

**Publication Date: April 18, 2017**  
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 057. Crime in Surfers Paradise**  
**Communities - With Dr. Sacha Reid**

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**Intro:** Welcome to Your Strata Property. The podcast for property owners looking for reliable, accurate, and bite-sized information from an experienced and authoritative source. To access previous episodes and useful strata tips, go to [www.yourstrataproperty.com.au](http://www.yourstrataproperty.com.au).

**Amanda Farmer:** Hello and welcome, I'm Amanda Farmer and this is Your Strata Property. Dr. Sacha Reid is a senior lecturer at Griffith Business School. Sacha's PHD, from the University of Queensland, assessed the social consequences and role of event stakeholders participation in the organising and planning of events within rural areas. More recently, Sacha was the founding director of research and has established the research capacity of DTZ, global property advisor firm in Australia. Her research interests are in vertical communities and high rise living, community development and planning and the social consequences of rural tourism and events. Sacha is a co-author of the research report 'Crime in High-Rise Buildings: Planning for Vertical Community Safety'. Completed in 2013 for the criminology research advisory counsel. Today, I am delighted to welcome Dr. Sacha Reid.

Welcome, Sacha!

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Thanks for having me, Amanda.

**Amanda Farmer:** Absolute pleasure to have you, Sacha. I often ask my guests who come on my show, who would you recommend I interview, and it has to be about three or four times now, I have had guests say, "You have to get Dr. Sacha Reed!" So it's an absolute privilege to finally have you.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Oh, they're very generous.

**Amanda Farmer:** Very well known in the sector, Sacha's in Queensland but we catch up regularly at conferences and events around the place. I've been wanting to chat with you for a while, Sacha, about your research into crime in our strata communities. Can you tell us why the issue of crime in the context of vertical communities is a critical one for strata owners to be across?

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** I think one of the challenges to strata owners is the fact that you're living within close proximity to others and so, the actions of one have a flow-on effect to others. So we really need to be cautious of and plan our communities to ensure that we have safe environments for people to live. And also to work in too, because strata isn't only about residential. We do have the commercial and all those other factors. The crime project that we're talking about is set in Surfer's Paradise and that's a unique environment because it's got the touristic element as well. So, that's a little bit different again-

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, you have all of those factors coming together. People's homes and where they live every day. People's places of work. Where people come to visit when they're on holiday, so there for a specific and quite different purpose as well. You often have all of those people in the one place and a raft of issues, let's say, are rising out of that.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Yes. I think that's because people do approach it quite differently. People that are living there, it's their life. It's their investment. It's their livelihood. It's where they reside with their families. So there's that safety element. People that are going there for tourist purposes, they do generally tend to be a little bit more laid back. They're on holidays. They probably let go of some of their normal daily habits. That has an influence on how they interact with their environment, that they are within. Also, the people that are within that environment.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, for sure, and they're only there for a short time.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** That's right-

**Amanda Farmer:** Not too worried about, necessarily, the consequences of their stay.



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**Dr. Sacha Reid:** That's right because they don't have to probably deal with the consequences of their stay. They just leave and move on and they've forgotten about it. That's one of the big issues I think, that is in the sector at the moment, when we all talk about Airbnb and that touristic element of people cohabitating within strata buildings.

**Amanda Farmer:** Definitely. Let's get stuck into some specifics here. What are some of the common crime problems that you've noticed people face in strata and what's working in terms of overcoming those problems?

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Okay. I thought I wanted to highlight to you that crime covers a full spectrum. So this research reports on all calls to service to police, so it's only on reported crimes. So there's a whole series of crimes that go unreported and that's probably not included within this research. But the key ones and the most common ones are opportunistic crime. That's the number one crime issues affecting strata buildings, is these opportunistic crimes, property theft, theft against individuals. So, they're the number one, ones. There are obviously the other, more challenging crimes: murders, a lot of drugs. We are talking about Surfer's Paradise Tourist Precinct, so there is the drug element associated with it. But the key one we're talking about is property theft and opportunistic crime.

