

StrataVoice

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Insurance & Major Strata Repairs / Maintenance
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and real estate agents.

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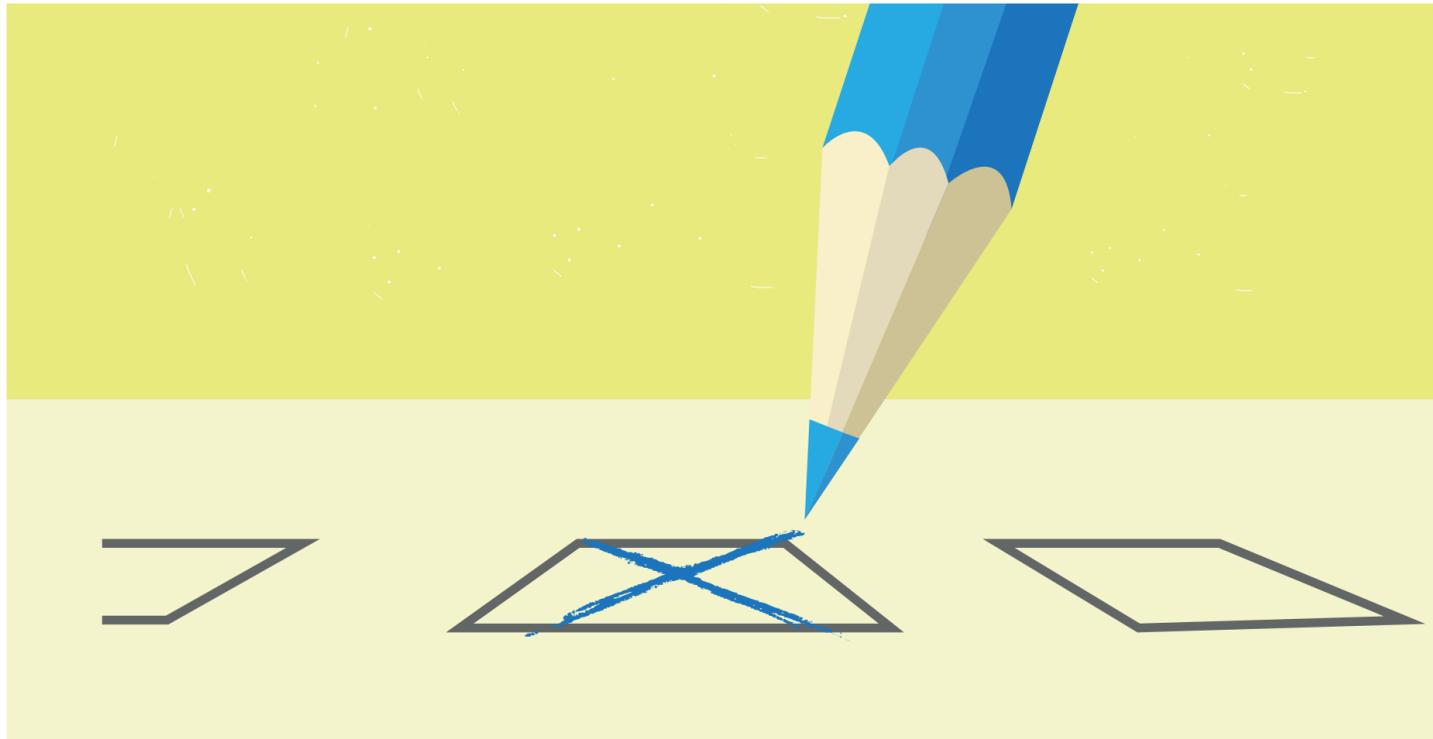
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New tenant checklist

What you must know before you sign a lease.

At the start of every tenancy you should be given the following by the landlord or agent:

- A copy of this information.
- A copy of your lease (tenancy agreement).
- 2 copies of the premises condition report (more on that later).
- A bond lodgement form for you to sign, so that it can be lodged with NSW Fair Trading.
- Keys to your new home.

The first thing you should do before you sign the lease is read it thoroughly. If there is anything in it which you don't understand, ask questions.

Remember, you are committing to a legally binding contract for which there is no cooling-off period. You will want to be certain you understand and agree to what you are signing.

Only when you can respond with a **Yes** to the following statements, should you sign the lease.

The Lease

- I have read the lease and I asked questions if there were things I didn't understand.
- I know the length of the lease is negotiated before I sign, which means it can be for 6 months, 12 months, or some other period.
- I know that I must be offered at least one way to pay the rent which does not involve paying a fee to a third party.
- I know that any additional terms to the lease are negotiated before I sign.
- I have checked that all additional terms to the

lease are legal, for example, the lease does not include a term requiring me to have the carpet professionally cleaned when I leave, unless I have agreed to that as part of a condition to allow me to keep a pet on the premises.

Promised Repairs

In relation to any promises by the landlord or agent (for example, replace the oven, paint a room, clean up the backyard etc):

- I have made sure these have already been done, or
- I have an undertaking in writing (before signing the lease) that they will be done.

Upfront Costs

I am not being required to pay:

- More than 2 weeks rent in advance, unless I freely offer to pay more.
- More than 4 weeks rent as a rental bond.

I am not being charged for:

- The cost of preparing my lease
- The initial supply of keys and security devices to each tenant named on the lease.

After You Move In

Make sure you

- Fill in your part of the condition report and

don't forget to return a copy to the landlord or agent within 7 days. This is an important piece of evidence. If you don't take the time to complete it accurately money could be taken out of your bond to pay for damage that was already there when you moved in.

- Get a letter from Fair Trading sometime during the first 2 months saying that your bond has been received and advising you of your Rental Bond Number. If this doesn't arrive call Fair Trading to make sure it has been lodged.

Top Tips for Problem-Free Renting

Follow these useful tips to help avoid problems while you are renting:

- Photos are a great way to record the condition of the property when you first move in. Take pictures (that are date stamped) of the property, especially areas that are damaged or unclean. Keep these in case the landlord objects to returning your bond at the end of your tenancy.
- Keep a copy of your lease, condition report, rent receipts, Rental Bond Number and copies of letters/ emails you send or receive in a designated 'tenancy' file folder and put it somewhere you can easily find it later.
- Never stop paying your rent, even if the landlord is not complying with their side of the agreement (eg. by failing to do repairs) – you could end up being evicted if you do.
- Keep a diary of your dealings with the landlord or agent – record all the times and dates of conversations, who you spoke to and what they agreed to do. If repairs are needed, put your request in writing to the landlord or agent and keep a copy. This type of evidence is very helpful if a dispute arises which ends up in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.
- Comply with the terms of your lease. In particular, never make any alterations, keep a

pet or let other people move in without asking the landlord or agent for permission first.

- Consider taking out home contents insurance. It will cover your belongings in case of theft, fires and natural disasters. The landlord's building insurance, if they have it, will not cover your things.
- If the property has a pool or garden be clear about what the landlord or agent expects you to do to maintain it.
- Be careful with what you sign relating to your tenancy, and don't let anybody rush you. Never sign a blank form, such as a Claim for refund of bond.
- If you are happy in the place and your lease ends, consider asking for the lease to be renewed for another fixed term. This will remove the worry about being unexpectedly asked to leave, and helps to lock in the rent for the next period of time.

Further Information

Go to the Fair Trading website, call 13 32 20 or visit a Fair Trading Centre for more information about your renting rights and responsibilities.

The NSW Government funds a range of community based Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services across NSW to provide advice, information and advocacy to tenants. Go to the Tenants Union website at www.tenants.org.au for details of your nearest service or check your local phone directory.

This document must not be relied on as legal advice. For more information about this topic, refer to the appropriate legislation.

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Ever heard that old saying 'prevention is better than cure'?

Issuing maintenance and responsive work to a Multi-trade contractor can now successfully transfer the control of a workplace, not only limiting personal exposure, but ensuring the correct procedures and requirements are followed to allow governed safety within the workplace.

Over the years government agencies, such as Housing NSW, have progressively moved from using single trade to multi-trade contractors. These multi-trade head contractors employ systems and documented procedures to help

mitigate workplace risk. Audited periodically from independent parties, it is ensured that they are following typical risk controls such as the induction of sub-contractors and site 'Safe Work Method Statements' (SWMS).



For some time now, an uncertainty has existed about specific issues stated in various Acts. Take for example Exemption Order 041/07 – OHS&R 2001 NSW whereby some believe that Strata Managers are exempt from Occupational Health and Safety obligations within the Act. In 2008, legal advice sort by the Institute of Strata Management Ltd confirmed that while Owners Corporations may be exempt from certain requirements, the controller of the workplace is responsible for everything.

So what is the risk involved with a simple maintenance task?

Say for example a plumber is engaged by a Strata Manager to repair a water leak. The plumber visits the site, identifies the location of the leak, removes a section of wall for access and undertakes the repair.

Easy? Not always.

Later it is found that the plumber disturbed a wall lining containing asbestos within a common area stairwell. Broken asbestos dust has spread throughout the common area.

What happens now? Who is responsible?

The Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos (NOHSC:2002(2005)) states that the owner is responsible to provide all workers on the site with a hazardous material report. Should this report not be issued, Workcover will become involved and commence investigations.

The New South Wales Court of Appeal recently found in *Laresu Pty Ltd v Clark* [2010] NSWCA 180 (*Laresu v Clark*) that Strata Managers can be regarded as 'occupiers' or 'controllers' of the property and owe a duty akin to that owed by the owner. In this same case it was also found that a Strata Managing Agent could also be found liable for an injury occurring on common property - salient proof that Strata Managers are not exempt from Occupational Health and Safety laws.

According to the OH&S Regulations 2001, the maximum fines for non-compliance include:

- (a) in the case of a corporation (being a previous offender) — \$825,000,
- (b) in the case of a corporation (not being a previous offender) — \$550,000,
- (c) in the case of an individual (being a previous offender) — \$82,500 or imprisonment for two years, or both.

In the event of reckless conduct causing death the maximum possible fines are now:

- For Owners Corporations \$1.65 million
- For individuals \$165,000 and up to 5 years jail

The evidence is clear. It is now vital that Strata Managers and Owners Corporations engage qualified and experienced firms to undertake work on their premises.

Asset Maintenance Australia
assetmaintenanceaustralia.com.au

Sub metering code now released

(WSA 10 Sub-Metering Code of Practice V1.1) Sub-metering allows for separate billing of customers on a 'user pays' basis and avoids some customers subsidising other customers located in the same development or complex.

The Sub-Metering Code of Practice is the first of a series of codes addressing metering that underpin the implementation of the National Framework for Urban Water Metering and ensure a nationally consistent approach to the key areas of responsibility for urban water metering.

While the National Framework defines why the urban water industry should meter the supply and consumption of water, the Codes of Practice define what needs to be addressed in each of the key urban water areas of responsibility.

The Code has been developed for implementation and use by water service providers for sub-metering of drinking and non-drinking water supplies within their jurisdiction.

The method of how each code is applied in practice is determined by the policies and processes of individual water service providers. Whilst the framework and associated Codes of Practice are voluntary, the adoption is strongly

encouraged to facilitate consistency of urban water metering practices in Australia.

This Code may also be adopted by third parties such as facility managers, Owners Corporations or building management companies for the purpose of design and application of sub-metering to cold drinking and non-drinking water systems, which are outside the jurisdiction of water service providers.

For more information please contact Water Services Association of Australia (03) 9606 0376

StrataVoice

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Major landlords join carbon fight

The City of Sydney has signed an historic deal with big businesses to cut carbon emissions and improve the sustainability of buildings in the nation's largest CBD.

The Sydney Better Buildings Partnership (BBP) is an alliance of the City of Sydney and 13 major organisations, which collectively own nearly 60 per cent of Sydney's CBD office space.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP said it's the first time major property owners in Australia have come together to develop energy, water and waste systems to improve environmental performance precinct-wide.

“Sydney is the most power hungry geographical area in the country and buildings produce nearly a quarter of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, so buildings that use less energy and water and produce less waste will help in the fight against climate change,” the Lord Mayor said.

“Producing energy locally instead of bringing it in from the Hunter Valley reduces pressure on the state's ailing electricity infrastructure and future electricity price rises across the State.

“Today's historic partnership will help Sydney businesses reduce their overheads, create opportunities for new businesses and make our city a better place to live and work.

“For many years now, we have worked closely in support of Sydney businesses, from small start-ups through to the big end of town, with grants, programs and business awards.

“Today's memorandum of understanding takes this relationship to a whole new level. By working together we will make Sydney one of the world's leading green cities.”

Foundation members will today sign a memorandum of understanding with the City of Sydney to reduce carbon emissions from their buildings, helping the City cut 70 per cent of carbon emissions by 2030 (on 2006 levels).

Chair of the Partnership and GPT Group sustainability manager, Bruce Precious, said,

“The Better Buildings Partnership provides an exciting and unique opportunity for collaboration to cut greenhouse emissions arising from the social and economic activity across the City of Sydney.

“This critical mass of public and private property owners has the capacity to guide, as well as make, the important decisions needed to reach a low carbon, sustainable city.”

The 14 founding member companies and organisations are:

- AMP Capital Investors
- Brookfield Office Properties Australia
- Charter Hall
- Colonial First State Property
- Global Asset Management
- DEXUS
- GPT Group
- Investa Property Group
- Lend Lease
- Mirvac
- Stockland
- Frasers Property
- The University of Sydney
- The University of Technology Sydney
- City of Sydney

Collectively, the organisations own 58 per cent of commercial office floor space in the Sydney CBD.

The BBP members have impressive environmental achievements and a number lead their sector on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index of the world's most sustainable companies.

They are constructing and retrofitting buildings that have set new standards for sustainability through innovative design and management practices, and use of advanced technologies and materials.

Initiatives include:

- Trigenation engines that run on natural gas and produce low carbon electricity, heating and cooling for buildings.
- Water recycling systems that collect and purify water from laundries and bathrooms for reuse in irrigation and flushing toilets.
- Solar electric panels and solar hot water systems.
- Energy efficient T5 fluorescent & LED lighting.
- High performance building facades to reduce heat but allow in natural light.
- Energy efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems.
- Rooftop gardens.

“This is an important initiative in the battle against climate change, which threatens to produce more frequent extreme weather events like the floods in Queensland or the bushfires in Victoria, unless we reduce our carbon emissions,” the Lord Mayor said.

“Businesses recognise we need to act on climate change – and many of these companies are already leading within their own property portfolios. Working together takes this to the next level.”

A Better Buildings Partnership scheme is currently operating in London covering 211

buildings which reduced carbon emissions per square metre by 13 per cent between January 2009 and January 2010 with energy savings of about 2.4 million pounds Sterling.

London BBP programme director Keith Bugden, in a letter to Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore, said,

“I and the London BBP membership look forward to developing a strong alliance with Sydney BBP over the coming months and years and I have no doubt that our work will increasingly be recognised as a powerful and effective driver of change in the real estate industry.”

The Sydney BBP will report on their achievements on reducing carbon emissions in an annual progress report.

The City of Sydney's Sustainable Sydney 2030 goals include a 70 per cent reduction in carbon emissions across the local government area, a 25 per cent reduction in water use and 66 per cent of council and residential waste to be re-used, recycled or recovered by 2014.

The City intends to reach its carbon reduction target with energy efficiency programs, the installation of a local network of trigenation energy systems and renewable energy such as solar electric panels.

Trigenation energy systems generate electricity, hot and cold water to heat and cool buildings. They are nearly three times more energy efficient than coal fired power stations and will cut greenhouse gas emission by 40 to 60 per cent for city buildings.

The City of Sydney – News in Brief



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Managing major repairs in residential strata developments in NSW

A study by the City Futures Research Centre at UNSW provided with the assistance of the NSW Office of Fair Trading.

