

THE COMMON GROUND

AUGUST 2025

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A Message from the Team

It's been some time since our last newsletter, and we're pleased to reintroduce **The Common Ground** - a six-monthly publication developed to provide valuable insights into the evolving strata sector and to keep you connected with the work we're doing at Richardson Strata.

As one of Western Australia's leading strata management firms, we believe it's critical to keep all stakeholders updated about broader trends, legislative changes, and best practices shaping our industry. This newsletter is part of our commitment to raising the standard of communication, transparency, and service delivery across the schemes we manage.

At Richardson Strata Management Services, our focus is not just on compliance and maintenance. It's on building resilient, well-informed communities. We believe a strong strata community starts with access to the right information, delivered in a way that's relevant and accessible. This publication is one of the many ways we aim to support that.

In this edition, you'll find educational pieces on commonly asked questions, spotlights on upcoming education events, a look into key compliance matters, as well as industry updates. We'll also share how your feedback continues to shape the way we operate and introduce you to some of the trusted suppliers who help us deliver on our service promise.

Whether you're a long-time council member, a first-time apartment owner, or an investor seeking clarity, our goal is to make strata ownership simpler and more transparent.

We hope you find this edition informative and worthwhile. And as always, we welcome your suggestions and feedback for future topics.

Recent Publications and Informative Information

Here are some links to a list of documentation that can help Owners and Council Members to better understand their roles within a Strata Scheme.

- [What is a Strata Council?](#)
- [What is Common Property?](#)
- [Can I have a Pet?](#)
- [How To Access The Online Portal](#)



Click Here

WORK, WINS AND TRUSTED PROVIDERS

Supplier Spotlight: Lync Insurance

Insurance is one of the most critical services in strata, and choosing the right broker can make a significant difference in both cost and coverage. That's why, for many of the properties we manage, we work closely with Lync Insurance Brokers WA, a brokerage that specialises in strata and community title insurance solutions across Western Australia.

With deep knowledge of the unique risks and responsibilities facing strata schemes, Lync offers tailored coverage and strategic advice - not just a policy. Their team regularly reviews the market across multiple underwriters to ensure that schemes are getting competitive pricing, appropriate levels of protection, and expert guidance in the event of a claim.

But why do our clients like Lync so much?

- **Specialised in Strata:**
Lync understands the complexities of common property, shared liabilities, and the legislative environment we operate in.
- **A Transparent, Ethical Approach:**
No hidden commissions and transparent fees. Clients are kept informed about commissions and fees including who receives these.
- **Claims Support That Delivers:**
From storm damage to burst pipes, Lync advocates for clients and works directly with insurers to ensure the best possible outcomes.

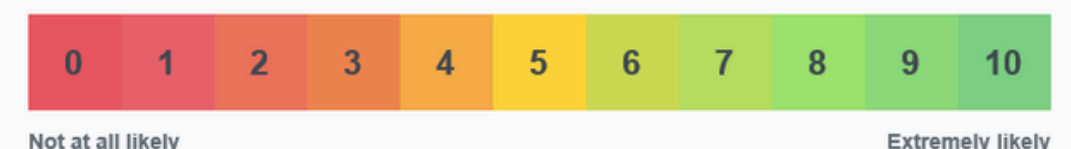
And here's a tip from the team at Lync...

"Insurance isn't just about ticking a compliance box. It's about risk management. Councils should review their building sums regularly, especially with rising construction costs, to avoid being underinsured."

Whether you're looking to reduce premium increases, understand the impact of maintenance decisions on insurance negotiations, or just gain clarity on what your policy does and doesn't cover, Lync can assist in demystifying the process.



On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to recommend Richardson Strata Management Services?



Building Defects and Waterproofing (Ocean's Edge)

Ocean's Edge, now 11 years old, is a stunning coastal building of 101 lots, has weathered its fair share of challenges. At the heart of the scheme lies a large communal area that had been severely compromised by water damage due to poor foundational waterproofing. For years, it was a source of frustration, and a reminder of the risks of early building defects.

