

THE COMMON GROUND

OCT 2026

CONTENTS

PAGE 1

- A Message from the Team
- Meet The New Faces

PAGE 2

- Work and Wins
  - Knowing Your Strata: Why Owner Education Matters
  - Stay Informed With SCA (WA)

PAGE 3

- Stratafy X: A New Chapter for RSMS
- Life at RSMS

PAGE 4

- Compliance and Major Works
  - Why is Workers' Compensation Required?
  - No Dogs Allowed

PAGE 5

- You Didn't Built It but You Might Fix It

PAGE 6

- Supplier Spotlight: Could Your Buildings Be Eligible for an nbn® full fibre upgrade?
- Ecologi Update
- Useful Links
  - Understanding Strata Emergencies
  - Who Does What When It Comes to Insurance?
  - Your Guide to Property Titles WA
  - Sustainability in Strata Communities
  - What is a Strata Council?
  - What is Common Property?
  - Can I Have a Pet?

A Message from the Team

Welcome to the October Edition of *The Common Ground*

It has been an exciting period of change and growth here at RSMS.

Over the past six months, we have welcomed new faces to our team, continued to grow our portfolio, introduced new technology and enjoyed plenty of opportunities to connect with our Owners and the wider Strata community.

While there has been plenty of change, one thing remains constant: our commitment to providing knowledgeable, considered and practical Strata Management to the communities we are privileged to work with.

Meet the New Faces



We are very excited to introduce the newest members of our team, who have joined us over the past six months.

Please welcome Xian Burton, Mikayla Wallace, Russell Vaguez, Brianna Noske, Nicholas Cooley, Natika Ward and Kerry Daw to the team.

Our newest team members bring extensive experience in WA Strata Management, with many joining us in Senior Strata Management roles. This is something we are particularly proud of and see as a real strength of the RSMS team.

Collectively, our team brings decades of combined Strata experience, giving us a depth and breadth of knowledge that we believe sets us apart.

With different backgrounds and experiences come valuable conversations, shared problem-solving and, most importantly, continual learning. We are proud to welcome our newest team members and look forward to the knowledge, experience and fresh perspectives they bring to RSMS.

WORK AND WINS

Knowing Your Strata: Why Owner Education Matters

It was fantastic to see so many of our Owners at the CHU SCA (WA) 2026 Owners Conference.

Several members of our team attended, with our Director, Karen Richardson, also joining the Hot Topics Panel. It was a valuable evening of learning, discussion and connection, and a great opportunity to meet with Owners who are genuinely invested in understanding and contributing to their Strata Communities.

One of our biggest takeaways was the importance of communication and respect. Strata living means sharing a community with people who may have different priorities, opinions and expectations. We will not always agree, but clear and respectful communication can make a real difference when working through issues and making decisions that affect everyone.

Owner education also plays an important role in a well-functioning Strata Scheme. Understanding how your Strata Company, Council of Owners and Strata Manager work together can help clarify where decisions are made, who is responsible for what, and where to turn when questions arise.
Being an informed Owner also means taking an interest in the bigger picture - not just your individual Lot. Attending meetings, understanding budgets, considering maintenance planning and taking an interest in Common Property all contribute to the long-term health of your Scheme.

One thought from the conference particularly resonated with us:
Take the “Y” out of “your” and you get “our”.

Your property is your asset, but Strata is also our shared community. The way we communicate, make decisions and care for Common Property affects everyone.

Thank you to everyone who attended the conference, took the time to learn more about Strata and stopped to catch up with our team. It was wonderful to see so many Owners engaged and interested in building stronger communities.





Stay Informed with SCA (WA)



We also encourage our Owners to take advantage of the free Owner subscription offered by Strata Community Association (WA).

The subscription provides Owners with a monthly update containing relevant Strata news, helpful tips and answers to frequently asked questions. It is a simple way to stay informed about what is happening across the WA Strata industry.