Common repairs & maintenance problems

Almost two-thirds of survey respondents considered the overall condition of their building to be either good or excellent, while just over one in ten respondents considered it to be poor. The most common problems with building condition identified in the survey were non-rectified defects, and structural problems.

1. Routine maintenance and major capital works: Common problems due to age or lack of maintenance in residential strata schemes in NSW include: water ingress; water leaks in internal wet areas; failure of services; outdated balcony balustrades; blocked guttering; electrical faults; and concrete cancer.

2. Emergency major repairs: The emergency major repairs most commonly identified by survey respondents also related to water ingress, as well as plumbing problems.

3. Building defects: Common building defects in residential strata schemes in NSW include: water ingress; water leaks in internal areas; defective services (e.g. broken lifts or air-conditioning units); defective or inappropriate design of balconies or balustrades; guttering faults; electrical faults; building movement; cracking to internal and external structures; tiling problems; various defects caused by the use of inappropriate building materials; and poor fire and safety compliance.

Of the respondents who owned a property that was built since 1997, almost two-thirds owned a lot in a scheme with ongoing defects in the building. The defects most commonly identified by survey respondents related to water ingress.

Responsibility

There was confusion on the part of many survey respondents about who was responsible for the management of major repairs and maintenance in their strata schemes.

The owners corporation is ultimately both legally and financially responsible for the management of major repairs and maintenance in their strata scheme. Should the reserves and insurances of the owners corporation not cover the full costs or any compensation awarded against them as a result of poor management of major repairs and maintenance, each owner is financially responsible for the remaining costs (proportional to their unit entitlements).

Where a strata managing agent has been employed and delegated duties by the owners corporation, that managing agent has a legal duty of care to ensure that the actions, omissions and statements they make in the course of their duties do not injure or cause harm or loss to another. Should they be negligent in their duties, they may be liable for damages.

It is the responsibility of the owners corporation to ensure appropriate people are hired to carry out the major repairs and maintenance on their property. The owners corporation should be aware that when hiring uninsured tradesmen, they may be financially liable for any injury experienced by that tradesman.

Planning for major repairs & maintenance and management of funds

- There are six main sources of funds that can be used for major repairs and maintenance in

residential strata. These are: the administrative fund; the sinking fund; special levies; loans taken out by the owners corporation; insurances; and moneys (or other rectification) received as a result of legal action.

- Estimates of future spending required in a strata scheme can be made by specialist consultants, strata managing agents, building managers and the owners corporations themselves. There were examples of all of these amongst the survey respondents. However, some survey respondents said that no estimates had been made.
- Levels of dissatisfaction with the way in which funds were collected in their strata schemes were high amongst survey respondents. The most common concern related to owners' unwillingness to pay higher levies, resulting in insufficient funds in the budget and the consequent collection of special levies. Indeed, almost a third of survey respondents indicated that major repairs and maintenance was funded by special levies in their scheme. The second most common concern related to a lack of or poor, planning regarding major repairs and maintenance funding and a lack of information provided to owners about these issues by the executive committee and/or managing agent.

- The majority of the survey respondents had participated in management decisions regarding major repairs and maintenance in their strata schemes. The most common difficulty noted by survey respondents in making such decisions was agreement from owners over major repairs and maintenance expenditure. The next most common difficulty noted was in accurately estimating costs of future works.

- Just over half of survey respondents considered that their owners corporation or managing agent had budgeted adequately for routine maintenance. A quarter did not think that budgeting for routine maintenance had been adequate in their scheme. The most common reason given for being dissatisfied with the budgeting undertaken for routine maintenance was that there was little pro-active planning undertaken and that their schemes operated on a 'crisis management' model.
- One-third of survey respondents considered their owners corporation or managing agent had not budgeted adequately for major capital works. The major concern was the striking of special levies to cover the costs of major capital works. Indeed, a third of all respondents noted that major capital works were often funded by special levies.

- Approximately one-third of the 80 respondents who answered the question regarding the adequacy of their sinking funds responded positively. The most common reason given for considering their sinking fund adequate was that a good sinking fund plan was in place. There was, however, also a common concern over the inadequacy of some sinking funds, particularly when they did not fully cover major capital works costs.
- There are a number of channels through which the rectification of defects in a strata scheme can be funded. These include: the owners corporation covering the costs out of the administrative or sinking funds or through a special levy (or loan); the builder or developer covering the costs (or the costs being covered under home warranty insurance); taking one of a number of parties (most commonly the builder or developer) to court and suing for breach of

contract or negligence; and insurances held by the owners corporation. There were examples of all these methods currently being used by survey respondents. A further five respondents said that the defects would not be fixed.

Putting the planning into practice

Routine maintenance

- Approximately half the survey respondents had some concerns regarding the way in which routine maintenance was managed in their schemes. Common concerns included a lack of planning and of proactive leaders; the visibly poor standard of the common property, in some cases leading to safety concerns; and a poor standard of work and lack of quality control in regard to completed works.
- Those survey respondents who were satisfied with the way in which routine maintenance was managed in their schemes pointed to active executive committees, contactable and responsive strata managers and/or building managers, the existence of a regular maintenance schedule, good financial planning and the availability of funds; and good reporting practices and the availability of information regarding routine maintenance.

Major capital works

- Approximately half of the survey respondents had some concerns about the way in which major capital works were managed in their schemes. Common concerns included inadequate assessments of the nature and costs of required works, insufficient funds available to cover these costs and a poor standard of work where it was undertaken.
- Those survey respondents who were satisfied with the way in which major capital works were managed in their schemes pointed to effective budget planning resulting in sufficient funds available to cover major capital works; an active executive committee, including a good relationship with an active strata managing agent and/or building manager; and the fact that expert advice had been sought and acted upon.

Emergency major repairs

- Just over a third of respondents were dissatisfied with the way in which emergency major repairs had been dealt with in their scheme. Common concerns included the length of time it took to undertake repairs, a lack of information provided to owners, a lack of consultation with owners; the effectiveness of both the strata manager and the executive committee; and the poor standard of repairs.

Stakeholders

- There are a number of stakeholders involved in the management of major repairs and maintenance in residential strata schemes in NSW. These include (but are not limited to): builders, developers, real estate agents, (resident and investor) owners, the owners corporation and its executive committee, tenants, strata managing agents, (resident and non-resident) building managers and caretakers, contractors, and professional consultants (such as quantity surveyors, engineers, lawyers).
- A number of survey respondents noted their concern with the continued involvement of the original owner (builder or developer) in their strata scheme. In particular, concern was raised

that the original owner was maintaining control of the executive committee and influencing the actions of various stakeholders, including strata managers. It is possible that changes under the Strata Scheme Legislation Amendment Act 2008 (NSW) will lead to a reduction in such concerns in the future.

- Almost half of the survey respondents who owned a lot in a scheme with a strata manager said that they were dissatisfied with their strata manager's treatment of major repairs and maintenance issues. The most common complaint was that the strata manager did not provide the executive committee and/or the owners with sufficient information and that the agent did not respond to requests from owners and/or the executive committee for that information.
- The most common concern amongst those survey respondents who were dissatisfied with their owners corporation's treatment of major repairs and maintenance issues was the amount of time taken to reach an agreement. Other concerns included harassment and inappropriate and nonessential spending.
- Almost half of the survey respondents said that they were aware of disputes between individual owners and the owners corporation related to the management of major repairs and maintenance. Some disputes resulted from the failure of the executive committee to meet its obligations with regard to documentation, communication, obtaining quotes for needed works and the overseeing of repair works. Other disputes were of a more personal nature, including accusations of harassment.
- Problems in the conduct of particular owners were also identified. These included owners interfering with hired contractors and attempting to claim moneys to improve their individual lots. Some respondents noted that some owners had taken (or threatened to take) legal action against each other and/or against the executive committee regarding this issue. On the other hand, concern was also raised about the lack of action on the part of owners.
- A number of survey respondents noted disagreements in their schemes about whether certain repair or maintenance projects were necessary. In some cases, delays due to such disagreements (or general inaction) led to further damage to property. Disagreements often occurred when different types of owners within a scheme (such as occupiers and investors; newer and older owners; shorterterm and longer-term owners) had conflicting attitudes regarding costs and standards.

Availability and comparability of repairs and maintenance data

Executive committees in NSW keep a number of records relating to repairs and maintenance, including details of cash flow, levies and expenditures. The lack of a universal database and standardised formats for this information precluded the possibility of obtaining a representative sample of relevant financial data.

One potential source of information on, at the very least, 'typical' repairs and maintenance costs and issues at block level are strata management firms. The researchers received detailed data on major repairs and maintenance funding in confidence from three strata management companies of different sizes in NSW.



While producing only a small data set, they clearly demonstrated the divergent collection and reporting practices across strata schemes managed by different agents. The researchers found that availability of data on maintenance and major repairs at block level – while often recorded in detail – is difficult to access due to issues of confidentiality and consent from individual owners corporations; a lack of standardisation in accounting codes; and the range of software packages used by different firms to record the data. This means that automated comparisons between the data held by different strata managing agents is impracticable, at least without extensive retrospective re-coding of accounting codes. Three possible approaches for the collation of major repairs and maintenance data are outlined in Section 5 of the main report.

Discussion

This section discusses some concerns which are beyond the scope of this research but which will require further consideration in any coordinated approach aimed at improving the condition of the strata stock in the longer-term. While the need for major repairs is strongly related to the level of maintenance that a building has received throughout its life, it is also related to the design and construction process of a building. This issue was made apparent by the comments of survey respondents regarding defects in their buildings that had existed since the time of construction. There are a number of factors that can contribute to defects in a building. These include certification of component parts, training and management of contractors and subcontractors and the potential knock-on effects of cost-cutting imperatives during development.

Conclusions

The standard of the management of major repairs and maintenance in residential strata in NSW influences tens of thousands of people living and investing in strata and underpins the success of the NSW Government's urban consolidation strategy. It is therefore important to understand what is actually going on in terms of the interpersonal and organisational relationships that influence current practices, attitudes and knowledge regarding planning for major repairs and maintenance. It is also important to know what the condition of the strata stock is across the state and to get an idea of the typical costs associated with maintaining and repairing particular types of strata properties.

The survey responses indicate that common causes of concern regarding the management of major repairs and maintenance in residential strata in NSW are:

1. Ongoing building defects since construction.
2. Lack of planning and of pro-active leaders.
3. Inadequate assessments of required works and associated costs leading to budget shortfalls.
4. A poor standard of work and of quality control where works are undertaken.

The survey responses indicate that the following conditions were important for satisfaction amongst owners regarding the management of major repairs and maintenance in their schemes:

1. An acknowledgement by all owners of their responsibilities as members of an owners corporation, and as joint owners of common property.
2. An active and responsive executive committee and (where applicable) strata managing agent.
3. A good relationship (and flow of information) between the executive committee, managing agent (where applicable), building manager (where applicable), owners and tenants regarding plans for major repairs and maintenance.
4. A regular maintenance schedule and a plan for major capital works, based on expert advice.
5. Effective budget planning resulting in sufficient funds to fund required works.
6. Repairs and maintenance works that are undertaken are properly funded and multiple quotes are received for works before a contractor is chosen.

The report also concludes that the effective management of a strata scheme is strongly influenced by the relationships between owners, between owners and the executive committee, the original owner (the builder or developer), strata managers and building managers. However, the roles of the multiple other stakeholder groups involved in the management of strata properties (e.g. lawyers, engineers, the NSW Office of Fair Trading and the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal) will also need to be taken into account when considering ways in which to improve the quality of residential strata stock in NSW.

While the legislation covering the sector is incredibly important in governing the actions of all those involved in the management of major repairs and maintenance in residential strata buildings, our findings suggest that in practice, there are gaps in owners understanding of the implications of the existing legislation. There are also large discrepancies between owners in terms of their knowledge regarding best practice in the sector (such as the importance of receiving professional advice, hiring licensed contractors

and drawing up regular maintenance schedules), as well as their willingness to act in response to this advice. Part of the solution will be to improve the information available to strata owners. Much information is already available on best practice in this area. NSW Office of Fair Trading, the Owners Corporation Network and the Institute of Strata Title Managers are some of the agencies that provide such information. However, more detailed information, such as a dataset of typical costs for different property types, would be beneficial in helping owners to make informed decisions about budgeting for major repairs and maintenance. Three possible avenues for further consideration for the collection of such information are suggested in the report.

The other part of the solution will be to provide information to those owners who are not actively seeking it, so that owners have this information before a problem occurs. For example, consideration could be given to the development of a toolkit compulsorily distributed to every strata owner at the time of purchase which clearly outlines their rights and responsibilities regarding the upkeep of the common property in their scheme. Deliberation on how best to inform owners of their rights and responsibilities regarding the management of major repairs and maintenance will need to be ongoing and will of course be dependent on the resources available to those agencies who will provide such services. However, it is essential that this issue remain at the forefront of government consideration as poor management of major repairs and maintenance in strata properties has implications for the quality of life of tens of thousands of people in NSW and billions of dollars worth of assets.

Article by: Dr Hazel Easthope Prof Bill Randolph Ms Sarah Judd.

This article is an extract of the summary report "Managing Major Repairs in Residential Strata Developments in New South Wales" by Dr Hazel Easthope Prof Bill Randolph Ms Sarah Judd. Pages 4-10. A study by the City Futures Research Centre at UNSW provided with the assistance of the NSW Office of Fair Trading.

Please visit to find a copy of this article. http://www.fbe.unsw.edu.au/cf/research/cityfuturesprojects/managingmajorrepairs/ManagingMajorRepairs_Summary.pdf.

stratavoice.com.au



End-to-end fire protection for strata buildings

Strata managers, building owners and body corporate members have the responsibility of providing a safe environment for the occupants of their buildings.

While specific requirements vary from State to State and building to building, installing an appropriate fire protection solution for your building is essential. This will include fire protection systems and equipment such as portable fire extinguishers, fire hose reels, fire sprinkler systems and emergency warning systems. Fire and evacuation training for building occupants is also an important consideration.

Leading fire protection specialist Wormald offers affordable end to end strata fire protection services which can help strata managers, building owners and body corporate members meet their responsibilities.

Wormald provides a quality range of fire protection solutions which are designed to meet Australian Standards as well as providing comprehensive training courses to help understand how to use various equipment and systems.

Wormald's products include:

Exit And Emergency Lighting

Highly durable and reliable, Wormald's LED and cold cathode exit lights provide constant lighting while using minimal energy. Containing no mercury and designed not to flicker, they also help save money, reduce land fill and minimise overall maintenance costs.

Fire Alarms And Detection Systems

Wormald designs, manufactures and installs fire alarm and detection systems as well as fire warning and evacuation solutions. Its high quality wired and wireless smoke detection options include ionisation, photoelectric, carbon monoxide and heat detector systems, meeting Australian Standards AS 3786 and AS 1670.1.

Wormald's low profile wireless alarms offer the added benefit of no drill holes or running wires, helping to maintain a building's aesthetics.

Fire Hose Reels And Cabinets

Reliable, easy-to-use and durable, Wormald's fire hose reels and cabinets help to ensure the right equipment is on hand at all times. Fire hose reels

provide an accessible and controlled supply of water to combat a potential Class A fire risk, such as a fire started by burning wood or paper.

Fire Doors

Fire doors are vital to contain a fire, stopping flames spreading throughout a building. As with any safety equipment relied upon for emergency situations, it is crucial to have fire doors regularly inspected to ensure they will function effectively if and when they are needed.

Wormald provides testing and inspections on fire doors, to ensure compliance with Australian Standards. Its dedicated mobile service fleet is available 24/7 to repair, test and maintain doors and systems so that they are ready when they are needed most.

