

STRATA & COMMUNITY LIVING

SPRING 2020

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



NEW LEGISLATION, NEW POWERS AND A RENEWED CONFIDENCE

We head into the end of the year continuing our advocacy for better construction standards across the state. We have been reframing our work on government and industry initiatives to better influence the strata agenda in NSW and assist in the delivery of improved consumer confidence across the state.

Part of this transformation has been the strong relationship and mutual collaboration with the Office of the Building Commissioner and David Chandler OAM.

Strata Community Association (NSW) and the Office of the Building Commissioner have been working closely on government projects to help foster and re-establish consumer confidence for the building/construction industry in New South Wales.

David Chandler OAM was recently interviewed by 60 Minutes in a segment called 'Buyer Beware' which addresses the systemic failings of the building/construction industry and shines a very positive light on the OBC, heralded as bringing NSW into the future of construction standards.

The piece can be found [here](#).

The construction reforms that the NSW Government have introduced this year and David Chandler's regulatory muscle push NSW ahead of other states in beefing up regulation of an industry notorious for past failings.

This is a huge step forward and redefining crossroads for strata and the construction industry.

As you know, we intend to champion the significant achievements to our industry and forge a new era for Strata buildings upon our desire to assist in the delivery of defined and measurable improvement in consumer confidence to support Strata Owners in NSW.

We have high expectations of success for the OBC and we're confident we will soon start to see positive and measurable differences in consumer confidence and purchasing experience.

As such, we have sought a defined and measurable improvement in consumer confidence and have called on the Office of the Building Commissioner to deliver a 50% increase in consumer confidence by 2025!

YOUR OBLIGATIONS WITH HAZARDOUS WASTE

Home isolation and lockdown laws over the last few months have sparked a home renovation boom!

But while the dangers of DIY home maintenance have been well publicised, very little has been written about how to store the leftover paints, thinners, batteries, cleaners, aerosols, oils and other flammable household waste left after we finish our to-do list.

Under most strata titles, the owners corporation usually has a set of by-laws that prohibit the storage of any hazardous material – which includes things like:

- Asbestos
- Computer materials
- Gas cylinders
- Certain garden chemicals - in apartments, storage cages or garages.

However, hazardous substances such as:

- Solvent-based paints

- Pesticides
- Car batteries
- Motor oils
- Ammonia-based cleaners
- Petrol or kerosene
- Mobile phone batteries and
- Inkjet printer cartridges - are stored more often than you might think and can be just as deadly.

Although common and seemingly innocuous, many of these products contain harmful elements which can be dangerous to dispose of, including hazardous or flammable liquids or components, making them unsuitable for normal rubbish disposal. It is also illegal to tip them down the sink, toilet, or gutters, or to bury them in the ground.

Unfortunately, what seems like a harmless product being stored, can be potentially life-threatening meaning the disposal of hazardous goods is vital!

When seeking to dispose of these type

of items it pays to check first with your local council to see if the materials are actually accepted at their listed depot or if not, when they are due to stage their next chemical clean-up day.

Remember:

Many local companies and councils may accept recycled materials, and it is worth the time discussing:

- Swap programs
- Recycling options
- Drop-offs
- Collections.

Further:

Effective risk management is also not just the responsibility of individual lots owners and tenants.

Each owners corporation also has a collective responsibility for the safe storage of all hazardous material used in common areas such as gas for communal barbecues or chemicals for the swimming pool.

CHECK WITH YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL TO SEE IF MATERIALS ARE ACTUALLY ACCEPTED



PROPER HYGIENE IS A
PROVEN AND EFFECTIVE
TOOL IN MITIGATING
THE SPREAD OF
CORONAVIRUSES



HYGIENE REMINDER

Your Role in a Healthier Strata Community

As more states are experiencing increased COVID-19 cases, and as we watch, read and listen to news reports about Victoria and the myriad of cases internationally, we're reminded that proper hygiene and common courtesy is a proven and effective tool in mitigating the spread of coronaviruses.

Cleaning is an essential part of disinfection because dirt and grime can inactivate many disinfectants. Cleaning reduces the amount of dirt and so allows the disinfectant to work. Removal of germs such as the virus that causes COVID-19 requires thorough cleaning followed by disinfection.

The length of time the virus that causes COVID-19 can survive on inanimate surfaces varies depending on factors such as the amount of contaminated body fluid (e.g. respiratory droplets) or soiling present, and environmental temperature and humidity.

Coronaviruses can survive on surfaces for many hours or more but are readily inactivated by cleaning and disinfection.

