

STRATA & COMMUNITY LIVING

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AUTUMN 2017



Be part of the community

Did you know that strata owners can become members of Strata Community Australia (SCA) (NSW)? As a member you can access information, updates and receive discounts to events such as the upcoming Strata Owners Day.

The annual Strata Owners Day, back for 2017, has been running for around 10 years. It started as a half-day session which ran as part of our larger NSW Annual Convention but the popularity of the event has seen it evolve, which incidentally is also this year's theme.

Evolve. It is a full-day event on Saturday, 25 March just for strata owners providing strata owners with information and opportunities to connect with other owners as well as those who work in the strata industry.

The special guest speaker this year is Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore who is a long-time advocate for people living in strata. Under her leadership the City of Sydney council offers a range of educational and environmentally sustainable programs all aimed at strata living. The City encourages owners, investors and tenants to take advantage of these programs which operate throughout the year.

It wouldn't be Strata Owners Day without a panel session. This encourages audience participation where you get to ask questions and our strata and legal experts answer them. This year the panel will be led by Cindy Martin, owner of the very popular Strata Live website. She will field questions about the new legislation and bring some clarity to any confusion with the help of some terrific experts.

“Strata Owners Day is a great opportunity to ask important questions about living in strata. With the best strata experts in NSW on hand you'll get advice, meet other owners and hear from professionals in a relaxed environment.”

During the rest of the day there are sessions aimed at showing how to add value to strata properties. These include assistance with capital works funds and getting a valuation. Plus for the first time real estate agents will tell you what buyers are looking for in apartments. This will help owners considering on selling their properties how to get the best price. It also aims at providing owners corporations with incentives to keep the property in its best shape so that owners and investors aren't losing money. A rundown property will not attract the dollars that a well-maintained one will.

SCA (NSW) has also organised an afternoon of sustainability with interesting sessions showing owners how they can be energy efficient and more.

For information and to register go to nsw.stratacommunity.org.au

The event is on at Sydney Masonic Centre, 66 Goulburn Street, Sydney.

For those of you who are new to strata, Strata Community Australia (NSW) is an independent not-for-profit organisation whose members represent approx 75% of all strata lots in NSW. The organisation is dedicated to the fostering and recognition of professionalism, excellence and harmonious communities in all aspects of strata and property.

To become a member is easy. You'll receive access to free or discounted events, seminars and education sessions, receive regular updates, news and information, be represented before government and get copies of the annual Strata Services Directory. Plus more. Check out the SCA (NSW) website or speak to your strata manager who is a member about the great things on offer to you.

Here's what attendees to past events have said:

“A fabulous day. Top Drawer. Thank you.”

“Excellent information day”

“The catering was excellent. The venue fantastic. The speakers are fluent and their topics interesting. Thank you.”

“Yes, I would very much like to see this become an annual event. It was very well constructed and organised day. Thank you!”

“Have been very pleased with today would like to attend more of these sessions”



Multicultural Strata Schemes

City Futures Research Centre is a part of the Faculty of the Built Environment located at the University of NSW. SCA (NSW) is a long-time supporter of the research undertaken by City Futures and occasionally we sponsor research programs.

One such program due to get underway later this year will consider the potential influence of cultural background on participation in strata schemes. According to City Futures "it will consider both participation in the everyday life of a scheme and participation in the decision-making in a strata scheme. This information can then be used to inform the development of tools and strategies to encourage community cohesion, connectedness and resilience in strata communities."

SCA (NSW) will advise when this research commences and we encourage you all to participate in this very worthwhile project.

In the meantime, the academics from City Futures have provided a checklist so you can measure whether your strata scheme is culturally diverse. The full copy is under the resources tab on the SCA (NSW) website. This version is edited due to limited space.

1. Get a sense of the diversity in your strata scheme. For example, consider doing a quick survey of residents' countries of origin, preferred language, proficiency in English, age group, and ownership status. Don't forget to include tenants as well as owners. There are many free online survey tools available for example Google Forms, Survey Monkey.
2. Encourage owners of different cultural backgrounds, age groups and genders to join the strata committee.
3. Facilitate opportunities for participation, apart from joining the strata committee. For example, committee members can invite other owners and residents to propose sub-committees that focus on a particular issue (e.g. energy efficiency, lobby upgrades), or working bees (e.g. in the garden).

4. Ensure that the concerns or requests of all owners are acknowledged by the committee, brought to a meeting, tabled and the reasons for any decision or action minuted so that owners do not feel disenfranchised or discriminated against, even if their request was not approved.
5. While a professional translator might be needed in some cases, often an owner or resident in the building can help with translating and liaising with others from the same language group during meetings.
6. Consider translating important items of communication or alternatively you could add a brief note at the bottom of notices in multiple languages saying – 'if you need this notice translated into your language, please contact ...'
7. Do not single out a single language for negative instructions or signage as this can cause offence. Use clear, pictographic signs where possible so that the messages can be understood by different language groups.
8. It is important that notices of breach of by-laws are consistently applied to all residents, irrespective of their cultural background or whether they are renters or owners.
9. It's often helpful to communicate issues in person with people who do not have strong English language skills. Letters, especially formal letters, can easily be misunderstood so it can help to follow these up with a personal visit.
10. Find ways to encourage residents to get to know each other. Consider celebrating festivities of different cultures and religions. For example, if you put up decorations for Christmas, consider doing the same for Chinese New Year, Diwali and Eid. Many of these can be easily put together in a working bee day.

