

SMARTER *Communities*

THE DOWNSIZE SHOCK
*From retirement to
apartment living*

PLANNING
For a growing Sydney

*Making work
from home
work for you*





STM

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SMARTER COMMUNITIES

Strata Title Management

ABN 43 119 665 762 is a fully

owned subsidiary of

Smarter Communities Limited

ABN 25 065 006 859.

stratatitle.com.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to express our thanks to Ms Nicole Wilde, Principal at Tisher Liner FC Law; Mr Colin Grace, Partner at Grace Lawyers; CHU Underwriting Agencies; Waste Wise Environmental; and Clare and Ken Boman for their assistance in the preparation of some of the material in this publication.

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Welcome to Smarter Communities magazine

It's now a digital world. Digital disruption has impacted the business world as well as our personal lives.

Take media for example. And how many channels we have today compared to 20 years ago. It's the same with the banks. When was the last time you went inside a branch to complete a transaction?

We believe the strata industry is no different

In 1961, plans for the very first strata titled building in the world were approved for a straightforward block of 18 units in Burwood, Sydney.

Over 50 years later, it's not uncommon to see strata plans with over 500 lots of mixed residential, commercial, retail and serviced apartments with one or several indoor heated pools, gyms, private rooftop gardens to a virtual golfing range.

These larger and more complicated strata developments, along with aging properties, have significantly impacted operational complexity, resident interaction and the support services required to maintain a thriving community.

Making a difference

At Smarter Communities, we believe we can make a difference. Our vision is to deliver smart solutions to create a better lifestyle for people living and invested in communities.

Any stereotype of people living in strata in the past is well and truly in the past. The only commonality between people living in strata is we are all property owners from different walks of life; the migrant family starting their new lives here in Australia, to parents buying an investment unit for children, or downsizers like Clare and Ken in our feature story.

How do we cater to everyone's needs? Now we understand Rome wasn't built in one day, and technology is simply an enabler. But it will play an important role in our journey to make strata living better for you.

Leading the way

Our customers have been generous with validating our vision and providing valuable insights to enhance the customer experience. Your support and feedback are paramount.

In fact, it was feedback that led to the creation of this publication.

It also highlighted our customers wanted to engage with strata in different ways. We heard, and shortly we will be releasing a new customer portal that gives you secure access to key strata information, vote, pay, update and contact at your fingertips anytime, anywhere, from your preferred device.

We believe we have an opportunity to make strata better for all. We're inviting you to shape the world of strata together.

Kind regards,

Timothy Lee

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The Human Connection



Trust, social cohesion and resilience are key for anyone looking to build a successful community.

A recent report by the Grattan Institute, which investigated how the design and functioning of a city impacts its residents, found the way we build and organise our cities is crucial to the quantity and quality of social connection. This, in turn, is critical to our psychological and physical health.

But rapid growth in apartment living means it is now harder than ever to make those social connections and build a community within your strata scheme.

The Demographics Group director of research Simon Kuestenmache says there are a number of reasons why living in high density housing is not conducive to feeling a part of an effective community.

While the physical architecture of apartment blocks and townhouses mean many neighbours remain strangers, extended work hours, longer commutes and the transient nature of residents are doing little to help the situation.



But Kuestenmache also argues that while some kinds of urban design may ‘build in’ isolation, others can actually encourage social connection. “If you build an apartment that has no common areas then the common area becomes the rubbish area and basement and, of course, no one wants to hang around there. A rooftop, a shared garden and communal living spaces offer a common sense of purpose. When you constantly increase small interactions then eventually they lead to larger, more meaningful interactions,” he says.

“If you live in a normal apartment building you might run into some-

body for 15 seconds in the lift or for five seconds while you throw a bag of rubbish out but that’s not enough to build human connections and connections always need to be on eye level to be meaningful. You don’t have a [social relationship] with your barista, but if you discover he has a cat, you have a cat and you both love cats then all of a sudden you have an eye level interaction and it can go on from there. You want to encourage a few more meaningful interactions.”

Jimmy Thomson, the writer behind apartment living advice website flat-chat.com.au, believes there

are an abundance of ways to promote a sense of community for those living in strata or high density-type housing – with or without communal areas.

Thomson says alongside the traditional methods of joining your strata committee to turn neighbours into friends there are also other options including starting up exercise groups, mothers’ groups, or meetings based around special interests such as theatre or book groups.

Setting up a Facebook group as a means of encouraging discussions relating to the building and local

neighbourhood is a good first step in opening the lines of communication among those living in high density-type housing, he says.

Next, he suggests organising in-house events and seeking input from the broader community as means of amplifying social connections.

“Get your local bottle shop to put on a wine or whisky tasting at which they can take orders to be delivered later. Set up an old bookshelf where people can leave books they’ve read and take others they haven’t. Organise a fashion show with a local store or boutique designer or get a local restaurant to have a residents’ night with a special menu for locals who dine at a shared table.” Thompson says he knows of residents of a building in Sydney who went so far as to band together to organise a discounted cycling holiday through Vietnam as a way of improving their social connections.

“The main thing is, if your strata committee isn’t interested, it’s very easy to sidestep them and use the social media tools you have to connect directly with your neighbours. Building communities doesn’t happen overnight – but it doesn’t happen at all if you don’t even try.” 🍷

“If you live in a normal apartment building you might run into somebody for 15 seconds in the lift or for five seconds while you throw a bag of rubbish out, but that’s not enough to build human connections and connections always need to be on eye level to be meaningful.”



What makes a high performing community

NO ONE WANTS TO LIVE IN A DYSFUNCTIONAL OR HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT, BUT WHAT MAKES A HIGH PERFORMING COMMUNITY? MANAGING OVER 6,000 COMMUNITIES ACROSS AUSTRALIA, WE'VE PULLED TOGETHER EIGHT COMMON CHARACTERISTICS WE SEE IN COMMUNITIES WHERE OWNERS AND RESIDENTS ARE MORE OFTEN SEEN WITH A SMILING FACE THAN NOT.