Under the guidance of Strata Manager Zara Pangler, and with unwavering commitment from the owners, the community turned things around. Over time, owners came together to raise over \$1 million to completely overhaul the waterproofing of the central space, transforming a persistent problem into a long-term investment in their shared future. The project was carefully planned and executed with input from engineers, design consultants, and waterproofing specialists.

The result was a beautifully redesigned space that is as functional as it is striking. Large decorative pot plants now line the area, cleverly designed to help drain water efficiently while lighting up at night to create a welcoming, communal atmosphere. What once was a flaw has become a feature - an example of proactive, well-managed strata decision-making.

The waterproofing and landscape redesign are on track for full completion by September this year. We couldn't be prouder of the Ocean's Edge community and their commitment to turning this challenge into an opportunity.

We Heard You: The Net Promoter Score Survey

Thank you to everyone who participated in our recent Net Promoter Score (NPS) survey. Your feedback is essential to how we shape and improve the way we work.

A few key themes emerged from the latest round of responses, and we're already taking steps to address them.

Improved Levy Recovery Communication:

We've updated our internal process to ensure that owners with outstanding strata levies receive clearer, more proactive communication before any legal recovery action is initiated. Our aim is to minimise stress and encourage resolution without escalating matters unnecessarily.

Clarifying Roles in Strata Management:

Several owners shared confusion about the difference between the strata company (the body corporate) and the role of the strata manager. To bridge this knowledge gap, RSMS is developing a series of owner education sessions to help clarify responsibilities, legal frameworks, and decision-making processes within a strata scheme. We recognise this is a significant initiative that requires careful planning to ensure the information is accurate, accessible, and genuinely useful. As such, it will take some time to fully implement, but we're committed to delivering a high-quality resource that supports a more informed and engaged ownership community.

We're committed to continuous improvement, and your input plays a vital role in that process. Please keep sharing your thoughts.

COMPLIANCE AND KEY REMINDERS

EOFY Compliance and Requirements

Strata companies across Western Australia are now required to adopt a financial year end of 30 June, unless a by-law specifying an alternative date was validly adopted during the transitional period. This change stems from legislative amendments that provided a five-year window (ending 1 May 2025) for strata companies to formalise a different financial year end via ordinary resolution and by-law registration.

If your scheme did not pass and register such a by-law, the financial year end has now automatically defaulted to 30 June. If you're unsure whether your scheme has a specific by-law in place, feel free to contact your strata manager for clarification.




Embedded Network and Energy Reforms

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) is currently reviewing how embedded networks operate to make sure customers are being treated fairly. This includes looking at the rules for both network operators and energy sellers within embedded networks—like those sometimes found in apartment complexes or strata communities.

The aim is to better understand the pros and cons for residents and to strengthen consumer protections.

At the same time, the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) is proposing changes that would give customers in embedded networks more access to competitive retail energy deals—similar to what you'd get if you were connected directly to the main energy grid.

These reviews could lead to important updates in how embedded networks are managed, so we'll keep you informed as more details become available.



Join EnergyTec's free upcoming event where they'll break down what this all means for Strata Managers.

- ✓ Key Updates on the Code of Practice.
- ✓ What It Means for Strata Managers in Real Terms.
- ✓ Why the Right Metering Matters.
- ✓ The Importance of Transparent and Accurate Utility Accounting.

Date: Tuesday, 23rd September, 2025.

Time: 5:30pm - 7:30pm

Location: Central Park Conference Centre, Perth CBD

City of Perth Local Government Election: Why Strata Owners and Occupiers Should Take Note

The City of Perth's next Local Government Election will be held on Saturday, 18 October 2025, and it's an important opportunity for those living or investing in strata properties within the city to have a say in how the capital is run.

What's Being Decided?

- The Position of Lord Mayor (Term Until 2027).
- Four Councillor Positions (Terms Until 2029).

These representatives play a significant role in shaping city policies, local amenity upgrades, sustainability initiatives, and regulatory decisions that directly impact strata communities.

Do You Own or Occupy a Strata Property in the City of Perth?

If you live in or own a strata-titled property in the City of Perth, you may be eligible to vote—even if you don't live there full time.

