



SCA (Qld)
Lvl 9, 410 Queen Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
T: (07) 3839 3011
admin.qld@strata.community

ARAMA
PO Box 4953,
GCMC Bundall, Qld 9726
T: 1800 ARAMA Q
national@arama.com.au

24 March 2020

Hon Yvette D'Ath
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
Email: attorney@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Attorney-General

RE: COVID-19 Impact on Medium to High Density Residential Buildings and Essential Services

We sincerely thank you for prioritising to consider SCA (Qld)'s request of 17 March 2020 to clarify the options for electronic meeting attendance at General Meetings, quorum requirements when face to face meetings are not taking place and the body corporate manager receiving such votes on behalf of the body corporate. Any solutions to these problems will be welcome by the industry as it struggles to manage lot owner's concerns.

Following announcements from Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments only this last weekend, our members have also voiced concerns about potential confusion surrounding terms such as "Non-Essential Services". The body corporate sector seeks to ensure all Governments are furnished with a complete understanding of the essential role of the Resident Manager acting in the vital role of resident letting agents or building managers contracted to provide services employed within body corporate schemes across Queensland, and we request clarification whether these services will be included in any definition of "Essential Services" once policy is announced.

Strata Community Australia (Qld) Limited ("SCA (Qld)"), and the Australian Resident Accommodation Managers' Association ("ARAMA") are providing the following concerns for your consideration.

INTRODUCTION

SCA (Qld), ARAMA and OCN Qld are the leading non-profit organisations in the strata and community title sector in Queensland. Collectively we represent more than 378,000 unit owners living or investing in strata units, around 90 body corporate management firms who manage more than 307,000 lots and approximately 3,000 management rights buildings.

The current situation within higher density accommodation is unprecedented and the demands that this will place upon the facilities within strata buildings is untested. The impact on these increased demands of the essential services of residential buildings due to self-isolation, forced isolation, restricted travel and unemployment needs to be considered.



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It is envisaged that the hours in residence will dramatically increase and therefore the demands on the facilities within the buildings will be increased accordingly. This will also require more servicing to avoid overwhelming essential services.

In higher density buildings, the service compliance requirements, as well as the operational needs, are monitored and managed by Resident Managers. In their role as a caretaking service contractor, Resident Managers are best placed to understand the needs of the building and are a key part of the safety of the building, its residents and the service technicians.

In light of the current circumstances, the Resident Manager's role becomes even more imperative to the safe operation of buildings.

Some voices in the public are being heard that a community title scheme (CTS) should become an exclusion zone if all non-essential services are to be stopped. In the view of SCA (Qld) and ARAMA, a community title should actually be treated as an essential area for occupation in much the same way as a pharmacy, hospital, or shopping centre. A CTS on average is home to often dozens of Queensland lot owners and it is essential that they have access to most of the common areas within the scheme and in particular the areas essential to allow ingress and departure to and from the lot.

There are good arguments to close down the Gym, Media Room, BBQ Area or other non-essential areas and services, however these essential common areas should be accessible to occupiers at all times with a limitation on how many access it at a time under the circumstances.

Proposed Essential Service Single Point of Access

Strata and building management services offer an alternative to having service providers attending sites and meeting with a multitude of residents to assess and address repairs and maintenance. The single point of access allows an opportunity to have control measures in place to protect the service providers from having to interact with residents and vice versa.

In buildings where there is a Resident Manager acting as a caretaking service provider on site, an access provision can be made to allow safe access to the building and other areas with minimal interaction with either residents or the resident manager. Buildings where there is no resident manager, safe access arrangements can be provided via the body corporate management company.



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Essential Services and Compliance Requirements

(a) Waste Management

Required as part of the operational acceptance of the Development Application pursuant to the registration of a Units Plan and based upon a Waste Management Strategy included with every Development Application, waste collection often requires the involvement of personnel to move waste and rotate hoppers within a building's waste rooms as well as presentation of the hoppers for local Government contractor collection.

We have noted an increase in the requirement for waste movement due to the number of people who are working from home.

Further increases of residents based primarily at home will result in further increases for rotations and the number of services for collection.

All buildings with waste or recycling chutes as well as any with multiple waste rooms will require manual movement of the waste hoppers.

(b) Fire Monitoring

Building managers will continue monitoring of the fire panels to be able to report faults and reduce the need for increased attendances by service technicians. Essential equipment for the safety of all residents and a compliance requirement.

(c) Vertical Transport

Compliance requirement for regular servicing as well as dealing with periodic issues that arise. Breakdowns may increase due to increased usage. Essential equipment for the safety of all residents and a compliance requirement. Onsite management reduces the number of and severity of the breakdowns.

(d) Hydraulic Infrastructure

The use and misuse will increase. The misuse will also include residents flushing inappropriate items through the system like alternatives to toilet paper rendering the system inoperable. It has already become an issue in certain buildings.

(e) Electrical and Communications Infrastructure

The demands on these items are due to increase as more people are required to work from home. These demands will also increase due to the social needs of residents to interact safely



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with family and friends.

(f) Cleaning

Increased visits will be required for the disinfection of common area facilities including bathrooms, lobby entrances and all associated access furniture, vertical transport including all operation buttons and various other touch points throughout the building.

Conclusion

A Resident Manager can act as a gatekeeper for other service providers, however unless there was a 24/7 security on every access point they are limited in the protection they can provide to non-occupiers.

Resident Managers, Body Corporate Managers and Committees will need to support each other so that the triangle of management can support the lot owners who in turn will need the support of the triangle of management now more so than ever before. And the scheme must remain open to occupiers and service providers such as a caretaking service provider and those whom they supervise, this is essential.

Any proposed workforce interruptions must take into consideration the critical functions of body corporate schemes. We would be available for further discussions regarding the above, via the SCA (Qld) Executive Officer.

Tel: 07 3839 3011 or 0458 120 917

E-mail: Katrin.Watson@strata.community

Sincerely

Handwritten signature of James Nickless in black ink.

James Nickless

SCA (Qld) President

Handwritten signature of Katrin Watson in black ink.

Katrin Watson

SCA (Qld) Executive Officer

Handwritten signature of Trevor Rawnsley in black ink.

Trevor Rawnsley

ARAMA CEO