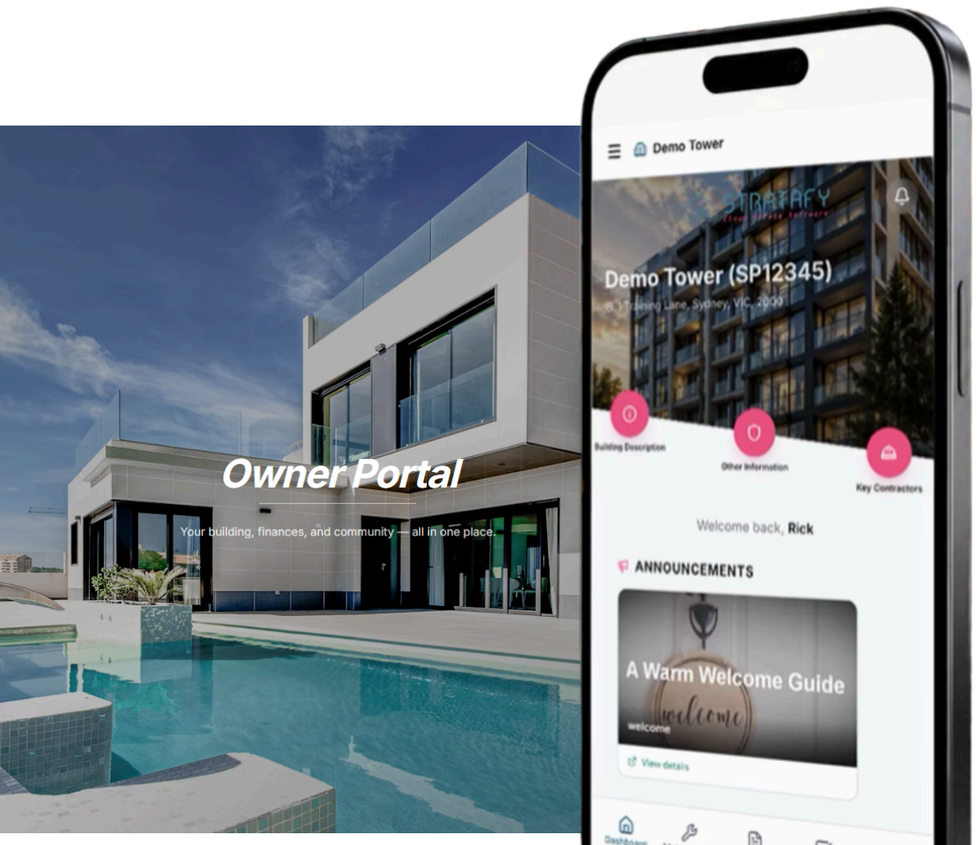
It also means you can hear directly from SCA (WA) when there are upcoming events and opportunities to learn more about Strata.

Interested in subscribing?

Owners can sign up by completing the SCA (WA) Owner Subscription form HERE.

It is a great way to stay informed, build your Strata knowledge and better understand the community you are part of.

Stratafy X: A New Chapter for RSMS



We are also excited to introduce Stratafy X, our new management software, which we have been progressively rolling out to our clients.

The new platform brings together a range of features designed to make accessing information and communicating with your Strata Company, Strata Managers and Building Managers easier, including access to important documents, live financial information, maintenance requests, announcements, bookings and other property information.

For our team, Stratafy X provides greater visibility and supports more streamlined day-to-day operations. For Owners, the aim is simple: easier access to information and a more connected experience. This also means a new Owners Portal and App that we are excited to share with you.

Watch this space - we're excited to share more as the new system rolls out!

Life at RSMS











While we take our work seriously, we also believe that enjoying the people you work with is an important part of a healthy workplace.

The RSMS team has enjoyed plenty of opportunities to get together over the past year, from PJ Day, to pub quizzes, parking lot BBQs and karaoke.

These events might seem like small things, but they play an important role in team morale. A strong team is built not only through working together, but through getting to know each other, celebrating together and having a bit of fun along the way.

COMPLIANCE AND EDUCATION

Why is Workers' Compensation Required?



Workers' compensation is an important consideration for Strata Companies in Western Australia. A Strata Company can be considered an employer, and in some circumstances, contractors or subcontractors may also be considered workers under the legislation. This can be particularly relevant where a Strata Company directly engages individuals for services such as cleaning, gardening, caretaking or maintenance.

Workers' compensation insurance protects the Strata Company against its potential liability if a worker is injured as a result of their employment. Importantly, workers' compensation is different from public liability insurance and is not simply "contractor insurance".

Where required, having appropriate cover in place is a legal obligation. Without it, a Strata Company may face significant penalties and could ultimately be responsible for the full cost of a claim - costs that would ultimately be borne by Owners.

