been residing continually in Australia for 10 years or more, or a New Zealander on a special category (subclass 444) visa.

The government estimates that six million workers will receive this payment. Gig economy workers will be covered, as they are sole traders.

### **What if I am on a temporary visa?**

Scott Morrison explained that New Zealanders on 444 visas will get the payment because “they are part of an ongoing economy in Australia”.

Eligibility may be expanded to others, but at the moment many temporary visa holders will be ineligible.

### **How will it be paid?**

Eligible employers will be paid \$1,500 per fortnight per eligible employee from 30 March 2020, for a maximum of six months.

Eligible employees will receive from their employers a minimum of \$1,500 per fortnight, before tax. Employers can top up the payment.

Employers will pay employees as usual and payments will be made to the employer monthly in arrears by the Australian Tax Office.

### **Will I receive \$1,500 even if I ordinarily earn less?**

If an employee ordinarily receives less than \$1,500 in income per fortnight before tax, their employer must pay them, at a minimum, \$1,500 per fortnight, before tax. It is therefore possible for a long-term casual or part-time worker to receive more than their ordinary pay.

### **What if I was stood down or sacked?**

If an employee has been stood down, their employer must pay their employee, at a minimum, \$1,500 per fortnight, before tax.

This means that employees of businesses that shut down due to various restrictions – such as cafes, restaurants, theatres, casino workers and the like – will continue to be paid even if they are not working.

If an employee was employed on 1 March 2020, subsequently ceased employment with their employer, and then has been re-engaged by the same eligible employer, the employee will also receive, at a



minimum, \$1,500 per fortnight, before tax.

### **When will it start being paid?**

The subsidy will start on 30 March, with the first payments to be received by employers in the first week of May. In the meantime, employers must continue paying their employees and then claim the money from the first week of May.

Businesses are able to register their interest in participating in the payment on the [ATO website](#).

### **What about superannuation?**

Employers must continue to pay the superannuation guarantee on regular wages, but it is up to employer whether they pay superannuation on additional JobKeeper payments.

### **Can I get the JobKeeper and other payments?**

A person receiving the JobKeeper payment cannot also receive the jobseeker payment (formerly Newstart). People who have already applied for jobseeker can withdraw and shift to JobKeeper payments if they are re-engaged by their employer.

A person cannot be in receipt of JobKeeper payments from two or more employers.

We'll keep our eye out for more information as it's published.

For now, the [ATO](#) is a good source of information for those affected by Covid-19.

## **Section 6: Common Questions and Answers**

### Strata Specific Questions:

#### **What options does a strata committee have to avoid in-person meetings?**

Strata managers or committees can make alternate arrangements to vote and discuss strata issues if they do not want to attend strata meetings in person.

The options available include voting in writing, email, teleconference or via other technologies, as well as voting by proxy – however there are limits on the number of proxies that any lot owner can hold on behalf of other lot owners.

If an owners corporation has not previously passed a resolution to accept voting by means other than in person, they only have the option of an in-person meeting.

For small schemes, it may be possible to continue in person meetings while observing the current social distancing and gathering orders from NSW Health.

Fair Trading understands this presents a problem for larger schemes in the current environment and is reviewing the situation.

## **Do members of an owners corporation have grounds to challenge any resolutions if the meetings are not carried out as per their usual procedures during this period?**

Decisions can only be made by parties who have the authority to do so.

Such authorities are often granted in managing agency agreements which delegate some or all the functions of the strata committee to a licensed managing agent.

Those agreements can also place limitations on the agent's authority to act, for example by placing a cap on the amount of the owners corporation's money they can spend on repairs and maintenance.

Likewise, decisions of the owners corporation, found in minutes of owners corporation meetings, may restrict how much a strata committee can spend without urgent approval.

Owners can challenge a decision made by a strata manager or strata committees where they do not have the approval to make that decision under the scheme rules.

In reviewing the matter, NSW Fair Trading would consider whether the action was in the client's best interests.

## **What is an 'essential service' in strata buildings?**

The legislation does not provide a definition of what is an essential service for a strata scheme.

In the current situation, any services that contribute to the safety, health of residents and maintenance of minimum living standards should be considered by the owners corporation.

SCA has prepared a paper outlining the impact of Covid 19 on residential buildings and defining essential services, You can access the [paper here](#) .

## **What options are available to owners corporations if they can't meet their obligations because of factors such as financial hardship, public health and/or property access issues?**

For now, repairs and maintenance work (such as fire safety inspections, fitting of window safety devices, fixing defects and/or other inspections and certifications) should still be funded using administration and capital works accounts which already have funds due to levies paid over previous years.

Once these funds are exhausted, the owners corporation may consider moving funds between these accounts.

However, the law requires that money to be reimbursed and requires the owners corporation, within three months of money being transferred or used for the other account's purposes, to determine the amount that will be levied on lot owners so that the relevant account can be reimbursed.

The owners corporation may request the strata manager to source a strata loan if any urgent repairs are required to maintain the safety, health and minimum standards for the building and common property, and the owners corporation's administrative or capital works funds are inadequate for the job.

During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, repairs and maintenance should be carried out, social distancing measures must be maintained.

### **Can our building have contractors onsite?**

Contractors, site inspections etc. will still continue and we encourage discussion around preventative measures on a case by case basis.