2. Owner Participation

Owners are encouraged to actively participate and contribute in meetings and in the management of the community.

3. Community Leadership

Committee members are aware of their roles and responsibilities and use their diverse skills and experience to best represent all owners.

4. Financial Security

Adequate financial contributions are raised on time and annual budgets reviewed to maintain and enhance the assets of the community.



6. Proactive and Transparent

Focused and committed to proactively act and deliver quality outcomes in a timely manner to benefit all owners and residents.

7. Collaboration with Experts

Where required the committee works together with relevant experts to ensure the best outcome and to meet legislative obligations.



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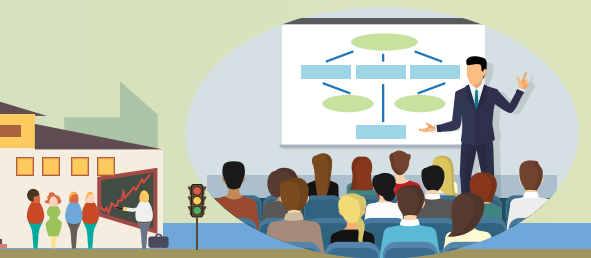
1. Community Spirit

A genuine sense of community to engage all owners and residents and to promote harmonious living.



5. Clear Rules and Guidelines

Actively reinforce and encourage adherence to rules designed to avoid conflict and promote acceptable community behaviours.



8. Effective Meetings

Meetings are held with clear agendas and useful, timely information to enable the community to make informed decisions.



A day in the life of...

LEANNE EARDLEY

Senior Community Manager – STM Sydney South



Hi, I'm Leanne. I'm a Senior Community Manager located in the STM Sydney South office at Taren Point. I am one of six Community Managers located within this branch of STM.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO STRATA?

I joined STM in 2012 after starting my career in real estate at just 18.

WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB/DAY?

A common misconception is we also double as property managers. I am constantly explaining the role I play as a Community Manager to my clients. Thankfully we now have videos that explain what we do.

WHAT KEEPS YOU COMING BACK TO WORK?

I love the diversity, no two days are the same. I manage different situations with different people living in different properties every day. It keeps my work exciting.

WHAT'S BEEN YOUR BEST STRATA MOMENT SO FAR?

One of my proudest achievements is nearing completion. I currently manage a Building Management Committee (BMC) where three of the residential strata plans have each undergone \$3m worth of remedial works.

The external works are in its final stage now and almost complete. My clients will be so relieved once that scaffolding comes down. Soon they'll be able to see how the value of their complex will increase because of these works, and their insurance premiums should drop considerably, saving them money.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?

I enjoy taking Sarge the bulldog to the park with my young family and try to go to as many live NRL games as I can.

Go the Sharks!

Making working from home work for me

AS A CAREER DESIGNER SUSAN CHOWNE KNOWS ONLY TOO WELL THAT COMFORT AND EFFICIENCY ARE FUNDAMENTAL WHEN LOOKING TO SET UP A HOME OFFICE IN YOUR APARTMENT OR TOWNHOUSE.

A specialist designer for the Canberra branch of home interiors company Creative by Design, Chowne has spent the past nine years advising hundreds of residents of strata schemes of the best ways to maximise the space they have available to

ensure working from home works for them.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show almost a third (3.5 million) of all employed Australians regularly worked from home in their main job or business, meaning

the importance of good home office design should not be overlooked. Chowne says one of the first steps you should take when defining a workable space for use for a home office is to take an inventory of the room's existing fixtures and fittings.



This includes items such as the location of the windows, doors and stairs as you may need to design around elements such as full-length windows when looking to place your desk. Other items that should be taken into account include bulk heads, access panels to electrical boxes and the status and location of power points, TV aerials and air-conditioning units. “Having space custom designed allows you to get the best use of the area and allows you to design the space to meet your individual needs. This takes into consideration making the work space function for the individual [such as when you are] looking at two family members and you need to allocate separate spaces for them so that they have enough space to work comfortably.”

Home offices should be an extension of the individual’s living space and receive the same attention to detail – albeit with the functionality required of a work area, says Chowne.

While furniture remains depends on the personality of the strata scheme resident, there are items that are a must-have for each home office space including a bespoke desk area – either at a fixed height, or in the form of a sit/stand desk – in addition to storage cabinets and shelving that

will keep you organised.

A clever space saving option is to consider integrating a pull-down wall bed that allows the office to become a guest bedroom while ensuring neither style or comfort is compromised, she says.

“More and more we are designing spaces that reflect our individual style and creates a space that is both comfortable and engaging to be in. This may be the placement of a statement chair for reading or plants and decorative pieces to soften the space.”

Chowne says when dealing with limited space, as usually available in apartments or townhouses, it is of vital importance to ensure clutter is minimised and creative storage solutions found.

This can easily be achieved with a good mix of drawers, cabinet space and shelving. When utilised correctly this allows a printer to be housed in a drawer, A4 folders to be stored in overhead cabinets with doors to hide the clutter, or open shelving so everything is easy to locate, she says.

“In a small apartment or integrated family living space, the office design can hide the power leads and power points, while providing access cable cups to allow computers etc to be plugged in.”

Wherever possible, Chowne says

strata scheme residents should always try to incorporate plenty of natural light into their home office space. It has been well documented that natural light, along with greenery, improves creativity and learning, while improving wellbeing.

If this is not attainable, under mounted lighting in overhead cabinetry, in a neutral globe, can create a comfortable working space, she says.

“When designing you also need to take into consideration good design principles, for example lighter colours can make smaller spaces feel larger. While the space needs to be very functional, it can also be very beautiful and reflect your design personality.” 