Fire Extinguishers

It is essential to select the right fire extinguishers according to the different types of fire that could occur within a building. Wormald's fire equipment technicians can help identify the most effective

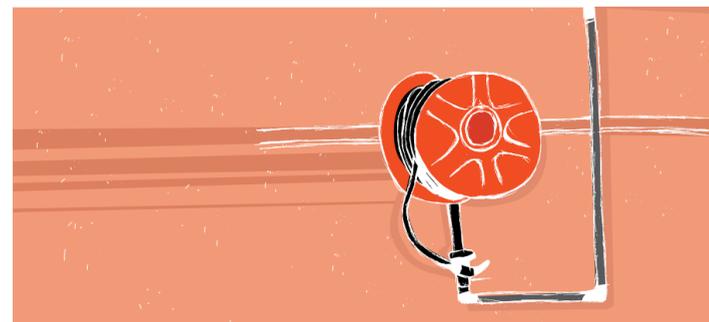
fire extinguishers for each application, install them and provide training on how to use them.

Wormald's comprehensive range of portable fire protection solutions suit all types of fires. Portable fire extinguisher options include powder, carbon dioxide, water, foam, wet chemical and the SAPHIRE™ MRI environmentally-friendly fire extinguisher.

Fire Sprinkler Systems

For a more comprehensive fire suppression system, Wormald's sprinkler, water spray, mist and deluge solutions can be tailored to suit requirements following an assessment of a building's contents, occupancy, operation and fire risk. Wormald's systems automatically detect and suppress a fire while transmitting an alarm to alert the building's occupants and the fire brigade.

To find out how Wormald can help equip your building with essential fire equipment, call 133 166 or visit wormald.com.au



We're right behind you, and your properties

With strict compliance requirements to meet, audits and never-ending maintenance, fire protection can be a headache for busy strata managers, facility managers and unit owners.

With Wormald, you have an organisation that is always right behind you when you need us most. We've helped prevent and suppress fires for over 120 years.

From portable fire equipment and fire protection systems such as fire doors and fire sprinklers, through to servicing, compliance, testing and fire safety training, Wormald's specialist teams can design, install and maintain tailored fire protection systems to match your needs and budget.

So, you can get on with the job, confident that your people, buildings and facilities are supported by one of the world's fire safety leaders. That's peace of mind.

Trust the fire safety experts.
Call 1300 556 015 or visit wormald.com.au/strata

Protecting People & Property



Pictured: Fire Doors

WORMALD

A Tyco International Company



When it comes to insurance, you need to know the lot

With more than 3.5 million Australians living and working in strata-titled schemes the question of 'who owns what?' has never been more relevant.

Unlike purchasing your car or home insurance, which is a relatively straightforward matter, when it comes to strata, there are a myriad of things that you must consider. For starters, you need some understanding on the whole concept of who is responsible for 'common property' versus 'personal property'. The basic distinction here is between a legal body and association of people (e.g. Body Corporate/Owners Corporation/ Strata Company) who have certain obligations under the law for the assets owned by a number of people, versus the individual lot owners' obligations for their own, personal assets.

Where is the property?

According to Michael Milligan, National Underwriting Manager at CHU, the first thing to establish is "What does the State or Territory legislation say about the property and insurance?" as this will set out the requirements under the specific legislation that will govern the strata property.

Each State has its own legislation and this means Bodies Corporate and Lot Owners need to either have some understanding of their State legislation and its effect on their property, or refer to strata experts who can advise them. This is one reason why managing agents are often appointed as scheme managers. They hold a wealth of practical experience and industry

knowledge and are viewed as the 'trusted advisor' on a range of strata related management matters. Strata managing agents, for their part, are often appointed to act as 'Authorised Representatives' of strata insurance specialists.

Understanding Insurance versus Maintenance

The principle of insurance cover is to protect the insured parties from a "sudden and unforeseen event". This is not to be confused with maintenance. An insurance policy will not cover damage caused through lack of maintenance to the property e.g. the unblocking of pipes by invasion of tree roots which is a maintenance issue. However, should the blockage of a water pipe result in water escaping and causing damage to common property, this would be deemed to be within the principle of sudden and unforeseen damage to insured property.

Another area of confusion arises when the Lot Owner fails to appreciate that although certain fixtures and fittings within the lot will be covered by the insurances of the Body Corporate, those same items will remain the responsibility of the Lot Owner to repair and maintain. This will also include any plumbing, electrical and other services if they only service that particular lot.

To demonstrate this if we look at a typical hot water service within a lot it would be appropriate

to consider this as a permanent fixture of the building and as such covered under the Body Corporate insurances, but the maintenance of the service remains the responsibility of the Lot Owner. Should the service leak due to wear and tear or simply because it has reached its life expectancy and it subsequently causes damage to some kitchen bench tops, the insurance of the Body Corporate would respond to the repair or replacement of the bench tops. However the repair or replacement of the hot water service would not be covered as this would be defined as part of the Lot Owner's maintenance responsibilities.

Conversely, if there was a fire in the kitchen that also damaged the hot water service the insurance cover of the Body Corporate would repair or replace both the damaged kitchen and also the hot water service as it would be a defined fixture attaching to the building.

Insurable Building

This is defined by your State or Territory legislation, albeit there are some nuances. Specialist strata plans will cover the bricks and mortar including doors, windows, as well as internal fixtures and fittings such as light fittings, blinds, carpets and the like.

Where the Body Corporate is responsible for the insurances, the definition of building in all Acts includes owners' improvements and owners' fixtures forming part of the building but does not include fixtures removable by a lessee or sub-lessee, at the end of the lease or tenancy.

When it comes to defining a "fixture" at times it may be difficult but the basic rule is it should satisfy three things:

- 1) It improves the value of the unit.
- 2) It is permanently fixed in such a way that its removal would require a substantial amount of restoration work.
- 3) Permission from the Body Corporate has been granted where there is a requirement under the Act.

Don't get caught short

Under all State Acts, the building must be insured for its full replacement value and there are a number of components that can affect this figure. For instance 'full replacement value' includes the costs for removal of debris and other professional costs such as architects, surveyors and/or engineers.

Also bear in mind the impact a severe fire or storm could have on reinstatement costs. Large claims can easily result in many months passing, or even years, before the building is reinstated to its 'business as usual' status.

A practical consideration is that any replacement value should include inflationary and 'surge' costs that may occur, for example because of a shortage of skilled labour or building materials. A qualified Valuer properly instructed will provide a valuation on this basis.

Removing the gaps from your insurance

For most, adapting to strata living is an exciting change that brings many benefits, including, if properly understood, the strata insurance cover.

The key is keeping abreast of the issues that affect common property assets so that owners and managers are well informed about what are personal responsibilities versus that of the Body Corporate.

And remember, for insurance in particular, seek out a strata insurance specialist who is experienced, and qualified, to guide and provide general advice.

General Advice Disclaimer: The information provided in this article should be considered as general advice only as it does not take into consideration the specific needs and/or requirements of the Body Corporate and/or reader.

CHU – The Specialists in Strata and Community Title Insurance

StrataVoice

If you are interested to advertise in our next issue please contact us

stratavoices.com.au



A national voice for strata insurance

Last year's introduction of a national strata industry peak body is a step forward as it provides national representation for the industry under the newly formed Strata Community Australia (SCA) brand. Larissa Meikle reports.

The new body, SCA, will provide industry leadership and set the national agenda for areas such as education, membership and accreditation for strata managers, professional standards and ethics and public policy and legislation reform for the industry.

Before there was Strata Community Australia, strata managers relied on the National Community Title Insurance (NCTI) for representation at the national level while

most industry activity remained the province of state-based bodies such as the Institute of Strata Title Management, based in New South Wales. In October 2010, NCTI formally resolved to change its name and become a public company limited by guarantee (i.e. a not-for-profit company) with a new constitution and operating model. By December 2010, the Strata Community Australia (SCA) logo was created and executive officers started work on a transition plan. During the first half of 2011, all six state-based bodies voted to



Good people to know for insurance

New entrant to the strata insurance market, WFI is keen for clients to have a choice when it comes to selecting insurance for commercial or residential developments.

Part of Wesfarmers Insurance, WFI brings a new style of insurance service with a high level of personal attention through a network of more than 160 area managers in over 80 locations around the country.

“We work closely with selected strata managers to give their owners a high standard of cover and the benefit of quick, direct claims service when they need it,” said Chief Executive of WFI, John Ripepi.

WFI is now looking to work closely with selected high calibre strata managers who would value the personalised service and high client satisfaction ratings that is part of the WFI experience.

“We recognise the importance of a professional and dedicated strata manager to the overall smooth and efficient running of higher density accommodation. We are keen to align with those managers who would value our personalised, client focused way of doing business,” said John Ripepi.

adopt the new branding and become part of the new organisation.

Due to the rapid increase in strata owned properties and the ever-increasing need for the development of more strata and community titled managed buildings throughout the country; the industry saw the opportunity to introduce a new body to better represent the common interests of strata managers and related companies.

According to SCA, there are now 270,000 strata and community title schemes covering two million lots Australia-wide. The 2006 census found that more than one in five households was living in medium and high-density dwellings.

That figure will be higher in the 2011 census with units and townhouses accounting for a record 38 per cent of all new building approvals in 2010.

CHU, a specialist in strata and community title insurance was the first business in Australia to build a strata specific insurance plan for bodies corporate over 33 years ago.

Gordon Bell, national marketing manager of CHU, says there is a definite need for a strong national body, where the collective voice of the strata industry can better lobby government for this increasingly important sector of society.

“Over the past decade or so, strata living has become the preferred choice for many Australian home owners so SCA will play a pivotal role in being an advocate for the consumer and its members,” says Bell.

“Our locally based area managers are happy to meet you in person and discuss our strata insurance products.”

Before introducing its new strata insurance plans for commercial and residential developments, WFI took a close look at the needs of strata owners and managers.

WFI strata insurance plans offer considerable flexibility for owners or their representatives as each insurance plan consists of individual policies allowing people to select only those that are needed by their development. This approach makes it easy if circumstances change and different insurance cover is required. It is easy then to integrate additional policies into the original plan or remove others.

Policies included in the commercial and residential plans include machinery breakdown, electronic equipment, voluntary workers accident only, fidelity guarantee, legal liability, strata council member legal liability. Some of the features of the commercial strata plan's building and common contents cover include up to \$50,000 for pre-approved architect, surveyor and other professional fees incurred as a result of damage to the building and up to \$100,000 for costs of demolition and removal of debris.

The cover also includes a combined total of up to \$100,000 during any one period of insurance for a unit owner's loss of rental income from a tenant; the use of temporary or emergency premises when a unit becomes uninhabitable or

There is also a movement within the industry to put through a private member's bill to attempt to address the problems that have been created by legislators, as a result of not consulting the industry prior to putting the current legislation through.

Other strata issues that the SCA will challenge include setting up a benchmark for industry best practice and professionalism.

“Our industry image and self promotion on the whole is a bit poor, when compared to other professional bodies,” admits Gordon.

“Strata is a growing profession with lots of upside and we need to attract more young people to the industry and demonstrate that it's a profession with long term benefits.”

“Over the past 10 years or so, state-based industry bodies have worked hard to unite community living stakeholders under a single industry voice” –Gordon Bell.

The education of lot owners and bodies corporate is a function the SCA will tackle, making clear, for example, the different functions, roles and responsibilities of body corporate committee versus the body corporate manager, in an attempt to debunk inaccurate consumer and public perceptions of the business of strata management.

inaccessible as a direct result of damage to the building and the reasonable costs for the removal and storage of a unit owner's contents while their unit is uninhabitable.

Why choose WFI

- We are a direct underwriter so we deal directly with our clients from enquiry to claim. This helps us understand their requirements and act promptly on feedback they provide

- We offer a fast, easy claim service with no lengthy documents to complete and dedicated claims officers and independent claims assessors to ensure clients receive a prompt and fair settlement

- We have over 160 local area managers across Australia offering personal face-to-face service.

- We are part of Wesfarmers Insurance.

- We have a long and proud history of providing insurance cover for homes, businesses and personal property.

- We have been servicing the Australian community since 1919.

You can find out more about WFI, obtain an obligation-free quote for your strata insurance or talk to an area manager in your region by phoning 1300 934 934.

You can also visit the WFI website at wfi.com.au



Underinsurance under the microscope

If your home was damaged or your possessions stolen, would the amount they are insured for completely cover your loss?

If you hesitated in answering, chances are you're caught in the underinsurance trap - a situation facing thousands of individuals and businesses who have neglected to keep their insurance policies up-to-date.

Underinsurance is becoming increasingly prevalent in Australia and elsewhere around the world. It describes a situation where the amount an individual or business is insured for is less than the true replacement cost of their home, business or contents.

All too often it is in moments of tragedy – be it a house fire or burglary – when people make the discovery they are underinsured. By this time of course, it is far too late.

For many, underinsurance is a consequence of making simple “guesstimations” of their home and contents value — and guessing wrong. Failing to take into account the appreciation of assets is a prime example of how households can under appreciate their possessions.

Underinsurance can also affect the value of your most valuable possession – your home.

Construction costs have increased considerably in most states over the recent years so the replacement cost of the family home can be significantly more than when it was first built. Statistics reveal that cost increases over the past 5 years have been as much as 16% per year in some areas.

According to a recent survey, half of all Australians are underinsured by close to \$100,000 and less than one in four think they are insured for a sufficient amount.

In fact it is estimated that some 28% of households are without adequate insurance to cover their homes' contents, and that figure rises to 67% for tenants.

EBM Insurance Brokers General Manager Sharon Fox-Slater said these increases in construction costs, many of which are passed onto the consumer, can create a significant gap between sums insured and rebuilding costs.

For home owners, establishing an insurance policy is something they can budget for and can give them a clear idea of what insurable events are covered and what are not,” said Ms Fox-Slater.

“But should a home owner not adequately insure their property and something happens, that’s a risk that they cannot escape.”

“Some insurance contracts require you to bear a proportion of each loss or claim if the sum insured is inadequate to cover the full value of your insured property or exposure. Although this is often not the case with household policies the danger of under estimating the replacement value of your home or contents cannot be understated.”

“Care needs to be taken that the sum insured reflects the full replacement value of your property at today’s prices, as this is the maximum that will be paid out by the Insurer in the case of a total loss”

Strata units

Similarly strata units need to be insured correctly. Whether they be owner-occupied, permanently let or leased for short periods the appropriate type of insurance is available. EBM Insurance Brokers are the largest privately-owned insurance broker in Australia and can arrange cover to meet any need, including:

Landlord Insurance

For over 20 years EBM have been arranging landlord insurance with their RentCover range of products. RentCoverUltra is arguably the most widely used landlord insurance policy in Australia protecting against almost every tenant-related risk such as loss of rent, as well as malicious and accidental damage, and theft by the tenant. EBM have claim settling authority on behalf of the insurer (QBE Australia) and have paid over \$8,000,000 in claims in the last 12 months alone.

Holiday Letting or Corporate Leasing

Properties that are let for short periods such as holiday letting and corporate leasing require insurance that meets special requirements. RentCoverShortTerm was developed to meet this need and is now widely used throughout Australia.

Strata Building

EBM can scour the market to ensure your Strata Building is being insured in the most effective way possible. Whether acting for the Strata Managers or Body Corporate/Owners Corporation EBM qualified professionals are equipped to negotiate on your behalf.

To contact EBM Landlord insurance:
1800 661 662 or rentcover.com.au

General insurance:
1300 INSURE (1300 467 873) or
ebminsurance.com.au

Some schemes also have the responsibility to ensure that when any contractor attends site that they are providing a safe working environment

The best way to monitor the state of repair and compliance of a lift is to conduct an equipment audit. A properly conducted audit should identify:

- Compliance - Compliance to current codes, legislation and standards and address obsolete equipment.

- Safety – Address safety concerns, whether for passengers using the equipment or safety issues for the contractor while working on the lifts at your site.

- Life Cycle Management –Including the estimated life span of electrical and mechanical components. It may include a thermographic report of electrical components & connections.

- Upgrade Path - Provide a suggested plan of attack to upgrade equipment and aesthetics.

