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Attention New South Wales Media

NEW DEFECT RECTIFICATION GUIDE HELPS CURRENT AND FUTURE APARTMENT OWNERS NAVIGATE BUILDING FAULTS

THE STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE HELPS STRATA PROPERTY OWNERS AND MANAGERS NAVIGATE THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING AND RECTIFYING DEFECTS IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS

As the NSW Government works towards delivering better quality builds for the future, a recent collaborative effort has seen the development of a consumer friendly guide (a first of its kind) to assist prospective purchasers, property owners and strata managers to navigate the complexities of identifying and rectifying building defects .

Researchers from UNSW Sydney's City Futures Research Centre and the University of Technology Sydney have developed the 'Strata Defects Rectification Guide' in partnership with Strata Community Association (NSW) for strata owners and managers in New South Wales.

The online tool provides vital information to help property owners and strata managers navigate the process of identifying, documenting, reporting and rectifying building defects in strata schemes.

"It's an informative guide to support strata property owners and purchasers worried about whether there are defects in an apartment building, and for owners who need more information on how to rectify defects in their strata scheme," says Dr Laura Crommelin, Senior Lecturer at UNSW City Futures Research Centre.

"It will help owners to know what they should be thinking about, who they should be talking to, what sort of risks they should be looking at, as well as how to find out who is responsible for existing building defects. It can be hard for owners to find all the information they need to deal with defects; this guide is a tool that helps buyers and owners navigate that information asymmetry."

While the NSW Government has introduced a suite of reforms to the multi-billion-dollar apartment building sector in the aftermath of Opal Tower, the guide

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complements these changes by focusing on consumers already in buildings impacted by defects.

“It’s essential that we build better buildings in future, and that we also support owners and residents in buildings that already have defect problems or will find they have issues in the years ahead. Defects can take time to become apparent, and owners need to be proactive in dealing with them,” Dr Commelin says.

Strata Community Association (NSW), the peak strata industry body in New South Wales representing the interests of all strata industry stakeholders believe this guide could be a ‘game changer’.

SCA (NSW) President Chris Duggan says the last few months has been an historic step forward for the strata industry in New South Wales; a sharp contrast for the sector which has been notoriously plagued by defects.

“With the state’s reforms and the Building Commissioner reshaping construction quality, this guide complements the retrospective effort of the strata industry in educating managers and assists consumers to deal with the practical realities of defects.”

“We are honoured to have helped fund and be associated with the development of the guide, as it will have important implications for the future of the strata industry,” Mr Duggan said.

Mr Duggan suggests the collaborative work of SCA (NSW), UNSW and University of Technology Sydney is of critical importance to better address a systemic issue impacting strata schemes in NSW, with a far reaching and profound impact on those residing in strata properties.

Martin Loosemore, Professor of Construction Management at the University of Technology Sydney, says defects in apartment buildings have been a concern in NSW for many years and we should expect more will be affected in the future.

“Parts of the industry have been worried about building defects for some time before Opal Tower put it on the political map,” Prof. Loosemore said.

The Defects Rectification Guide has been developed as a first point of call for owners and stakeholders who are worried about defects in apartment buildings.

The guide provides easy to understand information and support on how to rectify defects in your strata scheme. It walks users through:

- Identifying
- Documenting
- Reporting
- Rectifying

Dr Crommelin says the guide will be useful at all stages throughout the process of defect rectification, from the initial discovery of potential issues through to getting them fixed.

“You can pick up at different stages of the guide, so it will help people find what they need depending on where they’re at in the process.”

Though the particular focus of the guide is defects in common property such as hallways and courtyards, it also covers all levels of defects and their severity.

“Major defects are the ones that are the main point of concern for owners, and a lot of the advice is particularly relevant if you’re dealing with significant issues, where there’s lots of cost and complexity about getting it fixed,” she says.

“The reality of strata is that the cost is a shared, collective financial responsibility, and it can be complicated to agree on an approach...which is what this guide aims to assist with.”

While the guide is most useful for current and potential strata apartment owners, renters could also find the guide beneficial for clarifying rights and responsibilities.

“It highlights the obligations apartment owners have to ensure that the building is in good condition,” Dr Crommelin says. “So, if you’re a tenant living in a building that isn’t in good condition, it could be a resource to help you have a conversation with the landlord about that responsibility.

“Ultimately, there’s a benefit for everyone involved in understanding their obligations better,” Dr Crommelin says.

The guide can be accessed here:

<https://cityfutures.be.unsw.edu.au/research/projects/defect-rectification/>

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About Strata Community Association

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 products 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.

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