Tips for the ultimate home office

- ✓ Create a unique functional space that’s tailored to you
- ✓ Do your homework when it comes to storage selection
- ✓ Think outside the square when it comes to décor
- ✓ Go green and invite the light
- ✓ Invest in good quality home office equipment suited to a professional environment



SHORT TERM HOLIDAY LETTING *Should they go or stay?*

SHORT TERM HOLIDAY LETTING (STHL) IS ESTIMATED TO BE WORTH \$31.3 BILLION IN AUSTRALIA, WITH NSW REPORTEDLY ACCOUNTING FOR APPROXIMATELY HALF THE NATIONAL TOTAL. THIS FIGURE IS CERTAINLY NOT TO BE SNEEZED AT.

While lucrative financial benefits are apparent, STHL's rapid growth has played a role in the impact on amenities and communities. Particularly within prime real estate hotspots. In July 2017 the NSW Government of Planning & Environment and Fair Trading released

an options paper on STHL in NSW to generate discussion amongst stakeholders and to seek options as to how STHL could be successfully managed.

Being a significant stakeholder, STM was quick to host a round-

table discussion with a diverse group of strata committee members representing 1,469 lots across Sydney. Being passionately involved in strata, the group was acutely aware that STHL is very active and is very real in their communities and beyond.

The reality is short-term guests can have undesirable behaviour

Sadly, inconsiderate short-term guests played a major role in the negative impacts of STHL such as excessive noise, mess, overcrowding, overuse of common property as well as security, fire and safety concerns.

Unfortunately, the reality is few short-term guests will treat the premises as if it was their own investment, and that can sometimes lead to undesirable behaviours.

However, rather than rejecting STHL, the group believed each Owners Corporation (OC) should have the right to decide whether STHL is permitted in their community.

If the Owners Corporation agrees to STHL, the group believed suitable regulation was required to guide appropriate behaviour, additional resources to counter its impact, and authority to act against non-conforming owners/occupants who engage in STHL.

Ultimately, the group declared unanimously that the user should pay. Submissions have now closed and now the industry waits... 🌈



Five recommendations to effectively manage Short Term Holiday Letting:

The group were unanimous in their conclusion that the user should pay. They are not opposed to STHL. If the Owners Corporation voted for STHL in their buildings, then they would like to see:

- 1 STHL owners be registered and follow the rules set by a governing body;
- 2 STHL owners pay an increased levy premium based on their unit entitlements to cover expenses;
- 3 The OC have a level of authority to deal with any issues resulting from STHL within their building and can take immediate action;
- 4 Any issues the OC can't deal with are referred to NCAT for fast processing with a speedy result;
- 5 The OC can take the owner to NCAT if the owner is aware of undesirable STHL guests but does nothing to stop the behaviour – and ultimately shut down STHL for non-conforming owners.

Disclaimer: The opinions provided were purely of key influential strata committee members in attendance and do not necessarily represent the views of every individual lot owner.



Do you attend the AGM whine... or wine instead?

YOU LOVE YOUR NEW APARTMENT. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF IT'S BRAND NEW OR A PRE-LOVED APARTMENT, IT'S NOW YOURS. YOU LOVE THE QUICKER COMMUTE TO WORK. AND YOU LOVE THE FREEDOM OF SPENDING WEEKENDS BRUNCHING INSTEAD OF MOWING THE LAWN. THE MOVE HAS MADE LIFE EASY.

With community living comes lots of neighbours. Strangers living in close proximity; some friendly, some not so much. And meetings. What, wait? There's meetings I now need to attend and participate in? And there it is. You receive your first levies notice together with an invitation to attend the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) for your building's Owners Corporation.

The AGM is scheduled for 6.00pm on a Wednesday night. It's now

THAT Wednesday, it's 5.30pm and you're still at work. You consider not going to the meeting. After all, life is busy enough and time is precious.

But then you remember the reason you bought the apartment in the first place. To be close to work and make life easier, right?

That's right. Let's put it in perspective. You work hard to earn your money and this property is your investment. You need to invest in

your investment. It's time to pack up at work and get yourself home for the meeting.

Meetings can be a win-win

You attend the meeting. And fortunately for you, you did. Not only do you meet your neighbours, but you discover most are just as friendly as you. They too love where they live and want to make it a better place.

You realise that together you have a democratic voice as to how you

You have a democratic voice as to how you want your property to be managed.


want your property to be managed. It is in your best interest to attend and contribute.

So you participate in the decision-making process of your Owners Corporation's administration to benefit yourself and your neighbours. Agreed that no one wants to pay higher levies to cover costs to repair and maintain common property if it can be managed proficiently up-front.

And just quietly you now have a greater respect for your neighbours who serve as committee members. You understand they are all busy too and were no doubt seeking a simpler lifestyle when they bought their apartment. Their roles are voluntary, not to mention quite thankless.

No whining and save the wine for later

The strata industry has long since called for increased owner participation at Annual General Meetings as a minimum starting point for improving the community experience of owning and living in strata. It is not a big ask. As an owner, it is up to you to make the most from your investment.

So if reading this encourages one more owner go to their next AGM to have their say instead of staying home whining about not having had their say, then it has been worth it. 



Trusted Advisors

At Strata Title Management (STM), we understand managing an Owners Corporation can be an overwhelming job. From understanding changing and complex legislation, managing financials to arranging repairs and maintenance. That's where we can help.

STM has been successfully managing Owners Corporations throughout New South Wales and Queensland since 1978. For four decades we have provided seamless management, and acted as trusted advisors for Owners Corporations of all sizes.

We manage a diverse portfolio from mixed-use high-rises to small-medium residential and commercial blocks including townhouses and villas, shop lots and hotels.

Our teams understand each Owners Corporation is unique and we design our solutions to meet the specific needs of each community to ensure the effective running of the day-to-day operations and future-proofing your investment.

Local Expert, National Support

STM is proudly part of Smarter Communities, one of the largest Community Management companies in Australia. Nationally we manage over \$30 billion of properties across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria.