It is good practice to routinely clean surfaces as follows:

- clean frequently touched surfaces with detergent solution
- clean general surfaces and fittings when visibly soiled and immediately after any spillage.

All strata owners have a duty of care to ensure their property is a safe environment that doesn't pose a potential risk to the

health and safety of neighbours and anyone who visits.

This duty of care extends to contractors or employees to ensure safe workplaces for people carrying out essential maintenance.

With many people still working from home, the need for essential services at properties such as sanitising and disinfectant cleaning, garbage disposal services and plumbing has never been more important.

Now is definitely the time to keep up with frequent high-grade cleaning services in common areas and high-touch surfaces.

Cleaning and policy changes in your building may include:

Delivery of parcels to your unit

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

Visitors and visitors parking

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



HAND HYGIENE IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT WAY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTION

Rubbish/waste

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

Mail

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

Shared facilities

The Committee may determine new access times (hours of operation and closure) of shared community facilities, such as pools and gyms, or shut them completely.

Shared laundry facilities

Restricted use and/or closure of facilities may extend to communal laundries if residents do not adhere to the Government guidelines. Residents should be encouraged to take protective measures, such as wearing gloves, washing their hands, not touching their face and disinfecting all surfaces of the machines they use. Maintain social distancing. Recommend use of the hot water setting and use of laundry detergents that contain a bleach compound. To ensure delicate items aren't damaged, use delicate bags, etc.

Meetings & Communication

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

Building maintenance & services

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

The above is not exhaustive, however. Everyone needs to exercise vigilance and maintain good hygiene practices - not just the strata community.

Hand hygiene is the single most important way to prevent the spread of infection:

- soap and water can be used for hand hygiene at any time and should be used when hands are visibly soiled
- alcohol-based hand rub (sanitiser) can be used if soap and water are not readily accessible, except when hands are visibly soiled.
- cleaning hands regularly also helps to reduce environmental contamination.
- Wash your hands before and after eating, and after going to the toilet

Sneeze/cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene is the best defence against respiratory viruses:

- cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of tissue immediately.
- or cough/sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

Speak with the strata managing agent or strata committee if you are concerned about hygiene.

BALCONY GARDENS, WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

We recently received the following question about whether it was safe to have hanging plants on a balcony in a strata-titled property. As a subset to this, we also considered balcony gardens and what's necessary to ensure they're safe, legal and appealing.

Over the past decade the number of families living in strata titled properties has more than doubled, an analysis of census data shows.

And experts say this trend will accelerate, meaning more and more families will be living their lives in strata titled properties.

Balconies have fast become the new Aussie backyard!

With a little imagination, a concrete jungle can be easily transformed into a lush and versatile green space.

Let's look at what to consider when contemplating a balcony garden of your own.

Are there restrictions on balcony gardens, are they allowed?

In some cases, there are restrictions, but generally balcony gardens are allowed.

Firstly, you will need to refer to you scheme to determine if there are any by-laws (rules) regarding plants on balconies.

- Do plants need to be under a certain height?
- Are there restrictions on types of plants I can keep?
- Can they hang over the edge?
- Are you allowed planter boxes – and if so are there colour and design restrictions?
- What about requirements for watering?
- Or, are they banned all together?

Secondly, you need to consider your neighbours. Particularly if what you're planning on growing gives off a distinct odor,

disrupts the peace or incites allergies. Be conscious of your neighbours.

Once you've determined the allowances for your balcony, it's time to start planning.

Making the most of small spaces:

Firstly, think about where to put your plants.

Will your plants like moist and shady or sunny and dry conditions?

In Sydney, north-facing windows and balconies will get the most sun in winter. East-facing areas enjoy gentle morning sun, and west-facing positions get the harsher afternoon sun.

Balconies are typically hotter, drier and windier than the conditions found on the ground level. Balconies and rooftop gardens have their own unique microclimates and plants that thrive on the ground level may do the opposite once elevated.

You'll need to take into account your apartment's aspect, sunlight levels and the volume of wind it receives.

Most balcony gardens fail because the gardener doesn't anticipate the high-rise challenges of wind, light and access. Recognising them and meeting them head-on are what make a great balcony garden achievable.

Make your choices matter:

1. Choose pots that won't blow over but are not too heavy for your balcony structure.
2. Consider where the water will go. Are the pots self-watering, or will they need to sit on saucers, so the water won't destroy the balcony floor?
3. Are they the right sized pots for the plants you choose? The roots of plants are usually the width of the plant, so



choose pots big enough for the roots to grow, but not too big. Too big is known as ‘over-potting’ – and can cause a loose and unstable root ball.