We highly encourage all building managers, caretakers, facilities managers or strata managers to communicate with any contractors, trades etc. and advise of the following:

- Ask them to avoid close personal contact with any one on site
- Sanitize hands and equipment if they are coming on site before and after conducting their duties
- If they have been overseas or are feeling unwell, contact immediately and postpone the works – they should not attend the site
- Bring their own pens/pencils if any signatures etc. are required
- Avoid shaking hands

### **What needs to be done if a person diagnosed with Covid-19 uses common property facilities such as lifts, pools, spas, gyms etc?**

The strata manager has an obligation to “act in the client’s best interests” which includes communicating with residents on health guidelines as they affect closure of common areas such as pools, spas, community halls and gymnasiums.

### **What options are available to owners corporations if a strata unit is advertised on Airbnb or other platforms as being suitable for quarantining, which could place others at risk?**

Owners corporations must comply with planning approvals and the owner or occupier of a lot must ensure that the lot is not used for any purpose that is prohibited by law and is not occupied by more people than allowed by law.

Any person who is required to quarantine must strictly comply with health directions.

A strata scheme may consider reviewing their cleaning and sterilising practices of common areas to reduce cross contamination.

### **What are some of the precautions that can be taken in my building?**

It is a legislative requirement that Owners Corporations must act responsibly. It is recommended that all Committees work on the basis that there may be someone infected within the building and take any necessary precautions. Individuals are urged to take a large amount of responsibility in following government guidelines.

- Install hand sanitizer at all lifts, reception areas etc. We understand supply is hard to get now and are working on finding solutions/suppliers for our clients
- If possible, use knuckles or elbows to press elevator buttons and to open doors
- Install signs in the lifts, lobbies etc. Review our [infographic](#) here.
- Ensure all roll information is up to date. Give notices in the mailbox, under the door, via email etc. that outlines what precautions are being put in place by the Owners Corp (hand sanitiser, extra

cleaning, signs in the lifts).

### **Are we still required to hold an annual general meeting of the strata owners corporation?**

Annual General Meetings should still be held, remotely or electronically, in accordance with the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 (the Act) although there is a call for Government intervention to avoid penalties being imposed on owners corporations for not holding their AGM in accordance with legislative requirements.

In today's modern world, and with the implementation of Clause 14 in the Strata Scheme Management Regulation 2016 (Regulations), an owners corporation or a strata committee, may by resolution adopt:

- a. voting by means of teleconference, videoconferencing, email or other electronic means while participating in a meeting from a remote location,
- b. voting by means of email or other electronic means before the meeting at which the matter (not being an election) is to be determined by the corporation or committee (premeeting electronic voting)

All ongoing matters requiring discussion and resolution at a general meeting or a strata committee meeting, do not need to stop and can be addressed remotely or electronically if conducted in accordance with the Regulations.

### Property Questions:

#### **Can I still sell my property?**

Yes. Sellers' agents, buyer's agents and the rest of the market have adapted to the new restrictions. Virtual tours of homes, private inspections and online auctions are now the norm. Sellers can still sell via private sale too, as always.

#### **Will showing my property increase my family's chances of contracting coronavirus?**

The government says as long as all recommended measures, such as social distancing and hygiene, are observed it is safe to proceed with private open property inspections.

What if I can't make my mortgage repayments?

Most banks are allowing customers to pause their loan repayments for up to six months if they are experiencing financial hardship.

## Helpful Resources

[World Health Organisation](#) – Information and guidance from WHO regarding the current outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) that was first reported from Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019.

Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19

[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7\\_6](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6)

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.epi-win.com/>

[Australian Government](#) – Department of Health– resource page includes what you should know about the virus, situation updates, travel restrictions and resources and fact sheets for travellers, businesses, and others.

[Recommendations by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\) with regards to public events.](#)

## Health

Australian Government Department of Health website [here](#)

NSW Health Department: [NSW Health Information](#)

NSW Health fact sheet: [Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19.](#)

Advice for the [Elderly](#)

Advice for [parents with Children](#)

Advice for [People with Disabilities](#)

[Beyond Blue's new COVID-19 Mental Health Support Service](#)

ReachOut [online youth forums](#) and [online parents forums](#) offering peer support in safe and established online communities.

SANE have an active [online forum](#) focused on unpacking fact from fiction about COVID-19 and providing self-care strategies.

### 24/7 Support Lines

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
- MensLine 1300 78 99 78
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

Visit [Head to Health](#) for links to trusted Australian mental health online and phone supports, resources and treatment options. This useful website also has online programs and forums, as well as a range of digital information resources.

Call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

Contact your local state and territory health departments for information about your local health system arrangements. Find their information [here](#).

## Meeting and Event Specific Resources

[World Health Organisation](#) – Key planning recommendations for mass gathering in the context of the current COVID-19 outbreak.

[PCMA](#) – Global Association of Business Events Leaders information page and resources.

[US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#) – Interim Guidance – Get your Mass Gatherings of Large Community Events ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

## Workplace and Business Continuity Resources

[Australian Government – Department of Health](#) – Information for Employers

[Safework Australia](#) – Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Advice for PCBU’s (persons conducting a business or undertaking)

[McKinsey & Company](#) – COVID-19 Implications for Business

[Associations Now](#) – Article – How to Keep your Association Running if Coronavirus Worsens

[Harvard Business Review](#) – Article – Lead your Business through the Coronavirus Crisis

## COVID-19 information in different languages

[SBS – Coronavirus information in your language](#)

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