Our brands include Adelaide Strata & Community Management (ASCM), Challenge Strata Management, Ernst Body Corporate Management (Ernst), Strata Title Management (STM) and Victoria Body Corporate Services (VBCS). Together, we have one aligned vision – to deliver smart solutions to create a better lifestyle for people living and invested in communities.

Visit www.stratatitle.com.au for more information.

HIGH DENSITY LIVING *Now and then*

The tallest residential building in Sydney from 1996–1997. The Peak located in Haymarket, commenced construction back in 1991. Since then five mega residential towers have gotten closer to the sky with another 30 plus currently proposed or under construction. High density living looks set to continue. We take this opportunity to explore just how things have changed through insights from the 1991 and 2016 Census.

The 2016 Census of Population and Housing found that

10%

(2,348,434) of all people in Australia spent Census night in an apartment.

Results show there is now around

 **ONE**

occupied apartment for every

 **FIVE**

occupied separate houses in Australia - compared with one to every seven, back in 1991.

Over the past **25** years, the number of occupied apartments (including flats and units but excluding townhouses) in Australia has increased by **78%** to

1,214,372

By 2016, apartments in blocks of four or more storeys had more than doubled to **38%** of all occupied apartments (or 463,557 in number).

33
YEARS OLD

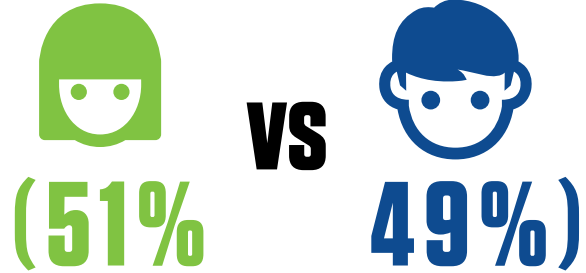
The median age of males and females who usually live in an apartment.

At the 2016 Census, families with children (and either one or two parents) comprised almost

44%

of all families living in apartments in Australia.

People living in high density apartments were more likely to be female than male.



Tenure information in the 2016 Census showed that well over half of all apartments in Australia **(59%)** are being rented.



13% of apartments were owned outright,
15% owned with a mortgage.

In 2016, the median total income for apartment households was **\$1,280** a week, considerably lower than the median of **\$1,526** recorded by households living in separate houses.



Planning for a growing Sydney well underway



CURRENTLY HOME TO MORE THAN FIVE MILLION RESIDENTS, SYDNEY IS A CITY ABOUT TO GET A WHOLE LOT BIGGER.

Extensive modelling undertaken by the NSW Government's Department of Planning and Environment, the agency responsible for planning for growth, predicts Sydney's population will grow by 1.7 million by 2036.

The department's figures forecast more than 725,000 additional homes – consisting of houses, flats, units and apartments - will be needed to accommodate the population boom, of which 196,750 will be required within the next five years.

The greatest percentage of these will be built in the local government areas of Blacktown,

Parramatta and Sydney city.

Other key areas ear-marked for new housing supply include The Hills District, Penrith, Camden, Ryde, Bayside and Cumberland, each of which can expect between 7,500 and 17,200 new residential constructions - suitable for a variety of budgets - to be built by 2022.

To help support this growth the NSW government is currently driving what it terms a "once-in-a-generation" infrastructure program, with \$80 billion to be invested in infrastructure projects across the state over the next four years. "We are planning for

communities to be supported by excellent access to world-class public transport and services including green open space whether they are in land release areas or middle ring suburbs," a department spokesperson said.

"Providing social infrastructure where and when it is needed is important to the daily lives of residents in areas experiencing growth. It also helps people to feel connected with their local community. Social infrastructure can include police stations, libraries, child care centres, community centres, open space and recreational facilities."



A key plank of these planned works is a new NSW Government initiative aimed at creating a network of interlinked green corridors, tree-lined walkways, cycleways and open spaces across the city. The state government intends that the project, dubbed the Sydney Green Grid, will create green connections from people's homes to local centres, to workplaces and to where Sydneysiders spend their leisure time.

On a broader scale, Infrastructure Australia has identified a number of key projects to be prioritised in and around Sydney over the next few years with the list incorporating