4. Terracotta pots and hanging baskets may need sealing or lining with black plastic to help prevent water loss. Ceramic and plastic, including self-watering pots, are good choices. Do not use hanging baskets on a windy balcony!
5. Consider a vertical garden too if you’re allowed to. These are ideal for growing herbs in sunny spot, or lush ferns and “indoor” plants on a shady wall.

Do you know your balcony’s structural load capacity?

It’s important to ensure your building can withstand the weight of the materials you plan to use. If you like the look of oversized planters, try lightweight alternatives such as polyresin fiberglass, which will give you the look and feel of concrete at half the weight.

What to plant?

These wind-resistant plants grow on exposed sunny or partly shaded balconies. Where available, select variegated or coloured leaf forms to add variety. For added interest include foliage contrasts from succulents, ornamental grasses or liriiope.

- Agave (Agave attenuata)
- Coastal rosemary (Westringia fruticosa)
- Coral plant (Russelia equisetiformis)
- Kumquat (Citrus japonica)
- Indian hawthorn (Raphiolepis indica)
- Japanese pittosporum (Pittosporum tobira)
- Looking-glass plant (Coprosma repens)
- Dwarf oleander (Nerium oleander)

Tall or feature plants:

If you want a tree or a tall shrub for shade, privacy or to make a bold statement, make sure you’ve got room both to house a

tall plant and the large pot it will require, and to get it there in the first place.

Most trees need pots that hold at least 75 litres of potting mix and need an area that’s three metres high and wide to accommodate their height and spread.

- Agonis (Agonis flexuosa ‘After Dark’)
- Aralia (Schefflera elegantissima)
- Camellia (Camellia sasanqua)
- China doll (Radermachera sinica)
- Frangipani (Plumeria rubrum)
- Screw pine (Pandanus tectorius)
- Weeping maple (Acer palmatum) (sheltered only)

Plant Care:

Growing plants in pots is a little different to growing in garden beds.

Potting mix

Always choose a good quality potting mix. Unfortunately, cheap potting mixes are generally not worth it. You’ll need to mix in fertilisers, soil conditioners, minerals, water crystals and perlite to bring the mix up to the right standard that the potted plants will need to survive, so you may as well pay the extra and buy a high-quality mix right from the start. Also consider filling the bottom of the pots with polystyrene chips to keep the weight down.

Mulch

As pots can dry out quickly, it’s always worthwhile topping the soil with mulch to keep the roots cooler and the soil moister.

Watering

Succulents don’t need a lot of water, but most other plants will need watering at least once or twice a week in cooler months, and maybe daily on hot or windy days.

Don’t let them sit in saucers of deep water either, as this can



BEFORE PLANTING A BALCONY GARDEN MAKE SURE YOU KNOW YOUR BALCONY’S STRUCTURAL LOAD CAPACITY

cause the roots to rot, as well as attract mosquitoes.

Feeding

When planting, ensure you mix a handful of controlled release plant food granules into the soil. There are different mixes available for different types of plants, or you can buy an all-purpose one.

It's also a good idea to water with a soluble fertiliser a couple of times a year, as they need nutrition to keep growing and flowering. Flowering and fruiting plants need a fertiliser high in potassium, whereas leafy plants need a fertiliser higher in nitrogen.

Trimming

Always trim off dead and diseased leaves and remove spent flowers. It's also a good idea to prune back straggly branches of shrubs to encourage bushier growth.

Quick Tips For Balcony Plants:

1. Have pots elevated on bricks or pot feet. This allows potting mix to drain and also lets you keep an eye out for unwanted roots.
2. Make sure all include drainage holes in their bases. If run-

off and drips are a problem, catch water in a tray under the pot but empty it frequently. If a pot doesn't have adequate drainage, use it as a cover pot for one that does.

3. Use top-quality potting mix that meets the Australian Standard. Cover the soil surface with a mulch of pebbles (particularly in windy situations).
4. When you buy a plant, make sure it has a well-developed root system but isn't pot bound.
5. Water plants well, to get them established and check them daily for dryness, particularly after a bout of windy weather.
6. Select plants that can be pruned and shaped to allow you to control their size and shape. Best choices usually have small leaves and twiggy growth.
7. Apply fertiliser in the growing and flowering season but reduce its use when plant growth slows. Either use a slow-release fertiliser pellet to give nutrients over three or four months, or regularly liquid feed.
8. Just because you're off the ground, it doesn't mean your garden will be pest free. Pests find their way to plants and can also be introduced with new plant material. Control pest outbreaks by hand or use low-toxicity sprays.
9. Cut your losses. If a plant isn't performing, remove it and try something else.