If your Strata Company is unsure whether its current arrangements require workers' compensation cover, we recommend speaking with your insurer or broker to confirm the appropriate cover.

No Dogs Allowed?



Article written by Nicholas Cooley

A recent State Administrative Tribunal decision provides useful guidance on how strata companies must determine applications to keep pets.

In DT and The Owners of Civic Square Apartments Strata Plan 64584 [2026] WASAT 14, an owner sought approval to keep a Golden Retriever puppy. The scheme's by-laws permitted pets with council of owners' approval, provided the pet did not interfere with the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of other owners and occupiers.

The council refused the application, citing concerns including noise, allergies, waste disposal, use of lifts and hallways, and the suitability of a large dog for high-rise living. The evidence also revealed that the scheme had adopted a general "no dog policy", except for certified assistance animals.

The Tribunal's decision
The Tribunal found that the strata company had acted unreasonably and approved the dog subject to conditions.

It rejected the contention that the by-law created a presumption against approval. The requirement for a written application was procedural. The council was required to consider whether the particular animal was likely to interfere with residents' quiet and peaceful enjoyment.

By applying a general "no dog policy", the council had fettered the discretion conferred by the by-law. Each application was required to be determined on its individual merits.

Evidence and reasonable conditions
The applicant submitted a detailed Assistance Dog Training and Development Plan addressing matters such as grooming, toileting, exercise, barking and movement through common property. The Tribunal found that the plan adequately addressed the genuine risks associated with keeping the dog.

In contrast, several of the council's concerns were speculative. There was no evidence that any resident had a relevant allergy or phobia, while general concerns about fleas, altitude sickness or keeping a dog in an apartment did not justify refusing the application.
Although the puppy was not yet an assistance animal as defined by legislation, the applicant intended to train and develop the dog to become an assistance animal. The Tribunal considered that intention, together with the applicant's personal circumstances, to be relevant to the application.

The strata company proposed 35 conditions if approval was granted. The Tribunal considered many of these excessive, duplicative or unnecessarily coercive. Instead, it imposed six practical conditions requiring the applicant to:

- train and manage the dog substantially in accordance with the training and development plan;
- notify the strata company of any failure to comply with the plan;
- dispose of the dog's waste promptly and hygienically without using common property bins;
- take reasonable steps to address complaints about the dog's behaviour;
- promptly rectify any damage to common property caused by the dog; and
- ensure the dog remains registered, microchipped and vaccinated, and is kept in accordance with relevant local government requirements.

No Dogs Allowed?

The decision demonstrates that conditions should be relevant, proportionate, workable and enforceable. They should address genuine risks without unnecessarily duplicating existing statutory or by-law obligations.

Lessons for Strata Companies

This decision does not establish an unrestricted right to keep pets. The outcome of an application will depend on the terms of the scheme's by-laws and the available evidence.
Where a by-law confers discretion to approve a pet, a council should:

- determine each application on its merits;
- apply the criteria contained in the by-law;
- identify evidence supporting any concerns;
- consider whether reasonable conditions can mitigate identified risks; and
- record clear reasons for its decision.

This article provides general information only and is not legal advice. The outcome of any pet application will depend on the applicable legislation, the scheme's by-laws and the circumstances of the application.

You Didn't Build It, but You Must Fix It

Article written by Nicholas Cooley

Who is responsible when an owner purchases a lot containing an alteration undertaken many years earlier?

The State Administrative Tribunal considered this issue in The Owners of Kingsway Gardens (Strata Scheme 4) and Wilkinson [2026] WASAT 94.

The dispute concerned a balcony enclosure created by moving an aluminium-framed sliding door and window towards the balustrade, increasing the lot's internal living area. The alteration predated the current owners' acquisition of the lot. The strata company alleged that the alteration did not comply with applicable fire-separation requirements and sought orders requiring its rectification or removal.
Was the balcony common property?

The Tribunal examined the registered strata plan and the legislation governing the scheme. It found that the inner surface of the balustrade formed the lot's external boundary. Accordingly, the balcony and its enclosure formed part of the lot, rather than common property. This was central to determining responsibility for the alteration and the cost of rectification.

Was the alteration authorised?
The owners submitted that approval should be inferred because similar enclosures existed throughout the scheme and historical documents showed that balcony alterations had previously been considered.