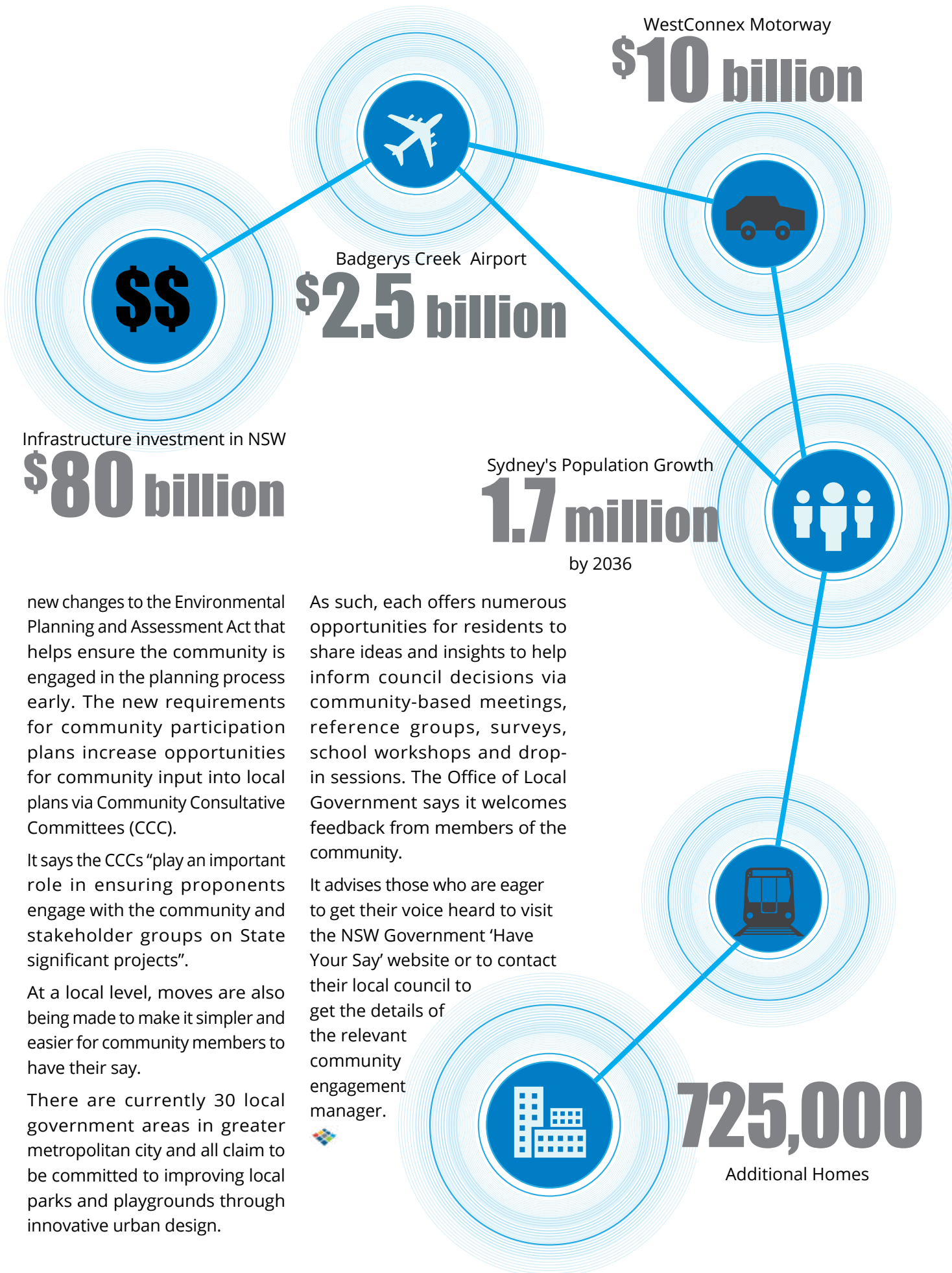
We are planning for communities to be supported by excellent access to world-class public transport and infrastructure services

the city's rail network capacity, the M4 motorway upgrade, the \$10 billion WestConnex motorway linking Western Sydney and the much-anticipated \$2.5 billion Badgerys Creek airport. All are deemed "high priority" projects.

Other Sydney infrastructure works on the high priority list include the Northern Road Upgrade and Bringelly Road Upgrade Stage 2, the Sydney Gateway initiative, Sydney Metro West, Southern

Sydney to CBD public transport enhancement and the Bus Rapid Transport project which seeks to address the congestion around the Northern Beaches, Parramatta Road and Victoria Road hotspots. The state government says the participation of local residents in shaping their communities is integral to the success of delivering better places for present and future generations.

As such it has recently introduced



new changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act that helps ensure the community is engaged in the planning process early. The new requirements for community participation plans increase opportunities for community input into local plans via Community Consultative Committees (CCC).

It says the CCCs “play an important role in ensuring proponents engage with the community and stakeholder groups on State significant projects”.

At a local level, moves are also being made to make it simpler and easier for community members to have their say.

There are currently 30 local government areas in greater metropolitan city and all claim to be committed to improving local parks and playgrounds through innovative urban design.

As such, each offers numerous opportunities for residents to share ideas and insights to help inform council decisions via community-based meetings, reference groups, surveys, school workshops and drop-in sessions. The Office of Local Government says it welcomes feedback from members of the community.

It advises those who are eager to get their voice heard to visit the NSW Government ‘Have Your Say’ website or to contact their local council to get the details of the relevant community engagement manager.





...really?

FOR AT LEAST TWO GENERATIONS WE HAVE BEEN EDUCATED TO REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE. AND FOR THE MOST PART, AUSTRALIANS HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN DOING THIS WELL.

Recycling has gone mainstream with two or three bin systems available for most people at home and in many public areas. Even in the workplace initiatives have been introduced to help reduce paper waste.

But where does it really go? Because for decades Australia has been sending low-grade recycling waste to China for processing and reuse. Products like plastic, textiles and mixed paper.

It's being called the 'Green Sword'. Changes to the quality control placed on products taken by China, and a ban on 24 categories of recyclables and solid waste, has cut down the amount of material China will accept.

This ban on foreign waste has been in place since January 1, 2018 and looks set to have devastating impacts on Australia's recycling industry.

So how will our recyclables be recycled?

According to private waste contractor, Waste Wise Environmental, a specialist in waste management of medium and high density resi-

dential and commercial developments, we need to continue to recycle. It's the right thing to do. We've trained our way of thinking to reduce, reuse, recycle.

'We need a better, greener solution to the pending recycling crisis. But that's for the state government to sort out,' says NSW State Manager, Anthony Zammit.

In the meantime, we need to sort out our recycling. Properly. Contamination can be a major issue when it comes to recycling.

Smart tips to help keep recycling streams contaminate-free

- ✓ Rinse bottles and containers first before putting out for recycling
- ✓ Remove lids from bottles & jars
- ✓ Refrain from recycling food containers that have not been washed

For those living in apartments, container deposit-type machines is currently being trialled in larger developments to make recycling even easier. These can earn money for the Owners Corporation and because they won't be put out

on the street curb, it reduces the mess caused by scavengers looking for eligible containers to claim as part of the NSW Return and Earn scheme.


Recycling and the future

In the short term, state governments have made available funding to cover services to ensure recycling bins are still collected by council contractors.

But long term, private waste service providers have already been dealing with these issues and have utilised smaller Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) to ensure better hand sorting of recycling. Operators use vehicles with a clear view of recyclables and can remove contaminants from recycling streams.

Some may see the ban from China as means to get countries, like Australia, to take responsibility for its own waste. That's one way to look at it. Another way would be to develop infrastructure to process this waste material and create new product opportunities for manufacture.