- Reliability – Contractors should provide a report of breakdowns and any trends that may appear.

- Maintenance – Providers should report on maintenance items completed and planned.



Audits – Should it just be a tick and flick when its comes to lifts?

New National Workplace Health and Safety Regulations will become effective from January 2012, how these proposed changes will effect plant such as lifts in strata premises is a little unclear at this point in time.

Needless to say whatever the outcome, having your lift maintained to the highest standards, applying good risk management strategies and conducting regular equipment audits, will provide a strong foundation for safety reliability and see your equipment complete its intended design life.

The majority of lifts belong to a buildings “common property” and under the Strata Schemes Act an Owners Corporation has a mandatory duty to maintain, repair, replace and renew all elements of the common property.



Shall we dense?

Poor density planning is an urban poison, but Adam Haddow is working on the cure. The young gun architect spoke to Chris Larsen about the fix for Australia’s planning ills. Property Oz reports.

Adam Haddow aspires to be the Jamie Oliver of the property world. Just as celebrity chef Oliver led a campaign against unhealthy diets, Haddow wants to lead a campaign against poor density planning.

And, just as Oliver’s famously radical campaign sought to change the eating habits of children, Haddow believes children are the key to long-term change in the planning system.

Haddow is a director of SJB Architects and a founding director of its offshoot SJB Planning. He has studied responses to urban density issues around the world, but is not content merely to observe faults. Haddow wants to deliver the fix, too.

At the 2009 Property Council / Rider Levett Bucknall Innovation & Excellence Awards, Haddow won the Coffey Award for Future Leaders. His winning proposal was to

assemble a team of bright young thinkers to propose new solutions to density issues, a process nearing completion as Property Australia went to press.

The research Haddow has conducted shows Australia’s urban densities do not compare favourably by international standards.

His home city, Sydney – said to be Australia’s first global city – has come in for particular attention from Haddow. He uses a tennis court analogy to illustrate how poorly Sydney compares to its international sisters.

Each Sydneysider, he argues, occupies an area equivalent to two tennis courts, on average. Londoners occupy just three-quarters of a tennis court.

Haddow knows there are no easy, nor quick-fix, solutions to Australia’s density inertia.

Population plan to focus on infrastructure needs

The nation’s first-ever population strategy will focus on the country’s growing infrastructure needs. Econews online reports.

The plan, which has been a year in the making, was announced today, the ABC TV reported last night.

Population targets and the rate of expected growth will not be outlined.

Instead, the plan will focus on the economic benefits of population growth as well as the environmental impact.

Urban congestion and the delivery of service will also be covered.

“If Australians are going to maintain, much less improve, their standard of living, then you have to significantly increase the population,” former Queensland Premier Wayne Goss told the ABC’s 7.30 Report.

“We are about to go into a resources boom with a shortage of skilled labour and if we are going to get the benefit of that resources boom in the country then we need a greater supply of labour.”

Australia is also about to go through a significant demographic change as the baby boomers retire.

“That will reduce the numbers in the work force, it will reduce growth and we’ve got to address that.”

Mr Goss said it is time the government was upfront with the Australian people on the issue.

“We are going to have a population of 35 million, at least, come 2050 and we have got to get onto the job of infrastructure, planning and skills,” he said.

One of the biggest drivers of our urban density issues is history.

“There is this kind of cultural idea that to be Australian you need to own a piece of land,” says Haddow.

The house marooned on a piece of land is a bit of a defence mechanism, perhaps, going back to the First Fleet days.

“You didn’t need to communicate with your neighbours if you didn’t want to.”

That cultural inertia extends to today’s urban environment and community attitudes.

The ‘herd mentality’ crushes innovation as much as it makes higher-density developments almost impossible for developers, Haddow argues.

“The planning systems promote mediocrity. It’s too easy just to make the boxes,” says Haddow.

We’ve lost the ability to innovate.

“If you try to innovate in terms of housing type or scale you just get whacked over the head. You can’t take too many of those risks.”

It is not too late to make change, for people to take a risk and embrace higher densities in our urban centres.

But to do so, we need to take a leaf from one of Jamie Oliver’s projects and try innovative ways to get people to accept, and generate, change.

There’s too much thinking about the ‘me’, and not enough thinking about the ‘we,” says Haddow. “There is total disconnect between desire and reality. Communities want more but they’re not prepared to give anything to get it.

“There’s a process we need to go through to engage people ... in making lifestyle and sustainability decisions about their living habits. Sometimes people have to take a decision about the big actions.”

Education is one of the first places we should start.

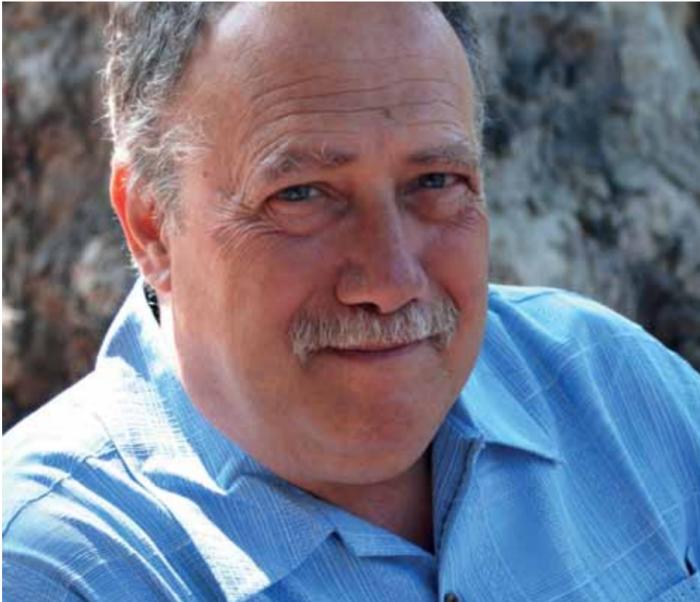
“There is a lack of education about what density is,” Haddow says, arguing that Australia talks a lot about solutions to problems like density, but won’t tackle the need for information.

“We don’t do any built [environment] research because the process is so arduous.”

The process of educating society on the benefits of innovative density solutions should start with children, Haddow says.

“The kids become the early adopters and drive their parents to change. The kids take it from a pragmatic standpoint and are the drivers of change.

“We preach to the converted a lot in the industry, but we need to get out of the industry and talk to the community. We need a reality show about density.”



Targeting cities

Why is Sydney eating itself? And why is urban planning threatening the great Aussie 'fair go'? Joel Kotkin takes aim at current urban theories. By Peter Hand.

Prolific writer and controversialist Joel Kotkin shows no sign of moderating his views for his keynote appearance at the Property Council's Cities Summit in May. Kotkin challenges most of the current 'bigger-is-better' urban theory and attacks the academics behind it and the media, which spreads the word with largely uncritical acceptance.

A Presidential fellow in Urban Futures at California's Chapman University and author of several books on population and cities, Kotkin is a keen observer of Australian issues and sees housing prices here as approaching emergency.

Kotkin target: density good – suburbia bad
Kotkin maintains that no market research has ever shown that a majority of people want to live in the forms of density favoured by today's urban

planners. While suburban life is not perfect, it serves people best and reflects the culture of people in places such as the US, Canada and Australia.

He says it is a fallacy that single family homes are always more costly to construct. He also dismisses economic arguments based on utilisation of infrastructure and services. "When you densify an old area you often have to rebuild services. In Los Angeles renewal of one older area meant the water pipes could not cope, needing replacement at a huge cost compared to opening a new area."

He also appears to believe that governments have a duty to invest in services and transport and laments the major shift of funding from infrastructure to welfare in his native California.

Kotkin target: city-centric thinking

Kotkin's support for old-fashioned suburbs turns current urban planning on its head.

He labels the idea that everything should be predicated on connections to a central city hub as flawed and unrealistic.

“The jobs are not in the urban core, they have been moving to the suburbs for years. In LA only 2.5 percent of employment is in the city centre.”

He says basing planning only on transport links to a city centre ignores the fact that, in Australia, the majority of commutes are from one suburb to another. He says Australian cities are following the worldwide trend, with only finance, media and government remaining focused on the city centre as other industries move out.

“Even these sectors will follow the trends. The new jobs in technology and services are not in the city centre, they're in the suburbs.”

These realities demand a reinvigoration of suburban life, something he refers to as an archipelago of villages.

“Suburbs need to become diversified and self-sufficient, not satellites, with developed town centres, cultural services, restaurants and entertainment.

“Telecommuting allows people to start their cars much less often for major savings in carbon and emissions.”

Kotkin target: the planning elites

Urban planning is undemocratic and dictated by a 'small self-appointed superior group' who decide what the majority will do.

“It's a dangerous thing in a democracy when a small group of people use the laws to prevent others from living the way they like to live. The vast majority choose single family houses.

“It is a definite problem moving middle and working class people to live on top of each other.”

Kotkin says in Sydney's case, densification threatens to change its unique character, with congestion and higher population threatening to destroy the city's exceptional standard of living.

Growing your own food:

- Many vegetables and herbs can be grown in pots on balconies and in courtyards.
- Sprouts are easy to grow if you don't have an outdoor area.
- The Watershed, King St Newtown runs free workshops in composting, worm farming and no dig gardening.

Community Gardens are run by the community, they provide:

- A place for growing herbs, vegetables and fruit.
- A meeting place for people.
- A place for nature.
- A place for composting and re-using materials.

To him, this is the bottom line. He is hostile to planning elites who demand density "while they themselves enjoy a comfortable life with second homes at the country or coast".

Birth control through urban planning

Kotkin says his extensive work in Asia has shown the effect of close city living not just on 'lifestyles' but an entire people and culture.

“When you force high density, you change people fundamentally. For example, in places like Singapore, small housing led to the birth rate dropping dramatically – something we will see in Australian cities. There is just no space for kids.”

This has enormous impacts on a nation's future and economic success. Primarily it results in an unsustainably ageing population and the economic baggage that goes with it.

Kotkin target: the Australian price emergency

Australia is facing a housing costs crisis that will turn into a home ownership crisis, bringing about fundamental changes to society.

“Already it's clear that a large group of the future population will have no chance of owning a home. One possibility is a nation of renters. It's absurd that housing affordability in Adelaide is worse than places like New York.”

Kotkin says this change will undermine the very basis of Australian society. "The idea of opportunity and reasonable equality will go – the 'Australian dream' will be extinct."

He sees this as not only consequential to our sense of who we are, but also to our international competitiveness. "I ask people in my travels where they would like to live, and they say places like Australia and New Zealand. When I delve further this is based on the type of housing and communities there."

Kotkin says there is an urgent need for more intelligent planning, release of land and acceptance of the public responsibility to provide infrastructure.

Joel Kotkin is editor of newgeography.com and the author of *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050* and *The City: A Global History*.

Article sourced from: propertyoz.com.au

The City currently supports 13 community gardens in Glebe, Newtown, Alexandria, Waterloo, Redfern, Woollahoolooloo and Pyrmont.

For exact locations and more information visit the Community Gardens page on Council's website: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/communitygardens

Get inspired:

Check out your local farmers market or food cooperative, grow some sprouts, book into a no dig gardening workshop or join a community garden.

Enjoy making a difference by supporting locally produced food or growing your own.



Highly efficient hi-rise living

A groundbreaking study completed by Sydney Water with assistance from consultants BMT- WBM, for the first time makes it possible for hi-rise building managers and occupants to benchmark their building's water use.

A survey of 22 hi-rise buildings across Sydney using water audits that included sub-metering and detailed monitoring found average consumption per site was 184kL/d.

Broken down into end uses of water Figure 1, reveals up to 88% of average consumption is within apartments, including showers, toilets, basins, baths, kitchen and laundry uses & leaks.

Four different benchmarks were considered but water use per bedroom provides the most consistently reliable indicator of the relative water efficiency for most residential hi-rise buildings.

Category	Water Use per Bedroom Benchmark (L/bedroom/day)
Higher Use	300 and higher
Typical	200 to 300
Best Practice	less than 200
Unachieved Target	less than 130

Of the surveyed buildings, none were centrally cooled or heated so cooling towers represent just 4% of total water use and this is the primary difference between residential towers and commercial towers, which are almost universally cooled and heated by centralised systems that require cooling towers.

The 'Unachieved Target' of less than 130 litres per bedroom per day is based on estimated consumption after all identified water savings recommendations from the audits have been implemented.

The primary water savings recommendations were lower flow shower fittings followed by flow regulation in taps and the repair of leaks within apartments. The impact of leaks was closely related to the building's age with older buildings having greater savings opportunities through the repair of leaks.

Figure 2 shows the identified savings opportunities uncovered by the audits along with the average volume of savings and in some key cases, the proportion of total water demand these uses of water represent.

Using the example of repairing leaks, 28.4% of total identified savings found can be achieved from a water use segment that represents just 10% of demand. So finding those leaks should be a priority, especially in older buildings.

Installing efficient showerhead with a maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute will also provide disproportionate water savings when considered in light of their high, 39% contribution to total building water demand.

Figure 1

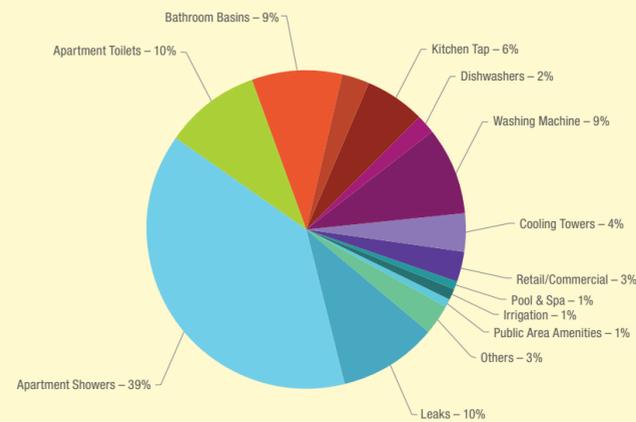
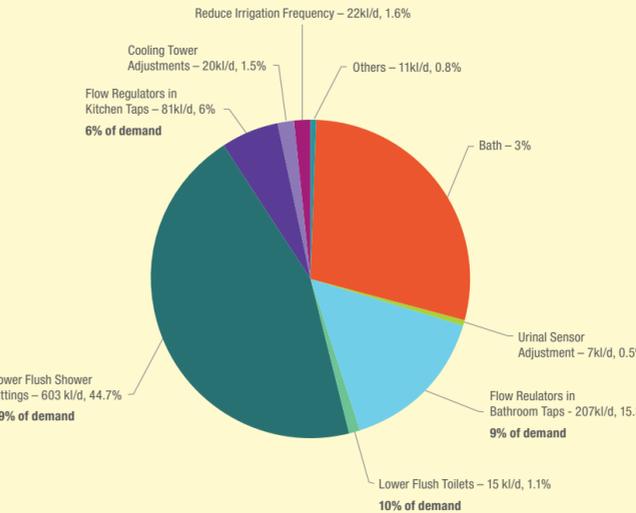


Figure 2



The combination of all water saving opportunities identified in the study have the potential to provide average annual water savings per apartment worth \$146.

The opportunity cost of doing nothing is further highlighted when energy savings are considered.

The energy inputs to hi-rise building water supplies is significant. Beyond the first few floors every litre of water supplied, must be pumped and pumping uses energy - lots of it. Take into account the need for constant and reasonable pressure, often two or more pumping stages are required and all this is before your hot water is heated!

The study identified an opportunity for further research here. Across all 22 sites, the

recommended savings initiatives, if implemented would save 1,736 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

So, where to from here? Typically, the first practical step any building manager should take is to gain first-hand knowledge of the recent water and energy consumption history of the building. By dividing the daily water use data by the number of bedrooms in the building and ensuring there is no central heating/ cooling and no significant commercial tenancies, the benchmarks can be easily used to determine the building's relative water efficiency.