The Tribunal rejected that submission
Despite extensive searches, no building licence, approved plan or strata company approval could be produced. A historical feasibility plan did not establish that approval had been granted, while the existence of similar alterations elsewhere did not prove that this particular enclosure was authorised.

In the absence of the necessary historical approval, regularising the alteration would require retrospective approval and compliance with current building requirements.

Responsibility for rectification
Although the current owners had not undertaken the alteration, the Tribunal found that they and their predecessors had received the benefit of the additional enclosed space.
As the alteration was situated within the lot, the strata company had no statutory function or obligation to undertake or fund the rectification work.

The scheme's insurer had also advised that unresolved balcony compliance issues could affect the continuation of insurance cover. The strata company therefore had a legitimate interest in pursuing rectification, particularly given its statutory obligation to maintain the required insurance.
The Tribunal ordered the owners to reinstate the balcony to its original condition within 90 days at their own cost, including obtaining any necessary approvals from the City of Perth.

Practical implications
The decision demonstrates that:

- acquiring a lot with an existing alteration does not necessarily make the strata company responsible for it;
- the age, visibility or prevalence of an alteration does not establish lawful approval;
- councils should retain alteration applications, resolutions, approved plans and building permits; and
- purchasers should verify that alterations have received both strata company and local-government approval.

This article provides general information only and is not legal advice. Responsibility for an alteration will depend on the scheme plan, the applicable legislation, the scheme's by-laws, available approvals and the particular circumstances.



Supplier Spotlight: Could Your Buildings Be Eligible for an nbn® full fibre upgrade?

Internet connectivity is becoming an increasingly common topic of conversation in Strata.

Residents are working from home, streaming across multiple devices, adopting smart home technologies and relying on digital services more than ever before.

As expectations grow, many Owners Corporations are beginning to ask whether their building's existing telecommunications infrastructure is keeping pace.

Many people living in apartments don't realise that if their home is connected through older copper-based nbn technologies, such as Fibre to the Node (FTTN), or Fibre to the Curb (FTTC), they can upgrade to full fibre. Full fibre (FTTP – Fibre to the Premises) uses fibre optic cable all the way to the home, delivering a faster and more reliable connection.

Some apartment buildings connected through FTTB may also be eligible for fibre upgrades. nbn is currently trialing fibre upgrade solutions in selected FTTB-served buildings to help bring the benefits of full fibre to more residents.

Upgrading to full fibre can help households get the most out of their internet connection, both today and in the future. As more people work, learn and entertain themselves online, full fibre provides a more reliable connection with faster speeds and greater capacity to support multiple connected devices throughout the home. It also helps ensure homes are ready for future digital services and technologies."

For Strata Managers, the key message is simple: it's worth checking whether an upgrade pathway may be available. As trusted advisers to Owners Corporations, Strata Managers can play an important role in helping committees understand available options and access reliable information.

The first step is straightforward. By using nbn's online address checker, strata managers can quickly see whether a building is eligible for an upgrade and can access more information about the process.

A quick check today could help start an informed conversation with a committee about improving a buildings' internet, reducing complaints and saving you time in the long run.

Upgrade your building's nbn technology to full fibre | nbn

Ecologi Update

We're committed to making growth good for the planet. Through our partnership with Ecologi, for every new Lot we acquire, we plant a tree, turning each addition to our portfolio into a tangible environmental contribution.

We've recently funded two new projects that we are excited about:

- Protecting the Kakamega Forest through Local Agroforestry, Kenya — supporting local communities to plant native and fruit trees, improve livelihoods and reduce pressure on the surrounding rainforest.
- Restoring Degraded Land through Agroforestry, Guatemala — restoring degraded land through native tree planting and sustainable agroforestry, while creating new opportunities for local communities.

So far, our partnership has helped us plant **3,794 trees, prevent 12 tCO_2e and restore 10 m^2** of habitat around the world.



Useful Links

Below are some useful resources to help Owners better understand their roles, responsibilities, and key aspects of living in a Strata Scheme.

- Understanding Strata Emergencies
- Who Does What When It Comes to Insurance?
- Your Guide to Property Titles in WA
- Sustainability In Strata Communities
- What is a Strata Council?
- What is Common Property?
- Can I have a Pet?

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