And of course...

reduce, reuse and recycle! 

THE DOWNSIZE SHOCK

From retirement to apartment living

THE FAMILY HOME YOU PAINSTAKINGLY DESIGNED AND BUILT, RAISED YOUR FAMILY IN AND THEN DOUBLED AS A SOUGHT-AFTER SANCTUARY FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN. SOLD.



After 43 wonderful years of living in suburbia in a generous-sized two-storey, five-bedroom home with a built-in pool, the inevitable move to downsize their home was just a matter of time.

The transition from house to apartment living can be quite traumatic, especially if you have never lived in strata before.

Recently retired couple, Clare and Ken, made the decision to sell their lavish home in Sydney's northern suburbs and bought an apartment in the south of Sydney, literally almost an hour away from their roots.

And if the change in location wasn't shock enough, they also had to learn all the by-laws of apartment living; the mere thought of having to seek approval to hang a simple curtain rod seemed ludicrous!

But as Clare admits, moving into their new apartment was not as restrictive as she first thought. And the apartment they chose has only two other apartments on their floor so getting used to neighbours being close by was not a difficult transition.

In fact, nearly two years later, Clare and Ken often question themselves why they didn't make the change sooner.

Clare and Ken donated a large portion of their existing furniture because they didn't need it all and didn't have the space they were used to. "Initially it was daunting. But after we arranged the pickup it was as equally refreshing as rewarding just knowing we were helping others who needed second hand furniture, whatever their circumstances.



Clare and Ken enjoying apartment living

“And it forced us to buy smarter, more suitable items to suit our new space. Purchases we hadn’t made in such a long time. It was fun shopping for our new home.”

From the first week they moved in, Clare says she’s always felt safe in her building, especially knowing neighbours are close by.

“Whenever we travel, we literally just shut the door behind us. We don’t need to arrange a house-sitter to maintain the yard and pool anymore. Because now, the grounds and pool are everyone’s responsibility. And it’s already been taken care of.”

Speaking of already taking care of things, Clare says that’s the beauty of being part of the owners corporation.

If something goes wrong, like the lift breaks down, it’s not my problem. It’s everyone’s problem and there’s already money in the kitty for repairs...I don’t have to worry!

“If something goes wrong, like the lift breaks down, it’s not my problem. It’s everyone’s problem. And there’s already money in the kitty for repairs. I don’t have to worry, it’s fixed before we know it. My only issue is walking up the stairs instead. I’m spoilt now, I’m used to the lift.

“And I love that we have a forced savings account for maintenance and repairs. It’s peace of mind knowing everything will be ok.

With our levies, we know what to expect to pay each time, it’s so easy,” said Clare. As for Ken,

who is far from officially retiring altogether, it took only a year before he was voted onto the Committee.

He loves being part of the decision-making process and has made great friends with neighbours in other areas of his complex that he wouldn’t necessarily have met other than at meetings.

For this retired couple, they have fully embraced the strata community lifestyle and are living proof that the trauma of downsizing to an apartment won’t last forever. 🌈

CHU Underwriting Agencies Pty Ltd (CHU) created the very first strata insurance plan in Australia and started trading in Sydney in 1978.



Now 40 years on, CHU has grown to become recognised as the world's leading strata insurance specialist, underwriting more than 100,000 schemes across Australia.

CHU now offering

Contents and Landlords Insurance for Strata



Why choose CHU's Contents or Landlords Insurance for strata?



Your Excess Waived

If you and your Body Corporate both make an accepted claim for the same event and they hold a CHU Residential Strata Policy then CHU will waive the Excess payable on your Contents or Landlord Policy.



Speedy repairs

If your property incurs damage in conjunction with building damage it will be repaired quicker with initial building repairs.



Easy Claims with Fix It

The CHUiverse app and Fix It allows you to submit a claim in a few taps of your finger.



Online 24/7

CHU Contents and Landlords Insurance can be purchased quickly and easily, online 24/7.

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Before making a decision to purchase either product, please read the Product Disclosure Statement (PDS). The PDS will contain important information about the particular policy which will assist you in making an informed decision about whether to purchase the policy. You should read it carefully to decide if the product features suit your objectives, financial situation and needs before making a decision about the insurance product. The PDS can be obtained by contacting CHU or visiting www.chu.com.au. In the event of a claim under a CHU policy; whether a policy covers the losses suffered and the extent to which it does so will depend on the specific terms, conditions and exclusions of the particular policy in question and the individual circumstances of the claim. CHU Underwriting Agencies Pty Ltd (ABN 18 001 580 070, AFSL 243261) is an underwriting agency acting on behalf of the insurers: QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited (ABN 78 00 3 191 03 5, AFSL 239545).



Am I covered?

Many strata owners get confused about their insurance needs, especially those new to strata living, risking being under insured or not being covered.

One common misunderstanding is owners believe their personal contents will be covered by their Strata Building Insurance policy. It's not.

Residential Strata Building Insurance provides general cover for the building, shared or 'common' areas, common property and common area contents.

As a general rule, cover ends when you step onto your individual property or lot.

However, adding to the confusion, there are often slight differences between strata legislation in each state regarding what is covered as part of the building or defined as common area contents.

That's why it pays for all members of the Owners Corporation, as well as tenants, to have a clear understanding of what is and isn't covered by the Strata Building Insurance and consider if additional cover such as Contents

and Landlords Insurance is required for you personally.

To help you better understand the different types of Insurance, we've asked leading Australian strata insurer CHU to provide some guidance based on policies they offer.

What is covered by CHU Residential Strata Building Insurance?

Residential Strata Building Insurance (*Refer to Table 1*), provides general insurance cover for the building, shared or 'common' areas, common property and common area contents.

What is covered by CHU Contents Insurance?

Contents Insurance (*Refer to Table 2*) will cover your household and personal possessions within your lot, such as clothing, furniture, and electrical appliances. It also covers

the financial cost of repairing or replacing these possessions in the event of loss or damage.