The data provided above in combination with a simple walk-through audit of a handful of apartments can be used to confirm whether water use within in apartments presents the same opportunities identified in the study.

Article by Andre Boerema – Sydney Water



The former concrete carpark

Project M Central 1 and 2: Some facts and a brief project description.

Project: M Central 1 and 2.
 Location: Pyrmont, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.
 Architect: Dale Jones-Evans Pty Ltd Architecture in collaboration with Marchese and Partners and 360 degrees.
 Project date: 2003–2005.
 Building area: 19,400 m² of residential, commercial and parking.

Brief project description

M Central consists of a very large commercial redevelopment of two existing heritage, warehouse-woolsheds (Elders Smith Goldsbrough Mort Woolstore built 1925, alterations and additions 1936 and the Pitt Son & Badgerly Woolstore built 1906, extended 1921) which during the late eighties were both gutted and converted into a massive concrete public car park.

We identified a powerful private 'public domain'; composed of lobbies, corridors, lifts and of course a huge potential roofscape, treating these like filmic-street-experiences and highly liveable open space systems. With respect to the large elevated roof garden it was conceived as a park system which contained rich urban design principles. It consisted of simple vision of a low watering grassland savannah like landscape peppered with iconic trees.

Through this ran a walking system of boardwalks, paths and resting places. Rather than a roof top of hard surfaces, pools and gyms rather a lush

landscaped experience with intimate open warm and semi enclosed shaded and cool spaces were designed.

The former concrete carpark roof now transformed provides a heat sink effect in the form of a micro climate to reduce overall city heat build up as well as insulating apartments below.

Where structural limits prevailed trees were placed only on top of the buildings existing column system. Rather than deep solid throughout the split level roof contained two stories; the lower level is deep planted and lush while the upper level is timber board walked with small built up greened dots where recycled concrete and tiled materials form abstract path patterns as relief.

This low watering landscape of succulents, grasses, ground and wall covers provides sanctuary for insect and bird life as well as respite for its inhabitants and visitors.

Generous consideration was given to a future body corporate by designing two interior-exterior pavilions on the roof, for them, as a place in which the building two body corporates could host meetings and functions with comfort fresh air and style.

Article by Dale Jones-Evans
 dje.com.au

Photography by John Gollings



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Domestic violence in a rented property

What tenants and occupants need to know.

If there is violence in your rented home you should contact the Police or an advice service. There are also steps you can take under the tenancy agreement to improve your safety.

Changing the locks

If you obtain an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) which prohibits a person from accessing the rented premises where you were both living, you can immediately change the locks. This applies if the AVO is a provisional, interim or final order.

You do not need the landlord's or agent's consent to change the locks as you would normally do. However you must give them a

key for the new lock within 7 days unless they agree not to have a key. The cost of changing the locks is your responsibility. If you do give a key to the landlord or agent, they cannot pass it on to the person who has been excluded from the property.

If the excluded person is named on the tenancy agreement as a tenant, your action in changing the locks does not end their tenancy or make you a tenant instead. All it does is prevent them from using their keys to enter the property while the AVO remains in force.

Changing the tenancy agreement

If the person excluded from the premises was

named as a tenant on the agreement, a final AVO made by a magistrate terminates that person's tenancy. If you were named on the agreement as a co-tenant the tenancy simply transfers to your name. There is no need for you to sign a new agreement or do anything else. Any share of the bond owing to the excluded person does not have to be paid back until you vacate.

If your name is not on the agreement, you can ask the landlord or agent to have the agreement put into your name. If they refuse you can apply to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal for an order to do this.

If you are an occupant of social housing premises (eg. Housing NSW) the Tribunal can only make such an order if you meet any eligibility requirements. Contact the social housing provider to find out what you can do.

Ending the lease early

Tenants cannot usually break a fixed term agreement early without paying a penalty or compensation. However, if you are a tenant and you obtain a final AVO which prohibits a co-tenant or occupant from accessing the premises, you have the option to end the lease early without having to compensate the landlord. This may be helpful if you cannot afford the rent on your own. You must give the landlord or agent 14 days notice in writing of your intention to leave.

Tenancy database listings

If you are listed on a tenancy database due to damage to the property caused by a co-tenant

or occupant during an incident of domestic violence, there are steps you can take. You can ask for the information about you to be removed or changed and you can apply to the Tribunal for orders. More information can be found on the Tenancy databases page on the Fair Trading website.

Further advice and support

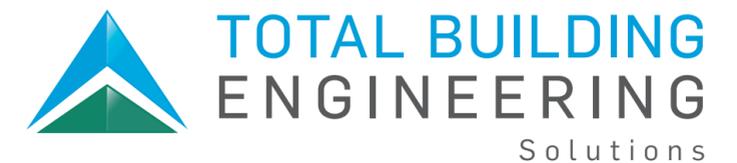
Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line
 Tel: 8745 6999 Toll free: 1800 810 784
www.womenslegalnsw.asn.au

At a glance

The table below lists the key differences between the old Act and the tenancy laws that began on 31 January 2011.

OLD LAWS	CURRENT LAWS
Locks could not be changed without landlord's consent	Consent to change locks no longer required if AVO excludes a tenant or occupant from the premises
No specific right to take over a lease after an AVO is made excluding the tenant	An occupant can seek to become a tenant in these circumstances
Domestic violence victim who left during a fixed term lease liable to pay compensation to landlord	Lease can be ended early without penalty with 14 days notice to landlord

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What to check for to minimise your water bills

Water efficiency can be tricky – it is hard to know where the water is really going, and it is common for hidden leaks to be silently making up a large proportion of your water bill. Adam Jones from BMT WBM Sydney office reports.

But with the rising costs of water and a growing understanding of the easy wins, it is now smarter and easier than ever to bring down the water use with low payback periods.

The ideal way to reduce water use is to hire an engineer to conduct a 'water audit' of the site. These have been common in industrial and commercial properties for some time, and are just now becoming possible for residential buildings of all sizes.

They normally involve monitoring of water meters and close inspections to find out exactly where water is going.

For the most comprehensive and 'future proof' solution, extra water sub meters can be installed in strategic locations, and data sent to a website for the Building Manager and Owner Corporation to access – so that the building can keep track of water use into the future (thereby not requiring any further help).

But even without the detailed investigation and financial analysis of a proper audit, there are a number of common things to look for things that sites can do straight away:

1. Get familiar with your water meters

There will mostly likely be a main meter to the site, and possibly some meters on the supply to any central hot water boilers. Try taking a few readings, or having a look at the meters at odd times (eg the middle of the night) to see if it's still moving. If it's spinning quickly at 3am, there could well be a leak somewhere.

2. Calculate some benchmarks

Sydney Water has recently recommended water use per bedroom to be a useful guide (based off a significant amount of research in apartment buildings), and is likely to release some further details soon. While every site is unique, anyone using more than 300L/bedroom/day can safely assume there will be some great opportunities available.

3. Check your float valves

A common area of wastage is 'overflow' when these fail, and water keeps 'filling' when it ought to be stopped. Float valves can be found in water tanks (eg roof or fire tanks), cooling towers, and some pools. You can check for water in the overflow drains, or even better try pulling up on the float and check that it shuts off properly. Remember that for roof tanks, the leak might only happen at night when the tank fills right up.

4. Keep an eye on the irrigation system

It is especially common for an automatic system to remain on settings designed for the peak of

summer – despite rainfall and significantly lower required demands in the colder months.

5. Look inside

It surprises most people to know that on an average site (without any particular hidden leaks, but with a pool, cooling towers and even commercial tenants), more than 90% of water through the meter is actually used inside apartments. Of this 90%, showers can consume 50% or more. The biggest opportunity for reducing water use is therefore retrofitting good quality shower heads with a high WELS rating, and fitting flow regulators in taps. Most sites could combine this with repairing of any toilet and tap leaks for payback periods in the order of a few months or less – especially when considering the energy savings from the hot water saving in showers and taps. Access to apartments is a wider issue for many sites, but from a technical perspective it is overwhelmingly the most significant savings option.

While an experienced engineer will be able to provide a useful breakup of water use and other helpful items (estimated costs, savings, options with payback periods and other helpful implementation tips), the above options are the most common 'wins' that adventurous sites can try for minimal risk. Be sure to pay close attention to your main meter before and after any changes to see how much of a saving you have made.

For the latest information on what other sites have found, and their results from implementing various options (particularly the trickier issue of retrofits inside apartments), we highly recommend the independent and free 'Green Strata' Online advice forum at: <http://www.greenstrata.com.au>



Green cities

Michael Green on the power of timber. Lynne Blundell reports.

One of the biggest challenges facing designers and construction companies today is the selection of building materials for minimum environmental impact. In his keynote address at Green Cities, Michael Green, principal of Canadian architectural firm mgb Architecture + Design, argued strongly for timber as a superior alternative to concrete and steel, from the suburban home to the tallest high-rise tower.

World housing and climate change are the two great issues of our time and they are interconnected said Mr Green. Given the number of houses that will be needed over the next few decades, if we continue to build the way we are today, particularly in the developing world, an escalation of climate change would be inevitable.

“The reality is three billion people will need an affordable house in the next 20 years. That equates to 40 per cent of the world,” he said.

“That means we have to build 100,000 new homes every single day for 20 years, which is obviously something people aren't getting their heads around in terms of how we're going to do it.”

The common conversation on the green agenda for housing centres around solutions such as rammed earth, straw, and modular construction, all great ideas but the reality is they are only suburban solutions and modest in scale, he said.

“Today 50 per cent of the world lives in urban environments and we expect that to go to 70 per cent by 2050. So obviously that scale requires another way of thinking about a solution.”

Urban building structures around the world are basically universal and consist of concrete, steel and masonry. Most architects don't evaluate the choices they make to build with these materials but according to Mr Green it is time they did.

His research has shown that concrete is the largest material on earth by volume used by humans other than water. In terms of carbon emissions concrete is responsible for 5-8 per cent of emissions compared to 1 per cent for airlines and 3 per cent for shipping. Steel represents 4 per cent of world energy.

“To reduce global carbon we have to reduce carbon emissions and remove carbon from the system. The reality is the only thing we build with day in and day out that does that is wood.”

On average 1.6 tonnes of CO₂ is stored in a cubic metre of wood and when a tree falls to the forest floor and rots or is burnt it gives off that carbon to the atmosphere, he said. If used for construction it will sequester that carbon for the life of the building and if re-used for further construction there is no more effective material for reducing carbon. “There is no better tool or solution for building carbon neutral buildings,” he said.

Mr Green estimated that the wood used in a typical timber-framed Canadian home stores the equivalent amount of carbon emitted by a family car over seven years.

But for wood to be a viable alternative the world has to become much better at growing timber sustainably. Europe was leading the way in this regard, with a high standard of sustainable forestry methods.

“We must evolve wood structures to compete with concrete and steel. The scale of the problem we face with housing requires innovation in new technology,” Mr Green continued.

Removing the limits on height for timber construction was necessary for it to compete. Building codes around the world currently limit height for timber – in British Columbia the height limit was increased from four to six storeys (15 metres) in 2009, in UK it is 27 metres, whereas in Japan it is 57 metres. A 30-storey hybrid building of timber and concrete is proposed for Austria.

In the past there were no such limits. In Japan, for example, a 19 storey timber temple was constructed in an earthquake zone 1400 years ago and it is still standing.

“We're now on the cusp of something new with wood but we have to get over the emotional hurdle of building with it. I think in the future we'll look out on a landscape of wood buildings just like we do with concrete and steel right now and we won't think twice about it. But for that to happen we need to remove the arbitrary limit to height around the world,” Mr Green said.

The next generation of wood materials include cross laminated timber which involves glueing layers of wood together to form 12 x 2.4 metre panels. While the mass of the panel was similar to concrete, its ability to store carbon and its

lower carbon footprint in production made it a vastly better product for addressing climate change.

Laminated strand lumber and laminated veneer lumber are constructed by glueing strands of timber together to form 19.5 x 2.4 metre panels, which are around 75 mm thick and typically used as beams in construction.

Such materials would ultimately gain ground in the construction industry through their cost effectiveness and strength and safety, he said. To help fast-track the process Mr Green's architectural firm has set up an open source system called, 'finding the forest through the trees' to allow the sharing of information on timber technology worldwide.

“It's about stepping outside the types of conversations we're currently having and asking what is it going to take to start making the systemic changes that provide us with more choices when we make decisions about what material we build with.”

A mass wood building weighs about half that of a concrete building, a significant advantage in earthquakes as the forces the building is subjected to dramatically reduce with its weight.

But for widescale adoption of wood as a building material developers will need to be convinced that timber buildings will sell and consumers must believe they are not going to burn and that they will stand up to both wind and earthquakes.

To push the wood agenda further mgb Architecture + Design applied for a research and development grant and has discovered through modelling that the strength and resilience of wood has been grossly underestimated.

Using similar construction methods to a traditional concrete and steel building and incorporating a small amount of steel to allow for bend, the firm found that it was possible to build 30 storey timber buildings without any problem.

“We've addressed all the technical questions but we are still not able to build them,” Mr Green said.

“We are at a fundamental point in time where we have the choice to go one way or another – we can take traditional knowledge and go much further with it or we can ignore it.”

Green building councils could also push the timber agenda much further by reassessing how they award credits for wood construction.

“Here [in Australia] you only get two points for timber and in Canada it is a struggle to get credits for wood. These systems and building codes need to change – they are not currently keeping up with innovation.”

Article sourced from: thefifthestate.com.au

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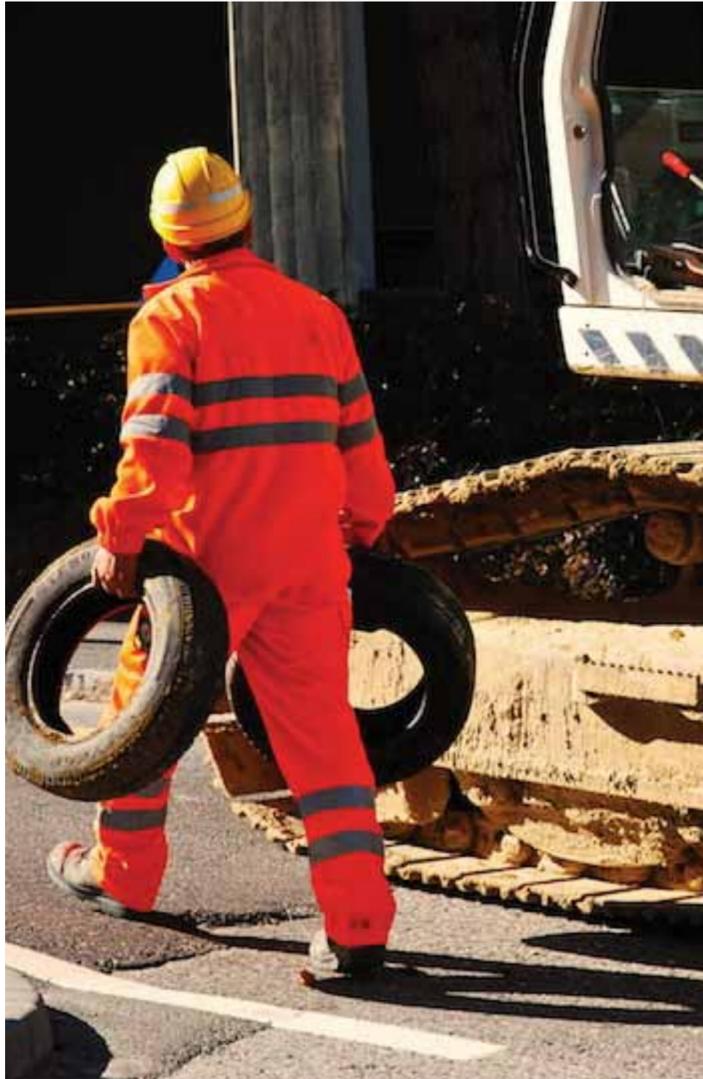
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Q&A: How to comply with OHS duties to contractors

Employers should, from January 2012, urge contractors to conduct risk assessments for every task, even if they are not obliged under harmonised work health and safety laws to do so, OHS lawyer Jacqui Hawkins told attendees at a recent webinar.