- Residents are automatically enrolled if registered on the state electoral roll.
- Non-resident owners and occupiers (e.g. investors or businesses operating from a strata lot) can apply to be added to the Owner/Occupier Roll.
- Each property is eligible for up to two voters, meaning both an owner and a tenant may be entitled to vote in some cases.

Why it Matters for Strata Communities:

From parking policies and verge collection to infrastructure upgrades and community safety—decisions made by Council have a direct impact on strata schemes.

Voting helps ensure the unique needs of strata owners and residents are considered in city planning.

For more information contact the City of Perth or visit perth.wa.gov.au.

Key Dates for Strata Owners and Occupiers	
Process:	Date/Time:
Candidate Info Session	6th August 2025 - 5pm, Council House
Enrolment Closes	5pm on 22 nd August 2025
Nominations Open	28 th August 2025
Nominations Close	4pm on 4 th September 2025
Election Day	Saturday, 18 th October 2025



Are Electric Vehicles the Future?

Across the globe, the slow but steady rise of driverless vehicles is starting to reshape how we think about transport. What once seemed like science fiction—cars that drive themselves—is now a reality in cities like San Francisco, Phoenix, and parts of China. But beyond the tech headlines, there's a deeper, more local question emerging: What happens to strata living when owning your own vehicle is no longer the norm?

Historically, cars have ruled urban design. Strata schemes are no exception. We design basements around car parks, plan lift access with garages in mind, and dedicate significant common property to vehicles—whether that's for parking, maneuvering, or storage. In many buildings, residents get more passionate about car spaces than they do about their apartments.

But as autonomous vehicle (AV) technology matures, so too does the model of vehicle ownership. Many experts predict a shift from private car ownership to shared mobility services. Picture it: instead of owning a car, you hail a driverless vehicle on demand—just like booking an Uber, but without the driver. It arrives when you need it and disappears when you don't.

What could this mean for strata? This shift has potential ripple effects for strata communities, particularly over the next 10–30 years. Let's explore a few key possibilities...

Reimagining Car Parks:

If residents stop owning personal vehicles, what happens to those double-stacker car lifts and multi-level garages? Over time, we may see underused car spaces repurposed. Think storage units, gyms or workplaces, green communal spaces and EV charging hubs for fleet style services. Forward-thinking developers are already designing convertible parking areas to allow for this transition.

Drop-Off Zones Over Garages:

Driverless cars could bring a new focus to convenient and safe pick-up/drop-off zones. This could change how strata buildings are designed, with less emphasis on deep basements and more on accessible ground-floor layouts.

Lower Parking Ratios:

Planning controls and strata by-laws often require minimum parking ratios per unit. As demand drops, these controls may relax, allowing for more affordable housing, better use of land, or improved aesthetics and community infrastructure in place of concrete slabs.

Insurance, Liability and Common Property Risks:

If cars are no longer personally owned—or if liability shifts to tech providers—strata committees might need to rethink how they handle insurance of shared driveways, access rights for autonomous fleets, and data security and privacy. This could result in a whole new suite of strata policies and by-laws to govern future use.

Shared Mobility as an Amenity:

Just like buildings today offer gym access or pool facilities, future strata schemes might include access to an autonomous vehicle fleet. Owners could “book” a car via the building's app, with fees built into levies or user-pays arrangements.

So... What Should We Be Thinking About Now?

The AV future isn't arriving tomorrow—but it is coming. Here are a few early moves for strata managers, owners and committees to consider...

- **Start the Conversation:** At AGMs or newsletters, raise the topic. Future-proofing starts with awareness.
- **Audit Your Space:** Could your car park be more than just a car park one day?
- **Talk to Your Local Council:** Are they reviewing parking ratios, zoning or planning laws with AVs in mind?
- **Watch the Tech:** Stay informed about autonomous vehicle trials in your city or state.
- **Plan for Flexibility:** When considering capital works or refurbishments, keep adaptability front of mind.

So what is the takeaway? Strata is where people live, and how they live is changing. Driverless cars may still feel a world away for many, but as with all disruptive technologies, the change will come faster than we expect—and the schemes that are ready will benefit first.

As owners and strata communities, we should be asking now: What's driving our future—and are we ready to let go of the wheel?