What is covered by CHU Landlords Insurance?

Landlords Insurance protects you for tenant related loss or damage inside your investment property.

It provides cover for accidental loss or damage to contents in your unit from events such as fire, flood or storms.

Items such as carpets, blinds, curtains and washing machines are covered as well as loss of rent should your apartment be unfit to be occupied.

It also covers you for malicious damage to contents/buildings caused by tenants and/or their guests.

Finally it offers protection if your tenant fails to pay rent. 

The information contained in this article may vary subject to State based Strata Legislation and individual Strata building by-laws. This is general advice only - the correct policy and level of cover is a matter for the Owners Corporation, owner or tenant to decide. Always check the extent of the coverage on offer and if it is right for your strata building and circumstances.

It pays to have a clear understanding of what is, and what isn't, covered by the Strata Building Insurance and consider if you require additional cover.


TABLE 1:

CHU RESIDENTIAL STRATA INSURANCE COVER	
Building	Common area contents
<p><i>Refers to all buildings and underground services erected upon the building block forming the Strata Plan, including fencing as well as all permanent fixtures and fittings within a Lot.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baths toilets shower screens • Hand basins sinks fixed tiling • Ducted air conditioners • Windows doors built in cupboards • Stoves • Paintwork wallpapering • Public light fittings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpets floating floors other temporary wall, floor and ceiling coverings within hallways and lobbies • Pot plants mirrors other decorations within common areas • Appliances such as washing machines and dryers owned by the Owners Corporation and used by all unit owners and housed in common laundries • Any barbeque equipment, gardening equipment and garden


TABLE 2:

PERSONAL CONTENTS COVERED BY CHU CONTENTS INSURANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpets floating floors other temporary wall, floor and ceiling coverings • Light fittings • Curtains blinds • Personal equipment valuables such as jewellery and watches • Clothing • Furniture • Household appliances such as dishwashers, refrigerators, washing machines and dryers • Entertainment equipment such as TVs, stereos and devices.

SMARTER BENEFITS

 **Receive 3% discount on Contents Insurance**

and

 **Receive 5% discount on Landlords Insurance**

To enjoy these exclusive discounts, purchase now at: smartercommunities.com.au/chu

Important Information CHU Contents Insurance and Landlords Insurance is issued by CHU Underwriting Agencies Pty Ltd ABN 18 001 580 070 (AFS Licence No: 243261), an underwriting agency acting on behalf of the insurer: QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited ABN 78 003 191 035 (AFS Licence No: 239545), and is introduced by Strata Title Management Group Pty Ltd ABN 43 119 665 762, fully owned by Smarter Communities Limited ABN 25 065 006 859 for which Smarter Communities receives commission. For more information on the amount of the commission please refer to smartercommunities.com.au/disclosure. This exclusive discount is only applied when a policy is purchased via the unique link smartercommunities.com.au/chu.

To tow or not to tow, that is the question.



Notice must be no smaller than A4 paper size

Must give at least 5 days clearly stated on notice

The vehicle can be moved to another place on the property

MOST STRATA SCHEMES EXPERIENCE THE FRUSTRATIONS OF ILLEGAL PARKING ON COMMON PROPERTY. TOO OFTEN LARGE NUMBERS OF CARS FIGHT FOR THE ULTIMATE CAR PARK AND ARE NOT BOTHERED WHETHER IT IS THEIR ALLOCATED PARKING SPACE OR NOT.

This issue can literally drive an owners corporation crazy and can cause unnecessary rifts amongst neighbours.

What the updated law says you can do

The recent changes to NSW strata legislation provides a procedure for an owners corporation to move a vehicle which is left on common property if it is blocking an exit or entrance, or otherwise 'obstructs' the use of common property, provided a 'removal notice' is placed on or near the motor vehicle.

The 'removal notice' must:

- be no less than an A4 piece of paper;
- be placed in a position or be in a material so the content of the notice will not likely be detrimentally affected by weather;
- describe the motor vehicle and state the date and time the notice was issued;
- state the motor vehicle will be removed if it is not moved from the common property or so that it no longer obstructs common

property before the date and time specified in the notice (being not earlier than 5 days after the notice was placed on or near the motor vehicle); and

- specify contact details for a member of the strata committee or delegate in relation to the notice.

Essentially, if a 'removal notice' is correctly placed and the vehicle is not moved within the period stated in the notice, the owners corporation can have the vehicle moved:

- to another place on common property or to the nearest place to which it may be lawfully moved; or
- so it no longer blocks an exit or entrance or otherwise obstructs the use of common property.

But here's the clencher... the law gives the owners corporation the power to move the vehicle to another place on common property but not necessarily to a public street or other property, which is exactly where you would want to move it.

Whilst the law says the car can be lawfully moved, this could practically be anywhere a vehicle can be parked, including unlimited parking on the street.

But guidance has not been provided and owners corporations face extensive risks if

they choose to do this, such as:

- The Local Government Act 1993 prohibits any person who takes possession of a vehicle from either refusing to release the vehicle or demanding payment to release the vehicle, i.e. the owners corporation cannot recover its costs if they tow a vehicle and would need to commence legal proceedings to do so.
- If the owners corporation move or tow the vehicle it is taken to be the owner of the vehicle, i.e. they are liable for any damage caused to the vehicle and potentially any other related costs (e.g. damage to third party property or injury).
- If the vehicle is unregistered, it is illegal to place such a vehicle on council property, like a public road, and the owners corporation can be effectively fined for dumping rubbish.

The new legislation therefore merely provides a short-term solution to the extent that the strata scheme is happy to have the vehicle remain on the common property.

