

2022 Election: Victorian Strata Residents, Owners and Industry Unite for Strata Helpline

Thursday 17 November 2022: In [an open letter to Victoria's incumbent Labor Government](#), SCA (Vic), Owners Corporation Network (OCN), Southbank Residents Association (SRA), Southbank3006 and We Live Here have called for a much-needed Strata Helpline from government.

It is one of several key policy initiatives in the next term of government to better protect and support lot owners and residents and boost confidence in strata living.

The establishment of a Strata Helpline can provide guidance in the form of general information and advice to lot owners and residents, reduce out-of-pocket legal advice costs, and easing the burden on dispute resolution bodies such as the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for complex enquiries.

At present, Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) has closed any method of contacting the agency for advice, other than a web form that guarantees a slower response time to common enquiries, which include car parking, pets, short-term accommodation, insurance, building defects, waste and many more.

The establishment and funding of a dedicated Strata Helpline, overseen by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) will:

- improve knowledge and understanding of apartment and townhouse living practice
- guide residents away from disputes
- improve living quality
- reduce the administrative burden placed on VCAT

The Strata Helpline would operate as a division of CAV, with two dedicated staff being provided training and expert guidance from an employee appointed by SCA (Vic) - this would cost approximately \$381,000 per year, or \$1.514 million in the next term of government.

In Western Australia, following successful advocacy by SCA (WA) for its establishment, a government run helpline has managed 7,284 enquiries since its establishment in March 2021. That is from a jurisdiction with only one-quarter the number of people living in strata as Victoria, strongly suggesting how much pent up demand there is for this service.

SCA (Vic) President Gregor Evans said that access to information and general advice about owners corporations serves to increase confidence in strata living and improve the experience of lot owners and residents going forward.

“We are absolutely delighted to unite with Owners Corporation Network (OCN), Southbank Residents Association (SRA), Southbank3006 and We Live Here in this call for a commitment from government and opposition, so just one question remains – will they commit better outcomes for the 1.6 million Victorians living in strata,” said Mr Evans.

“Providing greater certainty for lot owners, residents and committees when it comes to strata will continue to remain important well into the future.

“People will often look at web resources first, but when they cannot find the level of detail or answers they need, more than three quarters will choose to call if there is the option.

"If a jurisdiction like Western Australia with one-quarter the number of people living in strata has handled 7,284 calls then we can only imagine the demand not being met in Victoria, where **1.6 million Victorians are making the choice to live in apartments and townhouses,**" he said.

The open letter also calls on the next government to establish a working group towards implementing a minimum standard of education for owners corporation managers.

Read the full open letter here – [An Open Letter to Government from Victoria's Strata Living Sector](#).

[Read SCA \(Vic\) full election priorities here.](#)

[And check out our visual election tracking scorecard here.](#)

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About Strata Community Association (Vic)

[Strata Community Association \(Vic\)](#) is the peak body for the Owners Corporations sector, which comprises commercial, industrial, and recreational properties ranging from two units in a suburban street to many hundreds of units in inner city apartment buildings.

Owners Corporations represent property valued at over \$300 billion dollars and encompass commercial, retail, lifestyle resorts, retirement villages, car parks, storage facilities, industrial and, increasingly, mixed developments.

More than \$1 billion per year is collected and spent. It is estimated that around 1.6 million Victorians — a quarter of the state's population — either live in, or own property in, an owners corporation.

Media enquiries:

Liam Straughan, SCA (Vic) Public Relations & Media Officer, 0478 493 773, or Shaun Brockman, SCA National Advocacy & Policy Manager, 0468 334 277, media@strata.community.