Supplier Spotlight: PCB Plumbing and Gas

PCB Plumbing and Gas is a go-to partner for reliable plumbing and gas solutions in strata environments. Known for their prompt response, transparent quoting, and respectful approach on-site, they handle everything from burst pipes to gas appliance servicing — all with minimal disruption to residents.

Reliable. Responsive. Ready when you need them.
Visit <https://pcbplumbingandgas.com.au/> or phone (08) 9000 2228.



COMMITTED TO THE INDUSTRY AND CREATING BETTER COMMUNITIES

The following Article was published by *The West Australian* on June 7th, 2025, and written by Hana Humboldt.

Don't be caught without ticks of approval for Strata Renos

From hammering hooks in walls for artwork to painting a room in whatever shade takes your fancy – these are just a few of the simple joys which make a home feel like your own.

However, according to Strata Community Association (WA) General Manager Kerrin Simmonds, many owners of strata lots are surprised to learn they need approval for changes which might seem routine in a freehold.

So, just how far can you take the hammer and chisel before you need someone else's sign off?

"Owners of strata lots are generally required to obtain the same local government approvals as owners of freehold title properties," Emerson Raine Director and Operations Manager Alisha Garrod said.

"However, the Strata Titles Act 1985 and the strata by-laws may impose additional restrictions or require approval from the strata company in addition to local government consent."

Richardson Strata Management Services Senior Strata Community Manager Carmen Nelson said the first two documents you needed to understand before thinking about renovations – whether before or after purchasing a strata lot – are the strata by-laws specific to your building and the lot's strata plan, as the latter determined the boundaries of your responsibilities down to the millimetre of your tiles.

For example, the floor you live on may be considered common property based on said boundaries, which would then require approval from either the council of owners, the strata company or both depending on the by-laws.

"Air-conditioning units, solar panels, garden structures or even installing a lattice to a fence may seem minor, however they often interact with common property or can change the external look of the building," Ms Simmonds said.

Similarly, in high-end apartments, Ms Nelson said there was a vested interest in maintaining the external uniformity of the building, which was why many had by-laws specifically requiring certain shades of blinds to be installed.

When it comes to structural alterations, Ms Garrod said they required a resolution without dissent of the strata company before they could proceed.

"If one person dissents, the resolution fails. But fortunately, the Strata Titles Act defines the grounds for dissent, which the dissenter must state when voting," she said. "They are not required to provide evidence to support their dissent, but if the applicant feels this is unfair, they can apply to the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) to dispense with the approval, during which the dissenter would need to present evidence in support of their dissent."

As for which type of strata complex was less strict than others, Ms Garrod said anecdotally her office tended to see a more relaxed atmosphere in older single-tier strata schemes, compared to newer luxury high-rises.

"In the latter, with all the amenities and a strong focus on maintaining a uniform appearance, there's often more pressure for strict adherence to the rules," she said.

In the event someone does not seek proper approvals and has either partial or full works done, which contravene the strata by-laws, Ms Nelson said the council of owners would first issue a breach to the proprietor.

"It's always the proprietor not the tenant because they are responsible for the lot," she said.

"This would tell them what the remedy of the breach is, and then if the proprietor doesn't comply, it's up to the council of owners whether they decide to go to SAT for an order."

As the SAT is extremely busy and taking a case to it is costly, some council of owners may dismiss them into the too-hard basket.

However, if that lot goes to sale, the owner will need to disclose the fact it is in need of by-law remedy which can make a strata lot look less attractive to buyers.



Partnering with Ecologi, Richardson Strata Management Services plants trees for every new Lot that becomes apart of our portfolio.

As of this publication, we have planted **2,396** trees around the world!

Ecologi

Giving Back to the Community

Richardson Strata Management Services is an active supporter of multiple charities and strives to make a real community difference.

Earlier this year, our team joined the Ronald McDonald House Up All Night Walk, a 42km trek through Perth that mirrors the sleepless nights parents face with critically ill kids. We raised \$7,840 to help keep families close during hospital stays.

We also took part in National Pyjama Day, raising \$460 for The Pyjama Foundation. The funds support foster children by connecting them with "Pyjama Angels" - mentors who help them read, learn, and build confidence.

Small efforts, big impact - and we're proud to be part of it.