Regrettably, this doesn't solve the owners corporation's problem; how to get rid of the offending vehicle. 🗑️

What an owners corporation can do

While every strata scheme is different, and you will need to find a solution that works best for your scheme, there are four possible ways to deal with illegal parking:

1. If the offending vehicle is blocking common property, draw up a removal notice and if the vehicle is not moved, move it to another part of common property;
2. The strata scheme can enter into an agreement with their Council for the Council to place signs and for rangers to take over the regulation of parking;
3. The strata scheme may be able to introduce a by-law which allows the owners corporation to wheel clamp offending vehicles. As this type of by-law has yet to be tested in Courts, the owners corporation should ensure they get proper legal advice before introducing such a by-law; or
4. Where the vehicle is likely to be an abandoned vehicle, there are laws which allow the Police or Council to seize or tow away a vehicle.

The industry still awaits clarification of what is a lawful place, whether it be by the government, NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) or the Courts. In the meantime, owners corporations need to be cautious of how they deal with illegally parked vehicles.

Bootcamp for your finances

BEING FINANCIALLY HEALTHY IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS BEING PHYSICALLY HEALTHY.

It doesn't matter how tall you are or what size you wear. Healthy comes in all different shapes and sizes. It's the same with your finances. You can be financially healthy regardless how much you earn. The key is to spend less than you earn.

And just like the first session with your personal trainer, getting your finances on track can be confronting. It may even hurt. For weeks. But like most things worthwhile, making the first step is the hardest.



01

Plan your financial goals

Determine what are your short, medium and long-term financial goals then break it down into achievable steps and set deadlines. For example, to pay off your credit card debt by next December you will need to pay \$X each month.



02

Adjust your attitude

Our ingrained beliefs regarding financial wellness may not be warranted, rather an attitude we inherited from our parents. Believe you can take control of your finances, it may well need a change in attitude and behaviour.



03

Audit your spending

Yikes! But it's essential to understand where your money is spent so you can set an accurate budget. Keep your receipts so you can check your bank account. It pays to keep accurate records to manage your bank account/s.



04

Set yourself a budget

A realistic budget. Then stick with it. Keep in mind your financial goals and use your budget to help reach these goals... without giving up your daily latte.



05

Learn to be a better saver

Apply the 50/30/20 budgeting rule where 50% of your income is allocated to the essentials, 30% on lifestyle and 20% on savings or paying off debt. Know what your hourly rate is, less tax. It helps to put purchases into perspective.



06

Pay off bad debt

Make this a priority. Bad debt includes credit card balances that are not paid off in full each month. Be selective how you pay for larger expenses. It may be more effective to redraw on your home loan than using a credit card.



07

Negotiate better deals from providers

From electricity and gas to mobile phone and internet, to mortgage and credit card providers, do your research and negotiate a better deal for you. Make the most of any discounts on offer but be mindful of the T&Cs.



08

Utilise workplace benefits

Some employers offer staff a range of workplace benefits and special offers and these could save you considerable money. Ask your employer. You may have access to salary sacrifice benefits, or you may just be in a position to negotiate a pay rise.



09

Review your current insurances

If you haven't taken the time to compare car, home, contents, health or personal insurances, now is always a good time. Simply renewing your policies without researching comparisons does not make good financial sense. Shop around and negotiate.



10

Be smarter with your super

Shop around for a superannuation fund that will best help you reach your financial goals. If you have several accounts from previous employers, consolidate these into your main account. Again, it may be very worthwhile to seek the advice from an expert to help you.



11

Consider investing to grow your wealth

Believe it or not you may find yourself in a financial position to make an investment. In what exactly is up to you, and you may wish to utilise the advice from industry experts here to help you reach your financial goals.



12

Slow down your spending

We live in a digital world and it's so easy to use your device to search for the ultimate shopping bargain. We literally have access to shopping 24/7 and for shopaholics, the temptation can be too strong. Stop and ask yourself if you really need it. Slow down your spending!



If that all sounds daunting, remember you are not alone.

Like trainers, there are many experts available to help you reach your financial goals. Do your research, make sure you choose an expert that is suitably qualified and with whom you feel most comfortable.

Once you're committed to financial boot camp, and make the effort each week, it won't take long to see the results from your hard work. The more effort you put in, the greater the rewards.

After all, it's you that will enjoy the rewards. 🍀

Make the most from your investment



AS A PROPERTY OWNER/INVESTOR, MAKING THE MOST FROM YOUR INVESTMENT MAKES GOOD FINANCIAL SENSE.

As you may be aware, properties depreciate due to gradual wear and tear, even if their value is appreciating.

It's called property depreciation and as buildings and assets wear out over time, you can claim this depreciation come tax time.

Property depreciation is often overlooked by investors, resulting in a loss of taxation benefits to you as the owner.

As a property investor you are entitled by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to claim the expense of depreciation of your investment property over the years as a tax deduction.

The ATO recommends you only use a qualified Quantity Surveyor to prepare a report, a Tax Depreciation Schedule, to enable you to claim depreciation of your property against your taxable income.

If you haven't arranged a Tax Depreciation Schedule before, you could be missing out on entitlements that are rightfully yours to claim.

To help you put some money back into your own pocket, we've asked well-established Quantity Surveying firm, Mitchell Brandtman, to offer their services at a discounted rate for you.

SMARTER BENEFIT:

For just \$550 incl GST Mitchell Brandtman will prepare a comprehensive Tax Depreciation Schedule for your investment property.

That's a saving of \$110 straight away! Better still, Quantity Surveyors' fees are 100% tax deductible.

To take advantage of this discounted offer, visit us at:

smartercommunities.com.au/mb

Remember: our vision is to deliver smart solutions and services to create a better lifestyle for people living and invested in communities. Just like yours. 🌈

Important Information. Mitchell Brandtman, The Trustee for Mitbrand NSW ACT ABN 38 372 658 067, is the issuer of the Tax Depreciation Schedule. This service is introduced by Smarter Communities Limited ABN 25 065 006 859 and/or its subsidiaries for which Smarter Communities receives a fee. For more information on the amount of the fee please refer to smartercommunities.com.au/disclosure. This exclusive offer is only available when a request is made via the unique link smartercommunities.com.au/mb.

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