Advice prepared by Hazel Easthope, Edgar Liu and Caitlin Buckle from the University of New South Wales and Christina Ho from the University of Technology Sydney.

Autumn Tips for the Apartment and You

As the cool change begins to set in, it's time to make adjustments around your apartment to ready it for the cooler months. There are some simple yet effective things to do to make your place more comfortable and enjoyable.

Checking your air-conditioner units for leaks and cleaning them is a good way to bring their Summer use to an end. If you use freestanding fans, now is a good time to consider how and where you will be storing them until they are needed later in the year. Now is also a good time to bring out or clean the filter in your dehumidifiers. If you do not already own one, dehumidifiers are great devices to use inside smaller spaces that may be prone to dampness, as this is where allergy triggers tend to live including dust mites and mould. They are particularly valuable for bedrooms of small children, those with asthma, hay fever or those prone to allergies.

Check fly screens on doors and windows: As the cooler days and nights become less sporadic we are inclined to open windows more to let in the fresh air. It is a good idea to clean the fly screens to enable better air flow into your home. This is definitely a weekend task, and if you can round up a friend or partner to help – it'll be much easier. While cleaning, check the safety on your flyscreen doors and windows. Small children or pets can create holes or looseness that you need to be aware of, and it is always a good time to check for safety.

Autumn is a good chance to put away seasonal furniture, such as outdoor chairs and cushions; and bring out your lounge room furnishings for winter. If you're in the market for a new throw, here are my top picks:

- Inexpensive and versatile, the Kmart Cotton Waffle Blanket in beige, can double as a throw on your lounge by day, and a blanket for additional warmth on your bed at night.
- Splash of colour, the Mercer + Reid Micca Knit Throw in mustard or emerald will add warm vibes to your living space.
- Something luxurious, the oversized, hand-knitted Sheridan Carlin Throw in grey marl is 100% wool and perfect for the cool nights to come.



Create a Community:

Now that the Summer season has passed and the year is in full swing, consider creating positive opportunities for gatherings in your apartment block. It is never too late for a back-to-school, or back-to-work drinks on a Sunday afternoon. Try to choose a central and neutral spot in your building to encourage people to come along. Chat to your neighbours first to check availabilities, and then send around an email or use your building's notice board to communicate the invite. This is a good way to establish a rapport with those you live with, and to have discussions about general apartment living topics including safety, energy efficiency and community opportunities.

Finally, as the cool nights draw us more and more to the couch and the TV remote, consider instead watching these upcoming Netflix and Blu-ray recommendations:

Netflix: House of Cards: an intense drama series that will keep you watching episodes back to back. Jane the Virgin: light and fun watching, it is a clever and witty comedy series.

Upcoming Blu-ray blockbuster releases to keep an eye out for in April: Moana, Allied, Collateral Beauty, Why Him?, and Edge of Seventeen.

Enjoy the cool change and getting comfy indoors. And don't forget to stop and appreciate the orange, red, and bronze tones all around you!

Strata storeys



NSW Fair Trading news

NSW Fair Trading has, in conjunction with the NSW Police, launched a MailSafe strategy designed to assist us all in protecting us from identity theft.

The NSW Crime Stoppers website has four easy ways to stop thieves from stealing your mail and possibly your identity. These are:

1. Locking your letterbox with a non-master key lock (available through locksmiths)
2. Clearing your mailbox daily
3. Collecting new credit cards personally
4. Stop mail services or have a friend collect your mail if you're going to be away

If you can afford a post box at the post office or postal outlet these can be a great secure alternative. And if you can have your bills and financial statements sent by email then go for this option. It also saves paper and the problem of lost or undelivered mail.

If mailbox theft is an issue in your building it might require some security upgrades. Speak to your owners corporation strata committee members and ask if there are any measures that can be put in place such as better lighting or security cameras. Even trimming a tree or bush that hides your mailbox might deter thieves if they can now be seen.

Strata data

SCA (NSW) regularly publishes statistical data about the number of registered strata schemes in NSW and the number of lots.

At February 2017 there were 821,044 lots registered with NSW Land and Property Information (LPI), that is an increase of 12,668 lots in NSW since September 2016 when LPI recorded 808,376 lots in the state.

The comparative data for the number of strata schemes within the following lot ranges is:

Strata schemes with lot ranges of:	Sept 2016	Feb 2017
2-20	68,425	68,828
21-50	5,671	5,739
51-100	1,353	1,386
101-200	559	574
201-500	184	197
>500	8	9

New look website

SCA (NSW) website has a fresh new look. Check it out at nsw.stratacommunity.org.au



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Strata & Community Living is a joint initiative brought to you by SCA (NSW); the peak industry body representing strata managing agents and others committed to the continual improvement in standards of strata management practice in NSW and your strata managing agent.



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