Social behaviour as well is another one that sort of pops up a lot too.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, that's certainly something that I see in my day to day practice as a lawyer at the call-face, dealing with committees who have certain types of people perhaps living in their communities. They might be people who are known to police, who have been out on bail perhaps, and these people aren't necessarily committing these stock-standard crimes as we might know them, but they are doing things in and around the community that would be deemed anti-social behaviour. Their use of the common facilities is intimidating other people. There's some bullying going on. Committees come to me and say, "How do we deal with this, because it's not the kind of thing we might call the police about, but we are concerned and residents aren't happy."

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Yes and there's very little that you can do in that legal sense.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** So what do you advise them?

**Amanda Farmer:** Well, I say go back to your by-laws, always. Step one: there usually is a by-law that deals with behaviour and behaviour on common property that might harass, threaten or intimidate other people who are lawfully using that property, whether it's residents or contractors. We get a lot of complaints about contractors being intimidated and not able to do the work that they're doing. Some buildings have by-laws that deal with the way that you dress on common property, and you have to be appropriately clothed and those kinds of things. So, always go back to your by-laws and see if there's something in there. Then, of course, you're sending notices, by-law breach notices and letters, and bringing this kind of behaviour to the attention of these people who are causing trouble. I know, committees say, "Amanda, these people are in and out of jail, they're not going to pay attention to the notices that we send them." But it is better than doing nothing. It's better than doing nothing and as a strata committee, the committee needs to be seen to be, intervening and using the tools available to it, rather than sitting back and allowing this kind of behaviour to go unnoticed, I guess.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Yes, because they have got an obligation to provide a safe environment. That's one of the key factors. It's really interesting now, though, because at the most common level, though, anti-social behaviour affects everyone. I mean, you gave the extreme example of people that have been in and out of prison, or another key one, now, is the mental health concerns-

**Amanda Farmer:** Absolutely, yes.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Also, cultural differences. Cultural differences are affecting how people interact with others within these environments. We sort of have lost a level of tolerance, in society-



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**Amanda Farmer:** Yes.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** And sometimes we need to get back to those basic social skills, that probably these social media and social networks ... We're probably not developing those as well as we used to.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, actually talking to our neighbours. Knocking on the door, saying hi, sharing common spaces together. That all does feed into this sense of community, which we talk about a lot on the podcast.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Yes. With crime, sense of community's really important because it influences guardianship. Guardianship is how well people are observing what's going on within their communities. So, having someone oversee or being visible within a community. Having these casual social interactions. We're not telling you to go out and become best buddies with the people within your strata scheme because that invades upon people's privacy. But to at least be able to acknowledge, "Yes, you're meant to be in this strata scheme." "Yes, I've seen you around." Having people visible within the strata scheme's really important to put people off those opportunistic crime approaches. So rather, they could be observed doing it, and that is a key influencing factor to stopping opportunistic crime.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. Absolutely. A lot of the buildings that I've worked with, they talk about CCTV and setting up videos in the common area. They either have it or they plan to install it, to try and combat this behaviour. That works to a certain extent. I've certainly been involved with buildings where the cameras get damaged and disappear, things like that. But that concept of actually being there physically, personally, and being visible around the property, I think that's a great idea. Perhaps, we shouldn't be going straight to installing CCTV, but thinking "How can we as a community, be more visible, more accessible and more open, and combat it in that more personal way?"

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** It's not just the responsibility of the resident manager or the body corporate executive committee, it's the responsibility of everyone living within that scheme. Everyone that's there. It will affect everyone else in that scheme, so it's not just putting the responsibility on one or a small number of people.

**Amanda Farmer:** I think there's power in numbers as well, where you have many, rather than few, standing up to bullies and those who are intimidating, and not respecting the property the way others do. You're going to have more success at the end of the day I think than if you've just got one standing against the many.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Yes. It's easy in Australia to fall victim to that tall poppy syndrome-