The web seminar, Contractor OHS - Meet Your Obligations, was hosted by OHS Alert and presented by Hawkins, who is a Lander & Rogers partner, and concluded with a Q&A session.

The following edited transcript contains Hawkins' responses to eight critical questions.

Q: Under the draft model Work Health and Safety Regulations, due to take effect in January, risk assessments will not be mandatory in all situations, but should employers urge contractors to conduct such assessments anyway?

A: "Yes, and I would advise that, because that's how the regulator will particularise a case," Hawkins says.

There might not be risk-assessment provisions in some of the Regulations, but "there is an understanding and a general health and safety knowledge out there that that's what you do; it would be very hard to argue that because it's not in the Regs you don't have to do it".

Q: Do contractors need to provide or produce risk assessments for every job?

A: "Yes. Even if it's a generic job, [they] still need to put at the top [of a risk assessment] the site where it's happening, the job location and the day that [they're] doing it, so it does identify specifically that particular job... Even if it's the same job [they] did the day before at a different site, there might be different risks, like overhead powerlines.

"If someone has been killed or injured on a worksite, the first thing the regulator asks for is the JSA or risk assessment in relation to the particular job."

Q: Employers or PCBU's are in most jurisdictions obliged to ensure the health and safety of contractors as far as is reasonably practicable, but what does "reasonably practicable" actually mean?

A: "I often ask my clients: Can you look in the mirror at the end of the day and know that you've done everything possible to ensure that your workers and contractors go home safely to their families?"

"If you know that someone didn't do a risk assessment and they were working on a particular piece of machinery, or [they were working at height] without a harness, did you walk past and not say anything?"

"It's just the commonsense stuff. If [you have] an inkling you could have done it better, then I think it would not pass the reasonably practicable test."

Q: Does an employer's obligation to ensure the safety of contractors extend to delivery drivers and others who attend the worksite for short periods of time?

A: "I think that's definitely the case. I couldn't find a definition of contractor in the current [Victorian] OHS Act or even the new model Act, but if you've got a contract for services or the provision of goods, you have a contract, and therefore that person becomes a contractor.

"If they drive onto your site and they have to go through your traffic management system and follow signs, then [you might need them] to do an induction."

Q: Are employers or PCBU's obliged to ensure that sub-contractors, sub-sub-contractors and so on all have appropriate safety systems?

A: "It's all going to be about communication. If you have sub-sub-sub-contractors you have to set the bar pretty high. When you engage a contractor, you've got to tell them that if they engage a contractor they have to have similar if not better standards than what is expected of the person who is contracting them.

"Every layer has to have systems in place to ensure the safety of people who are doing the job." Principals must conduct site checks, and audit and review systems."

Q: Do employers need to assess contractors' technical abilities?

A: "You do need to know that they have the relevant licence [and] have looked at the risks, and satisfy yourself that they've done everything to reduce or minimise those risks."

Q: What obligations do employers have to contractors with highly specialised skills?

A: "There has been a lot of case law about this. You don't have to know exactly how they're going to land a roofing sheet on a roof with a crane. What you have to do is assure yourself that they do have a system to identify risks, and are looking after risk management issues."

Q: If an employer reports an injury or incident involving a contractor to the relevant authority, what obligation does it have to ensure the contractor follows up on the issue?

A: The employer has fulfilled its obligations in reporting the incident, Hawkins says. "It is then up to the person who has the injured employee to do all the return to work and report lost-time injuries, but it would be worth your while to confirm that those things are being done."

The employer would be prudent to determine whether the contractor has "outstanding WorkCover issues" before deciding whether to engage it again.

Article sourced from: tradesmonitor.com.au

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Green stars for green living

The health benefits of living in a 'green' environment cannot be understated. We now have a growing body of evidence that neighbourhoods which encourage physical exercise and offer contact with nature reserves and parks have a range of both physical and mental health benefits.

A Danish survey, for instance, found that people who lived a greater distance from publicly accessible green spaces, and who had less access to private or shared gardens, were more likely to be overweight or obese, and experienced higher levels of stress.

Another study conducted in Zurich showed that five-year-old children who could not access outdoor play areas unsupervised displayed poorer social behaviours, less well-developed motor skills and had fewer playmates than their counterparts with better access to the outdoors.

The mountains of evidence-based research we now have confirms what we've known instinctively for millennia: that green spaces are places of relaxation, respite and refuge.

Centuries of literature documents the calming affects of pastoral landscapes, meadows and gardens. The Chinese Taoists believed gardens and greenhouses were beneficial to the health more than 2000 years ago. In 1699, The English Gardener, advised readers to spend "spare time in the garden, digging, setting out, or weeding; there is no better way to preserve your health".

Enlightened developers understand that people need green space – from rooftop gardens to open parkland – for their health and wellbeing. Take Docksider Green in Victoria, Canada, for instance. Sure, this large-scale project incorporates a variety of high-tech green features such as wind turbines, green roofs and solar power. The residential developments include energy-saving appliances, heat recovery



ventilators, and double-glazed windows. A centralised biomass gasification plant converts waste wood, such as tree clippings, into a gas that provides hot water and heat, and which enables Docksider Green to be carbon neutral or even carbon positive.

However, it's not Docksider Green's high-tech eco-features that have people lining up to live there. Speaking at the Green Cities 2011 conference in Melbourne in February, the co-developer of Docksider Green and now part of Lend Lease's Sustainability Leadership team, Joe Van Belleghem, said that what attracted people to the residential developments was the open spaces and community facilities available at their doorsteps.

Docksider Green encourages alternative methods of transportation to reduce the impact of car ownership and use. Some of these measures include a residential car-pooling program, the provision of bicycle racks and showers for those commuting to the development's commercial areas, and the connection of the development to a regional cycling trail.

The first phase of the residential development, known as Synergy, achieved a Platinum rating – the highest possible – under the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating tool for its sustainable design. The second phase, Balance, is also targeting LEED Platinum.

Similarly, we now have a number of 'bricks-and-mortar' examples of green living in Australia. Convesso at 8 Waterside Place in Melbourne is a luxury tower located on prime water frontage. Lend Lease's 4 Star Green Star development, representing 'Best Practice', will be one of the first in Australia to install the visual display panels which provide occupants with live data on

electricity and water usage and costs, as well as an update on the carbon emissions generated through electricity use. This real-time feedback will enable occupants to keep track of their usage levels and make informed decisions about reducing their usage.

Convesso has been designed with a high-performance double glazing system to achieve an average 8 Star NatHERS rating resulting in improved thermal and acoustic performance well beyond a standard building and also increased operational energy efficiency, reduced reliance on air conditioning and improved indoor air quality.

Convesso's outdoor spaces have also been designed with liveability and wellbeing in mind.

Balconies are inset to create 'outdoor rooms', while the landscaped, north-facing gardens can be used for both passive and active recreation and encourage a sense of community. A flexi-car system and good connections to nearby public transport will encourage people to do away with their cars all together.

While the Green Star tool for residential developments has been slow to take off, we are starting to see greater traction. With 20 residential projects now registered to achieve Green Star ratings, we can expect green living to move from boutique to mainstream as people recognise that home is where the heart is healthy.

Tony Arnel – Chairman, Green Building Council of Australia



Harnessing the power of electronic media

Remember a time when the most you had seen of a property before you attended the open for inspection came from a single, grainy image - and how more often than not, it didn't even look like the real thing?

Fortunately for all those in the market for a new home, property or premises, real estate advertising has come a long way in the last decade. There are now so many ways agents can promote their properties that consumers have a wealth of information at their fingertips before they even leave their front door.

Prospective buyers no longer need to dedicate their Saturdays to inspecting living rooms which turn out to be only a quarter of the size they appeared in the advertisement. Instead of driving for kilometres only to find out that their dream property is anything but, consumers can now be much more strategic in selecting properties that are worth the travel and time an open for inspection involves.

The property industry has embraced the rapid advances in advertising technology that

most life-like still images or descriptive text. And while there is not an industry that hasn't been touched by the impact of multimedia advertising, it has become an almost essential element of property campaigns.

Smart agents and developers recognise that video has come to represent the pinnacle of real estate advertising – and it is a trend that experts believe will only continue to grow. Head of Marketing at Ray White Real Estate, Ian Campbell, says real estate video has been used widely in the United States for many years.

“Trends are a lot more advanced in the US. Traditionally agents there have adopted videos to a larger extent than in Australia but that is now definitely starting to change,” he says. And, he believes, it is a change that has been driven by the consumer.

“People are so time poor now that the more they can find out before they get to a property the better. No one has time to spend doing physical inspections of homes that just don't suit.”

In the same way that a film brings a book to life, Campbell says it is the richness of video content that makes it so much more valuable than the static images used in traditional real estate advertising.

“Video not only provides images, it really gives you a sense of dimension and space. It's a true representation and probably the next best thing to being somewhere physically.”

It's this sense of realism that Campbell believes also makes video a more honest medium than photography.

“There are definitely stories of photos being retouched to make the sky look blue, the grass greener, or rooms bigger than they are, but video is harder to manipulate. It also gives a greater sense of proportion than pictures, particularly if you have a human reference in the footage. It shows perspective and brings a property to life in a way that photos can't.”

Interestingly enough, video technology has been around for decades. What has changed in recent years is the number of new platforms through which it can be played. Whether uploaded to YouTube, embedded in a Facebook profile, sent by email, watched on a phone or hand-held device, or simply copied to duplicate DVD or even VHS...the list of uses for video continues to grow.

So how can you harness the benefits of video? John Hosking is one who knows.

With an extensive broadcast television background including Executive Producer of the award-winning global science and technology series *Beyond 2000*, Hosking started his Open House Productions property video business in Sydney more than a decade ago.

Since then it has produced powerful and effective presentation videos in property sectors throughout Australia including residential, commercial, retail and industrial.

Watchability, says Hosking, is the key. And he knows what he's talking about when it comes to creating screen content that people *want* to watch, rather than *have* to watch.

“In broadcast TV a plodding storyline, sub-standard image or boring on-camera talent means you're dead in the water - the ratings drop and the show is axed. The same applies to property video – people watching must be both engaged and entertained.”

“A presentation video has to be crafted, with subtle and sometimes no-so-subtle use of imagery, graphics, music, script and other factors to keep the audience's attention.”

“A lot of novices think that because they've done a video course, bought a camera or have a home edit system they know what they're doing. Not so,” he says. “My first and most important tip if you're interested in a video: get someone who knows what they're doing.”

“Experienced producers usually see the angle, selling-point or creative approach straight away. So they'll not only hit the mark better and sooner, they'll usually do it more cheaply because they have a better understanding of what's required at both a creative and technical level.”

Hosking says new and emerging digital video technology has made dramatically increased quality available at a fraction of the cost. He says a typical presentation, which usually lasts between 90 seconds and four minutes, can now often be produced for less than the cost of still photography or printing glossy brochures.

To use video to greatest effect, Hosking offers the following tips:

- Make it for the audience, not for you: Understanding your viewers will help you create a video that is well received and achieves its purpose. Focus on effect, not detail.
- First impressions count: If the production doesn't feel right first time you watch – it isn't. Don't talk yourself into accepting sub-standard content.
- The power of the unexpected: Don't state the obvious. If the shot shows a lounge, then don't say “I'm here in the lounge”. Say something interesting – best of all, something they don't expect.
- Big start and big finish: Capture the attention of your viewers in the opening moments, and leave them with a memorable ending for maximum impact – give them something to remember.
- Leave them wanting more: It's an old show-business adage that holds true in video production as well. Be selective about the footage you include in the final edit. Trying to cram too much information into your video may cause the audience to lose attention or switch off.

Following these simple guidelines, Hosking says, can make the difference between a successful video and one that simply doesn't work.

He says viewers are discerning about what they watch and in the same way that a well-

produced video can promote your cause or product, an amateur production can have a detrimental effect.

Hosking is right. The power of the medium is obvious: in Australia alone, more than \$3 billion a year is spent on television advertising – considerably more than all other sectors combined. But it's not just advertising where the power of electronic media comes to the fore.

Video is also an immensely powerful tool for conveying all manner of basic visual information. One Open House Productions client uses video for tasks like contractual and bond assessment.

“A professional video operator can cover every nook and cranny of a multi-story building in a matter of hours - producing un-arguable images in the event of disputes,” Hosking reveals.

Online news sites are another good example of the increasing use of multimedia content. All around the world, publications ranging from club newsletters to prominent newspapers incorporate video with their still images and written copy. With the value of moving images becoming more and more powerful, figuring out how you can best harness the benefits may very well be the challenge that sets you apart from your competitors.

Tessa McMahon, Marketing Manager at Walker Corporation, says that in the property industry the major players use video to communicate big messages in a short amount of time.

“In property development visual mediums are the most effective way to communicate ideas or concepts around developments because people often find it hard to visualise things.”

“We use video in our corporate marketing and also in our project-based marketing. So

we do various things whether it's testimonials from clients that we have, to feature videos of a particular project. For example we have a great history video that we use to quickly tell our story about what it is we've achieved. It's much faster to be able to show people on video the types of projects we've done and communicate the key messages that way.”

“Without question video is becoming a more and more popular medium, particularly because it's very easy now to put onto the web and because generally people are becoming averse to reading. If they can watch a video that will tell the story in half the time and in a more entertaining and impressive fashion then definitely they'll choose the video option.”

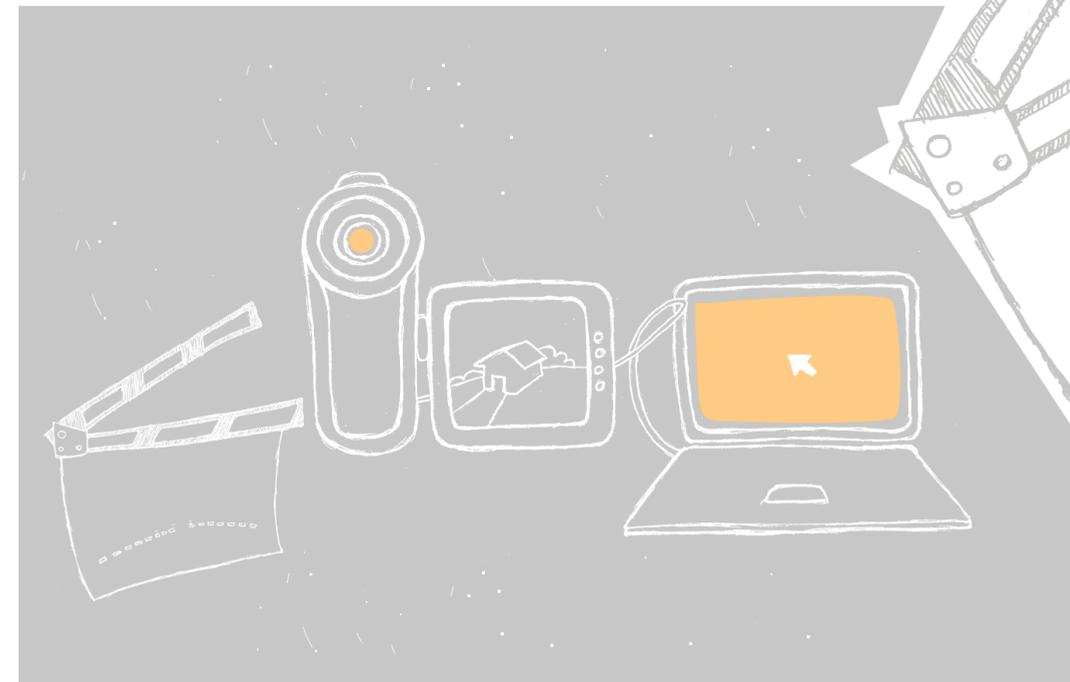
“It's certainly becoming a medium of choice for a lot of industries, not just property development.”