Spring Cleaning in Strata, Your Guide to Spring

Spring is a time of fresh starts and new beginnings, and perhaps this is part of the reason why giving your home a deep clean is so common in the spring. Whatever the origins, spring cleaning plays an important role in helping people get their homes in perfect condition at least once a year.

What it means is taking the time, maybe a day or two if necessary, to make sure unused items are donated or stored away, the windows are washed, the dust is cleared, the countertops are sparkling, and the refrigerator is fresh.

Spring cleaning may not sound like the world's most enjoyable task, but it doesn't have to be daunting – or laden with chemicals. Since space is always limited in units, a spring clean is the perfect excuse to review everything worn, damaged, or simply unwanted.

You may not want to go down the complete minimalist route, but the concept of critically evaluating what you own and how it fits in your life is a valuable exercise.

Of course, before this all begins, having a strategy will be tantamount to success. Formulating a plan will help ease the stress and create a more efficient cleaning system.

Make a checklist:

Making a list of the tasks that you want to accomplish can help you better organize your approach to spring cleaning and

ensure that you have all your bases covered.

As an added bonus, checking an item off of a to-do list is a form of motivation in and of itself that can help keep your spirits a little higher when the work gets tiresome.

Declutter:

Spring cleaning is ultimately just as much about decluttering as it is cleaning. Now is the time to take a serious look at the items you're storing in your home and decide which ones are truly worth keeping. There's no doubt that it can be difficult throwing things away but living in a home that is clean and clutter-free is very much a worthwhile tradeoff.

Make a cleaning kit:

The first step to starting and keeping a home or apartment clean is buying the right supplies.

Basic checklist:

- an all-purpose cleaner
- disinfecting wipes
- rubber gloves
- glass cleaner for showers and windows
- carpet spot cleaner
- microfiber cloths
- a small duster

Then store all your most-used supplies together in a container

TRY A NON-TOXIC
ALTERNATIVE FOR
CONVENTIONAL
CLEANING PRODUCTS

like a shower caddy or basket, so it's easy to carry them around with you to any room.

Those who favour non-toxic alternatives for conventional cleaning products swear by vinegar, bi-carb and a selection of microfiber sponges and cloths.

- Baking soda/bicarb makes a gentle all-purpose cleaner and is also an effective deodorizer.
- Vinegar is also incredibly versatile, and while most people immediately think white vinegar, you might be surprised to know apple cider vinegar is also a useful cleaning product. The list of vinegar's cleaning power is comprehensive, from creating streak and fog-free mirrors, a cheap fragrance-free fabric softener, to degreasing kitchens and cleaning stainless steel.

And when used together, vinegar and bicarb is a cleaning powerhouse which can be used to remove limescale, refresh your balcony and hard to remove marks.

Go room by room:

Trying to do everything all at once will set you back, or you'll end up not cleaning as much as you thought you'd cleaned. Tackling one room at a time will help keep you focused.

Address your fridge:

Even if you're pretty diligent about throwing away expired food or drinks in your refrigerator, there are bound to be condiments in there that haven't been used since you moved in. Clear out the entire fridge, check expiration dates, and toss. The same goes for the piles of forgotten leftovers in the freezer.

Before putting everything back in, wipe the bottoms and lids of the containers you're keeping getting rid of any drips or gunk, then spray the inside of the fridge with some vinegar and water and wipe it down.

Let's look at what else we need to do:

- Dust shelves, blinds, vents, moldings, light fixtures
- Wash your windows
- Clean window treatments
- Flip your mattress (if you can)
- Change your winter bedding to spring
- Change your clothes from warm to cool and pack away your seasonal clothes
- Donate unwanted clothes
- Vacuum and shampoo carpets
- Check your smoke detector batteries
- Clean out your medicine cabinet and makeup bag
- Organize your paperwork
- Clean your computer and TV
- Clean your deck and furniture

Great work!

Bring some life back into the place:

Once you've completed your very first spring clean, it's time to reward yourself!

Buying some fresh flowers or a new plant will add a nice finishing touch to your refreshed space. Plants can improve indoor air quality, brighten your mood, and (some believe) boost your creative energy. Not a bad way to start the new season!

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