And with some statistics showing that websites which contain video are up to fifty times more likely to be listed on the first page of Google search results, it is not hard to see why.

Video content is increasingly being used as the method of choice to promote companies' products or services online.

Ian Campbell says that while traditionally marketing at Ray White Real Estate relied heavily on print, in future he sees opportunities in the integration of offline and online content – and video as the best way to bridge this gap.

“With the proliferation of mobile devices, the great thing about video is that it's almost native on a phone or iPad,” Campbell says. “The experience of watching a video on a phone or hand-held device is much more natural than clicking through pictures.”



Remember

Video should always be well-produced. Just as a high quality video will enhance your campaign, an amateurish production may have a detrimental effect.

Article by Amy Kelly

Strata Voice readers and Strata Managers can obtain a free sample DVD from Open House Productions by visiting: www.openhouseproductions.com.au or calling John Hosking on 0293323888

Quotations for video production, uploading, DVD authoring etc. are obligation free.

“Add to that the credibility factor,” says Hosking. “When people see a property, product or service featured in well-produced video, they immediately afford it greater respect and importance.” Indeed for many offerings without a video element in their sales presentations, the first question that's asked is: “Where's the video?”

Hosking says there's nothing to match the emotive power of well-produced content. “It really is the next best thing to being there.

Whether its earthquake victims or millionaire prize-winners, devious crime or great sporting moments, 21st century electronic media brings major events to life right before our eyes.

And of course, Hosking says, there is always the added novelty of having your family, friends or business associates seeing the video of your new home or premises playing from your computer or plasma TV.

Why video?

Video is the most information rich medium and the next best thing to physically being somewhere.

- Video is harder to manipulate than images, so provides a more honest impression.
- Moving images capture the attention and emotions of the viewer in a way that static images don't.
- Video is easier to play on hand held devices than clicking through images.



NSW strata report: Queensland versus the world

The ability of developers to establish management rights in the various states of Australia, as well as New Zealand.

This article will look at restrictions on developers setting up management rights in New South Wales, where it is estimated that there are no more than 200 management rights complexes currently established.

Restrictions relating to developer control periods

The relevant act governing management rights in NSW is the Strata Schemes Management Act 1996.

- Under the Strata Act, the "initial period" commences on registration of the strata plan and ends when one-third of the aggregate unit entitlement has changed hands (settled) from the developer.
- The Strata Act restricts an owners' corporation, during the initial period, from:
 - incurring a debt for an amount that exceeds the amount then available for repayment of the debt from its administrative fund or its sinking fund, and
 - appointing a strata managing agent or a caretaker or other person to assist in the management or control of use of the common property, or the maintenance or repair of the common property, for a period extending beyond the holding of the first annual general meeting of the owners' corporation, and
 - changing or cancelling the by-laws or making extra by-laws that do not give a right or obligation to all owners of all lots, and
 - altering common property (except under a development contract), and
 - selling any common property, and
 - borrowing money or giving securities.

- The original owner must hold the first AGM within two months of the end of the initial period. Fourteen clear days' notice is required for this meeting, whereas all other AGMs or EGM only require seven clear days notice.
- At the AGM, if the original owner still owns half or more of the total unit entitlement and a vote by poll or special resolution is called, the value of the original owner's vote is reduced to one-third of the original owner's unit entitlement, ignoring any fraction. If the motion is to elect the executive committee and the original owner still owns half or more of the lots, the original owner's vote is reduced to one vote for every three lots owned, ignoring any fraction.
- There is a statutory agenda for the holding of the first AGM. One of the agenda items is whether a caretaker is to be appointed. As the New South Wales legislation does not specifically recognise the authorisation of an on site letting agent, the authorisation or appointment must be passed at another general meeting (in practice, usually an EGM that immediately follows the first AGM).

Community Title Schemes under the Community Land Management Act 1989

- The Community Act provides that a community association, precinct association or neighbourhood association may agree with the proprietor or occupier of a development lot, neighbourhood lot or strata lot within the community, precinct or neighbourhood scheme to provide amenities or services to the lot or to the proprietors or occupiers.

- The Community Act provides that, if during the initial period for a scheme, an association enters into a caretaking agreement, the agreement terminates at the end of the first annual general meeting of the association unless:
 - its effect was disclosed in the association's management statement before the transfer of any lots in the scheme, or
 - it is ratified at the meeting.

- In other words, a caretaking agreement or letting agreement can be entered into by a community association during its initial period provided that the "effect" of the agreement was disclosed in the community management statement before any lots in the scheme were transferred. Alternatively, the agreement can be ratified at the first annual general meeting of the association.

- Recent cases have made it clear that disclosure of the "effect" of such an agreement in the CMS must be quite specific to be effective. For example, clauses in a community management statement to the effect that the community association may enter into a caretaking agreement and the term of the agreement may be for a period of ten years and may be with a commencing remuneration of \$X have been held not to be sufficient disclosure for the purposes of this section. The CMS disclosure must state exactly what the term will be and what the remuneration will be etc. Otherwise, the caretaking agreement (or letting agreement) will come to an end at the first annual general meeting - unless ratified.

Legislation re term of agreements - Strata Schemes Management Act 1996

- In New South Wales, there are two types of caretaker agreements - those entered into prior to 10 February 2003 and those entered into on and from 10 February 2003. The 10 February 2003 was the date that the New South Wales government introduced the "caretaker" provisions into the Strata Act.

- The Strata Act defines a caretaker as a person who is entitled to exclusive possession (whether or not jointly with another person or other persons) of a lot or common property and assist in exercising any one or more of the following functions of the owners' corporation for the strata plan concerned:
 - managing common property,
 - controlling the use of common property by persons other than the owners and occupiers of lots,
 - maintaining and repairing common property.

Consequently, you will see that there are two limbs to this definition and you have to satisfy both limbs to be a "caretaker" under the legislation.

- If you fit within the definition of a caretaker then section 40B provides that any agreement appointing a caretaker must be in writing and entered into under the authority of a resolution (ordinary) passed at a general meeting of the owners' corporation.
- The Strata Act also provides that unless the agreement expires or otherwise ceases to have effect earlier, a caretaker agreement (including any additional term under any option to renew it) expires:
 - at the conclusion of the first annual general meeting of the owners' corporation if the agreement was executed by the original owner, or
 - when ten (10) years have expired after it commenced to authorise the caretaker to act under it.

- On-site letting agents are not recognised under the act and accordingly, there is no term limitation in respect to any letting agreement. The key points to understand in respect to letting agreements in New South Wales are:
 - the entering into of the letting agreement should be firstly empowered by a by-law authorising the owners' corporation to enter into such an agreement,
 - by-laws have no effect until they are registered,

- unless restricted by the terms of the empowering by-law, the agreement can be for any term,
- It is possible in New South Wales to have a caretaking agreement with a maximum term of ten years and a corresponding letting agreement with a term of, say, 15 or 25 years. In this scenario, you should ensure that the agreements are not linked so that default or expiration of one agreement does not automatically trigger the default or expiration of the other agreement.

Community Land Management Act 1989

- There is currently no term limitation on caretaking and/or Letting Agreements under the Community Act. Consequently, a community association can enter into a 20 or 25 year caretaking or letting agreement whereby the community association contracts with a caretaker and/or letting agent to provide services to the community association and/or subsidiary associations if allowed for in the CMS.

- I believe that this anomaly will be changed some time in the next year so that the term of caretaking agreements under the Community Act will mirror the 10 year term limitation under the Strata Act.

The ability to top up agreements - Strata Schemes Management Act 1996 Caretaking agreements entered into prior to 10 February 2003 do not have a term limitation, and accordingly, the term of the agreements can be topped up at any time by way of a variation of the agreement. Likewise, there is no restriction on the

top up period. You must ensure however that you do not effect a "re engagement" of the agreement because if this occurs, the 10 year term limitation will then apply.

- Agreements entered into from 10 February 2003 can be topped up to a term (including options) of no more than 10 years. However, because of the wording of the relevant section, a "top up" can only be effected by way of re engagement. This is because the clause states that a caretaker agreement expires "when ten years have expired after it commenced to authorise the caretaker to act under it". Consequently, a variation of an existing agreement will not work.

Community Land Management Act 1989

- As there is no term limitation currently applying under the Community Act, a caretaking or letting agreement can be topped up by way of variation.

Financier's rights - Strata Schemes Management Act 1996

- There is nothing in the Strata Act that compels an owners' corporation to enter into a financier's deed. Consequently, an owners' corporation can reject outright any request by a financier of a caretaker to enter into such a deed.
- However, from a contractual point of view, some caretaking Agreements do have provisions in them which require owners' corporation to enter into agreements with a caretaker's financiers. In practice however, I find that the contractual terms are generally limited

in their detail and it is becoming increasingly more difficult to negotiate the terms of these agreements to a position where they are acceptable to both the financiers and the owners' corporation's solicitors.

- In an ideal situation, financier' rights in relation to caretaker and letting agreements should be incorporated in detail in both the caretaking and letting agreements as well as the by-laws.

Community Land Management Act 1989

- There is likewise no provision in the Community Act to compel a community association to enter into such agreements and accordingly, the same situation applies as under the Strata Act.

Legislation relating to use of proxies by developers and caretakers when entering into or extending agreements

Strata Schemes Management Act 1996:

- Amendments to the Strata Act that came into effect from 1 August 2008 now prohibit developers of strata lots from being able to use a contract for sale to obtain proxy voting appointments from purchasers. Any contractual provisions obliging a purchaser to make such an appointment is unenforceable.
- Likewise, any person connected with the developer or caretaker is ineligible to be appointed to the executive committee unless they disclose their connection beforehand.

Relevantly "connected" people include family, employees and executives of developer companies.

- Also, a vote by proxy who is a caretaker, an on-site residential property manager or a strata managing agent is invalid if it would obtain or assist in obtaining a pecuniary interest for, or confer or assist in conferring any other material benefit on, the proxy.

"Material benefits" are defined as including but not limited to, the following:

- an extension of the term or an additional term of appointment of the proxy as Caretaker, on-site residential property manager or strata managing agent,
- an increase in the remuneration of the proxy,
- a decision by the owners' corporation not to proceed with, to withdraw, to delay, to compromise or to settle litigation or other legal proceedings relating to the proxy,
- any other decision of the owners' corporation that affects litigation or other legal proceedings relating to the proxy.

Community Land Management Act 1989

- There are no restrictions in the Community Act similar to those contained in the Strata Act that limit caretakers' or on-site residential property managers' or strata managing agents' use of proxies in circumstances where the use of the proxy by a caretaker will assist in conferring a pecuniary or material benefit to the caretaker. Accordingly, a caretaker can obtain proxies and use the proxies to vote on any extension of the caretaking agreement.

Article by Col Myers - Small Myers Hughes



Queensland unit market

The Queensland unit and townhouse market has not been immune from this year's natural disasters and patchy economic conditions, according to the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ).

According to the REIQ's March quarter Queensland Market Monitor report, median unit and townhouse prices eased across much of South East Queensland during the first three months of 2011.

While a number of regional centres bucked this trend to record positive growth, this was mainly due to the construction of new unit or townhouse developments, or the sale of more expensive existing stock, in these areas over the period.

The number of preliminary unit and townhouse sales in Queensland decreased 15 per cent over the March quarter.

“The unit and townhouse market has been impacted by lower numbers of first home buyers and investors, who are the type of buyers usually the most interested in this more affordable segment of the market,” REIQ chairman Pamela Bennett said.

“First home buyers continue to languish at about 15 per cent of the Queensland residential property market, while investors appear to have adopted a wait-and-see approach until a clearer picture emerges on interest rates and the economy.

“The prestige market is also struggling with the number of preliminary sales of units and townhouses for more than \$1 million across Queensland dropping about 40 per cent compared to the December quarter.”

The median unit and townhouse price in Brisbane eased 1.4 per cent to \$395,000 over the quarter. On the Gold and Sunshine coasts, the median unit price decreased 2.7 per cent to \$355,000 and 2.1 per cent to \$350,000 respectively.

“REIQ agents continue to report a significant drop in demand compared to the same period last year, but this is creating wonderful opportunities for buyers with many sellers having to be very realistic about what price they can achieve in the current conditions if they want to make a sale,” Ms Bennett said.

Positive median price growth was recorded for the Toowoomba, the Fraser Coast, Rockhampton and Townsville local government areas over the March quarter.

Over the period, there was an increase in sales in higher-priced stock in Toowoomba and the Fraser Coast which pushed up the median sale price.

Rockhampton and Townsville both recorded median price increases of 4.5 per cent over the period. As Rockhampton's unit market continues to be quite small, this result was due to higher priced unit sales in Yeppoon, while sales in new waterfront developments in North Ward and South Townsville have underpinned that region's result over the quarter.





Building newflash number 473

Building Act 1975 amendments – pool fencing and residential care buildings.

Purpose

To advise proposed amendments to the Building Act 1975 in the Local Government Electoral Bill 2011 were introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 16 June 2011.

Background

Swimming pools: Queensland's swimming pool safety laws require pool owners to comply with safety requirements for swimming pools. It is common practice for pool fences to incorporate dividing fences as part of their enclosure.

If passed in its current form, the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Bill 2011 (NDRB) will replace the Dividing Fences Act 1956 and regulate the laws governing most of Queensland's dividing

fences. With the risks associated with inadequate pool fencing, an alternative to the model in the NDRB is needed to cater for pool barriers serving as dividing fences. The proposed amendments aim at creating a suitable model for situations where pool owners use the dividing fence for pool safety compliance.

Residential care: Residential Care Buildings (RCBs) have been identified as posing a high risk to life in the event of a fire. Following the Childers Palace Backpackers fire in June 2000, the Queensland Government began a staged fire safety improvement program for high occupancy buildings, including budget accommodation buildings (BABs) and RCBs.

The BAB fire safety improvement project was successfully completed on 31 December 2006.

Since 1 June 2007, new RCBs have been required to comply with Mandatory Part (MP) 2.2 of the Queensland Development Code (QDC)—'Fire safety in residential care buildings'. MP 2.2 requires life safety sprinklers and building-wide smoke detection systems in all buildings constructed after 1 June 2007. The code also requires a minimum number of carers to be onsite at all times, to ensure residents can be effectively evacuated from smoke compartments.

However, there are still over 700 RCBs in Queensland that were built prior to 1 June 2007. The government is implementing the final stage of its fire safety improvement program for RCBs to improve fire safety in these buildings.

New provisions

Swimming pools: The amendments provide an effective regime for dealing with pool barriers on common boundaries. In certain circumstances,

pool owners will be empowered to construct or alter a pool fence, without first obtaining the agreement of their neighbour.

Consistent with the principles of the NDRB, a pool owner will always be required to notify an adjoining owner before commencing building work on a dividing fence. This provides the opportunity for the adjoining owner to liaise with the pool owner about the construction of the pool fence. In all cases, the pool owner will be responsible for the construction costs needed to comply with the pool safety standard.

The Bill has a broad application and accommodates situations such as both neighbours having pools, the use of a dividing fence as an enclosure for regulated dogs and the need, in some cases, to gain access to a neighbour's property to construct a pool barrier on a common boundary.

Residential care: The fire safety reforms of this Bill adopt a new part of the QDC, mandating minimum fire safety requirements for residential care buildings (RCBs) constructed prior to 1 June 2007. These requirements complete the government's fire safety improvement program for RCBs, as they capture those buildings not covered by MP 2.2 (which applies to all RCBs constructed after 1 June 2007).

MP 2.3 of the QDC – 'Fire safety in residential care buildings (pre 1 June 2007)' has been published and is now available on the department's website.

Owners/operators will need to have their building assessed against MP 2.3 within six months of the commencement of this legislation, which is likely to be on 1 September 2011. The upgrades outlined in this assessment will need to be implemented within either three years from commencement for high risk buildings or five years from commencement for medium and low risk buildings.

Department of Local Government and Planning Building Codes Queensland Division. tel +61 7 3239 6369 buildingcodes@dip.qld.gov.au



Case Study- Spring St Towers

The City of Melbourne's Sustainable Living in the City (SLIC) pilot project assessed four high rise apartment buildings and used low cost retrofits and behaviour change workshops to reduce the water, waste, and energy used in the buildings.

Savings were achieved at apartment level and at building level, with particular success in reducing energy used for lighting and hot water.

Spring St Towers consists of two buildings constructed in 1997. The buildings have 231 apartments, extensive on-site recreational facilities including tennis court, gym, indoor pool, and BBQ area. There is also a chiropractic office on the premises.

The building is managed by Melbourne Inner City management (MICM). Just over half of the residents are renters.

The Sustainable Living in the City (SLIC) program funded a range of works at Spring St Towers.

In Each Apartment

Compact fluorescent lightglobes

Spring St Towers hosted a light globe exchange to provide residents with 15 watt compact fluorescent globes to replace existing 75 watt incandescent globes. Assuming that each of these lights is on for only an hour each day, the light globe exchange will save:

- 21.9 kWh/day
- equivalent to 29 kg or 580 black balloons of CO2
- per year the light globes save 6699 kg or 13 398 black balloons worth of CO2.

Halogen downlights

Many apartment buildings have halogen downlights. Halogen downlights are an extremely inefficient way to light large spaces (such as hallways or apartments).

They are low voltage - which means they don't produce much light. But halogens are high wattage which means they consume a lot of energy. Furthermore, each halogen downlight requires a transformer, the transformer consumes an additional 10-15 watts.

Most of the wasted energy is used in generating heat which often causes the halogen globes to burn out and to burn the ceiling around them.

While no halogen downlights are energy efficient, there are now alternatives to reduce wattage without requiring rewiring. The more efficient halogen downlights were installed through the SLIC program.

If a downlight is on 24 hours a day, replacing a 50 watt halogen (the most common halogen downlight) with a 20 watt halogen will save approximately 263 kWh/year.

Remote mains outlet

Power is used when appliances (such as TVs, stereos, computer monitors) are turned off but left on stand-by.

Stand-by mode can usually be identified by a little light that is left on once the appliance is switched off. Stand-by power accounted for 5.3 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Spring St Towers. Stand-by power can be prevented by using a remote mains outlet. The remote mains outlet switches off up to four appliances in the apartment with one button. An electrician is not required to install a remote mains outlet.

Cent-a-meter

A cent-a-meter displays the cost of electricity being used on a portable easy-to-read LCD monitor inside the home. It allows the resident to monitor energy use in real time. Installation requires an electrician but is a simple and quick.

The SLIC program retrofitted eight apartments with cent-a-meters. Some of these apartments will be tracked and their energy use will be compared with residents who did not receive a cent-a-meter.

Showerheads

A showerhead exchange held in the building was popular with residents. Each showerhead upgraded to a 3 star rated energy efficient model saves an average of 13,500 litres of water per person per year.

In the common areas of the building

Ring Main Hot Water System

Spring St Towers has one ring mains system to supply hot water to all apartments. The ring main system was not operating efficiently as demonstrated by the following graph which shows almost half of the gas used by the system was "lost" through the system rather than being used to heat the water.

Balancing the ring main system and insulating the pipes properly saved large volumes of water and gas in Spring St Towers. Residents now have instantaneous hot water where previously they had to wait for up to ten minutes. For an explanation of ring mains balancing, see the SLIC ring main fact sheet at: melbourne.vic.gov.au

Car Park lighting

For safety reasons, the lighting in the car parks at Spring St Towers needs to be on 24 hours a day. This is a high energy user. The SLIC program used voltage reduction to reduce the energy consumed by the lights.

Light levels in the car park were reduced however the difference is so slight that it is not visible to the naked eye. The energy savings are extensive as shown below:

- 42224 kWh/year
- Cost saving of \$5827, a payback period of less than two years.

For more information on voltage reduction, and whether it could work for your building's car park, see the SLIC car park lighting fact sheet at www.melbourne.vic.gov.au

Hallway and foyer lighting

Lighting in the common areas of the Spring St Towers was on 24 hours a day.

This was unnecessary in the hallways, where twelve 50 watt halogen downlights, as well as two compact fluorescent wall lights were fitted on each floor.

Now, four 25 watt compact fluorescent lights are in each hallway - these remain on 24 hours a day. All of the 50 watt halogen downlights were replaced with 20 watt halogen downlights, and press button timers have been installed so that these lights are used only when needed.

The difference in energy use by permanent lighting is 94,608 kWh/year. This is a saving of \$13,056 per year, with a payback period of 13.7 months.

Additional energy will be used for the short periods of time that the push button timer turns on the halogen downlights. Currently, rates of use for the push button timer are low because residents are satisfied with the light from the compact fluorescent lighting.

In the foyer, lighting is still used 24 hours a day, but all 50 watt halogen downlights were replaced with 20 watt halogen downlights.

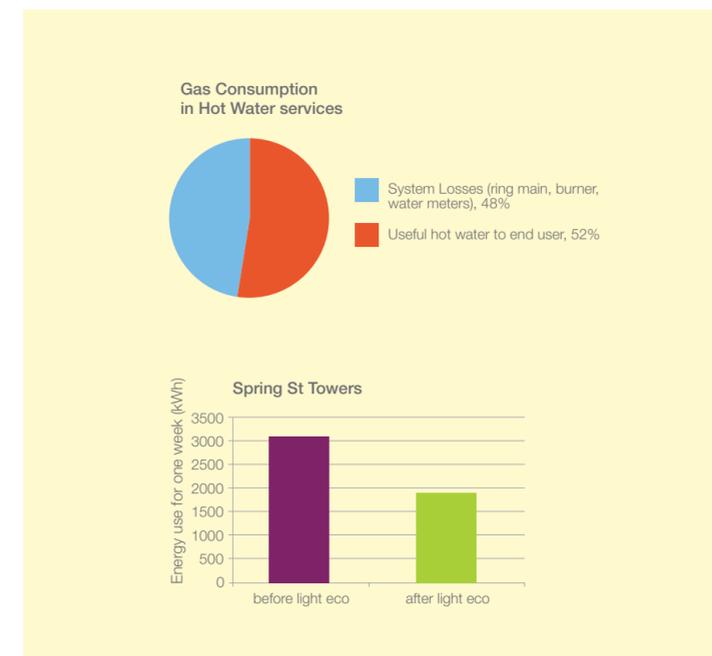
Rain water tanks

Two 2400 litre rainwater tanks were installed on the top level of the car park. This enables the body corporate to water the garden during restrictions.

"Many of our residents have commented positively on the reduction of excess lighting throughout the complex including carparks and occupied floors. The initiatives will with no doubt have savings in consumption and waste on many levels including direct energy consumption, cost in relation of globes/down lights, labour in replacing lights and the environmental factors in terms of resource depletion and disposal of spent consumables."

John Tsambardas – Building Manager Spring Street Towers

The City of Melbourne thanks Melbourne Inner City Management, Bone Electrical, EcoBright Energy Solutions and Bright Sands Plumbing for their assistance in developing this fact sheet.





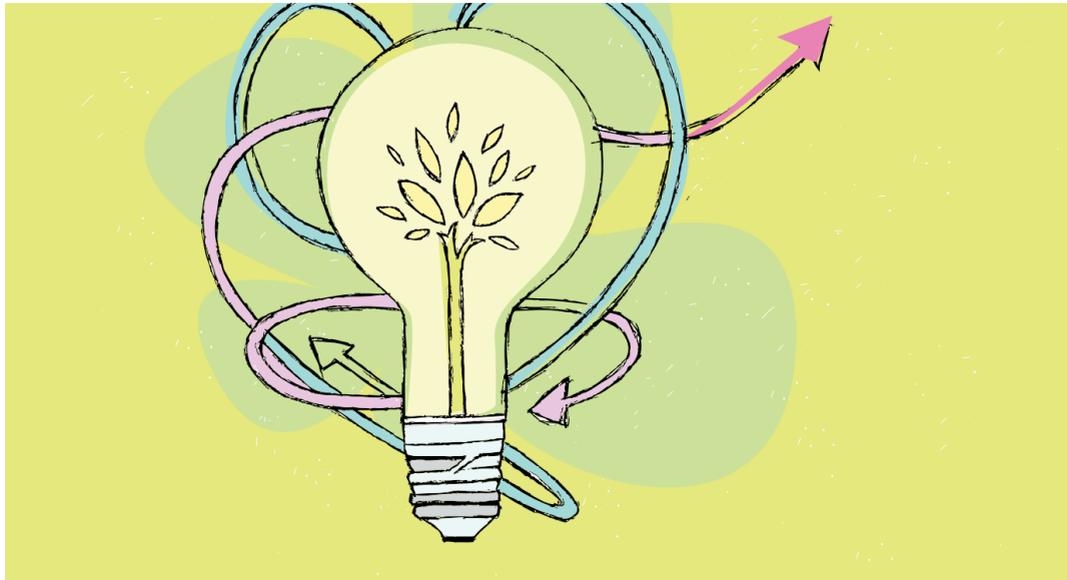
StrataVoice

Strata Voice is a quarterly newspaper directly mailed to stata managers, body corporates, selected unit owners and real estate agents

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Developing sustainable solutions for apartments

In May 2011 the City of Melbourne, in partnership with Strata Communities Australia (VIC), convened a workshop to discuss the important issue of increasing the sustainability of Victoria's existing apartment buildings.

The group first set out to pinpoint the foundational barriers contributing to inaction by existing apartment buildings within the area of environmental upgrades. Four major barriers were identified through the workshop. These were mapped to illustrate the many connections

between them. Before investigating possible solutions it was important to illustrate that these barriers are not exclusive to each other and therefore solutions should not be developed in isolation.

The group was then given free range to brainstorm any number of solutions to these barriers. While a number of ideas arose, some significant themes for possible solutions were identified:

- Development of best practice/case studies to demonstrate how sustainability can be achieved and the positive benefits that result from investing in building upgrades.
- Workable tools to assist unit owners/owners corporations to become more sustainable and compare sustainability performance between buildings.
- Development of a database which identifies good quality sources of information.
- Use of media to demonstrate the importance and benefit of sustainability.

- Financial support to help building owners transition to sustainable solutions.
- Financial support to develop economies of scale to make sustainability more affordable.

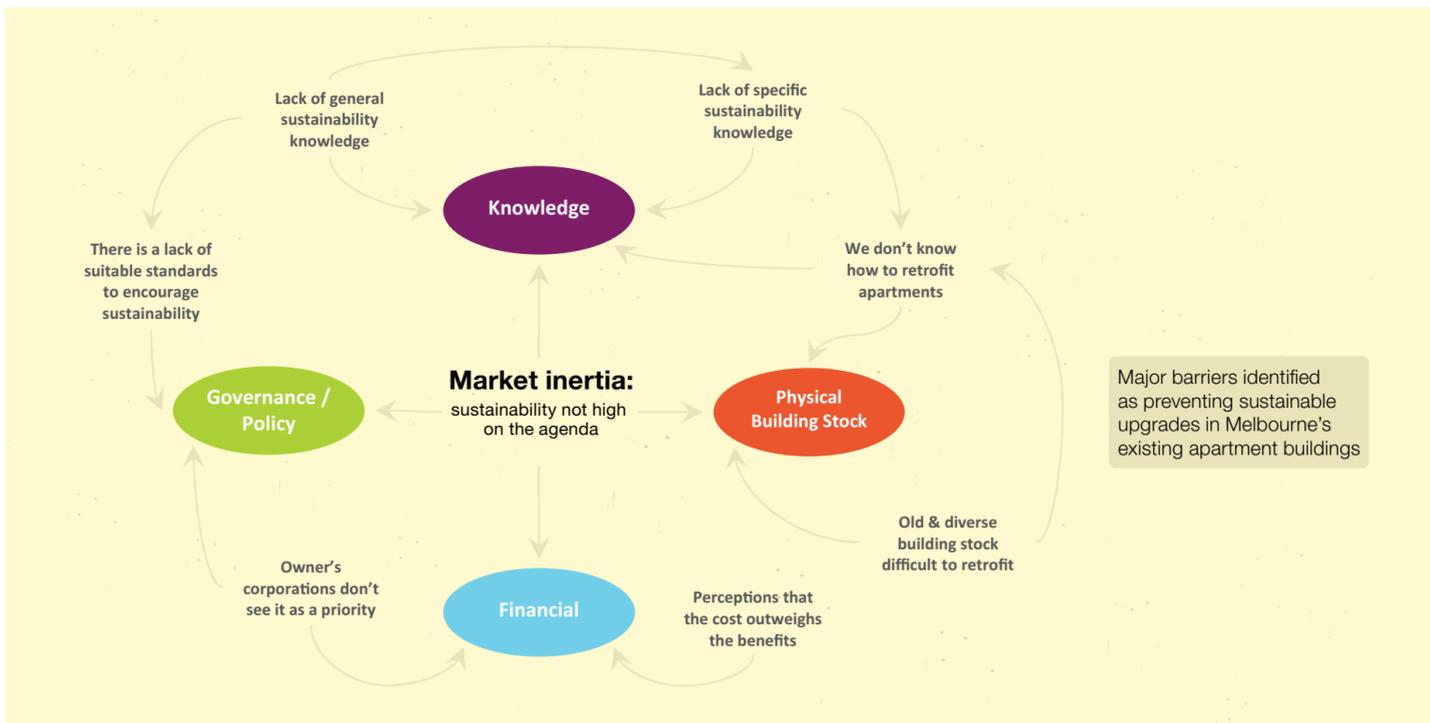
It's our aim that the suite of solutions ideas brainstormed during the workshop will be further developed and refined into a short-listed group of robust, practical and scalable solutions that can be tested in the field.

We want to work with interested stakeholders within government, the community and private sector to help co-create solutions that deliver sustainable change to this sector.

For more information about the workshop, please visit the City of Melbourne's website (<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/Environment/WhatCanIDo/Pages/WhatcanIdo.aspx>) and click through to Sustainable Solutions for Apartments to learn more and see how you can get involved.

The Developing Sustainable Solutions for Apartments workshop was run as part of the Hi-RES (Higher density Residential Efficiency Solutions) project, which aims to develop and test solutions to help transform Victoria's apartment buildings to become more sustainable.

The Hi-RES project is an initiative of the City of Melbourne, Strata Communities Australia (VIC), Yarra Energy Foundation, Moreland Energy Foundation, and Cities of Yarra and Port Phillip and is supported by the Victorian Government Sustainability Fund, managed by Sustainability Victoria.



Choosing insurance is a little like walking a tightrope.

You don't know how much it will hurt until you hit the bottom.

When it comes to insurance, all the bells and whistles and fancy TV ads don't mean a thing when you come to make a claim.

That's why using a company that has specialised in investment property insurance for over 20 years makes good sense.

We've seen it all.

The RentCover range of landlord insurance policies is used by tens of thousands of owners all over Australia, and in the last 12 months alone we have paid out over \$8,000,000 in claims. And most are settled within 5 working days.

RentCover Ultra

What many consider as the benchmark for landlord insurance in Australia today. RentCover *Ultra* protects against almost every tenant-related risk (such as loss of rent and damage), as well as "defined risks" such as fire and storm and up to \$30,000,000 liability cover.

RentCover ShortTerm

Developed specifically for owners of properties let for short periods such as Holiday Letting and Corporate Leasing, RentCover *ShortTerm* includes features that may not be included in many off-the-shelf policies.

To learn more about the RentCover range of policies visit www.rentcover.com.au

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860,000 claims paid since 2000

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