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, yes.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** So the one person that does stand up to the bully, will be then, ostracised in other ways. That impacts further on the community because people aren't willing to stand up.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, I do see that in my practice that a strata manager will often be a strata manager who will say, "Amanda I can't do this one my own. I can't put myself out there. I'm going to meetings at night and I'm not comfortable. The poor chairperson doesn't want a bar of it, where do we go from here?" That's a really sad situation because that community has lost control of its own space and of the homes that these people live in.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** I think that's one of the good things about this crime research project because it was looking holistically. It's not just looking at who's responsible for crime prevention or what buildings create the most levels of crime. It was looking at across a whole suburb and looking at that 80/20 principle, which is basically a crime principal that says that 20% of the buildings probably create 80% of the calls to service. Within our research, what we've actually found is, it's probably closer to 10% of buildings create 90% of the calls to service or the crime issues. It tends to be higher in mixed-use buildings. When you've got competing uses taking place in the one building, then there tends to be those high levels of crime. That's associated with, not just tourists, but short-term residential letting. It's to do with tourists as well but, what we were talking about earlier about people having a

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different approach to their safety and security, or perceived safety and security, than if you were living there permanently.

**Amanda Farmer:** Let's talk about some positives here, Sacha. Have you got any stories or any recommendations coming out of your research about buildings that are doing really well, that are having this problem and they're solving it, or don't have this problem and the reasons why they don't? What have you got to share with our listeners there?

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** It's really interesting because long-term tenancies or long-term accommodation, tends to have lower levels of crime, but slightly different crime. We're seeing that building of community is an important leveller in terms of ostracising crime from these buildings. I think relationships build over time as well, so if they're there for a longer term, or they're invested in that community financially, well that will have an influence as well, in terms of levels of crime.

It's interesting that just putting up a fence, or barriers to entry, isn't going to stop crime from occurring, especially the opportunistic crime. So the best thing that communities can do is to be visible, to say hello to people that they see on their schemes because then the people on the schemes will think, "Oh, maybe it's not the scheme that I should be getting involved with."

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** CCTV cameras and other types of observational security mechanisms, are great to have in place, but aren't the only means by any stretch of the imagination, that human presence is much more important. I think Strata schemes need to be aware that the resident manager isn't a security personnel. They're not there to ensure the security of others. They're not there to chase people off if they see crimes occurring. Their roles are different and they need to work closely with crime prevention agencies, such as police neighbourhood watch, to ensure these safe environments. I think this research is really good in helping police plan, where they put the patrols. They can work out which are the risky facilities. They can work out what times are they the most risky and therefore increase police presence during those periods of time.

**Amanda Farmer:** So, really what point you raised is, Sacha, about the types of personnel and not putting on your resident manager or your building manager or your Strata manager, that role of security service provider. I have seen buildings who have had problems in the past have really worked towards solving those by employing the right people for the right job. Even when it comes to security personnel, there are different ends of the spectrum. There's the security guard who will open and close the gate, open and close the door and say hi and bye. Then there's the security guard ... There are companies out there who have ex-military personnel, ex-police officers, these guys are tough, they are big, they are scary. That's the kind of service that I've seen work really well, where you have people living in the community who are known to police, there's drug-dealers, there's bikies, there's all sorts of things. That's a community that's really struggling, they may need that level of service. Being able to identify that and get the right people for the job, is really critical I think.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Yes. I think we need to invest sometimes, in security. strata schemes are hesitant to spend money on that level of security presence, because they think, "Oh, well we can do it ourselves." Sometimes, we need the help and for our own personal safety, and for the safety of others, we do need to have professional assistance, to even do security audits-

**Amanda Farmer:** Oh, yes! Great tip. To go in and see where the holes in the procedure are. Where the doors are left open. Where the lift passes don't work. Yes.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** For the residents living within those schemes, just be aware of your settings. So, when you are entering car parks ... Car parks are a risky area within a building. We've got the risky facilities within the suburbs but we've also got risky facilities within the buildings. I'd like to do some more research to really examine where those pressure points are within buildings and how that influences crime prevention strategies within those buildings.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, that would be really interesting. Sounds like something that managers and buildings can rely on as a practical guide for where to focus their attentions.

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**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Exactly.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, I like that.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** People assume that because they live up high, that they're safe. That they're protected. There's this perception about that. The reality is that that's not always the case. We have that on the Gold Coast all the time when you have these media reports about spider-men entering buildings through balconies that are unlocked-

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, it's a fine line, isn't it from, you don't want to live terrified and you want to feel comfortable and feel that you can trust those around you. But at the same time, you need to make sure that you, your family and your home are protected. All right.

Sacha, everyone that comes on the show gets asked the book question. What books have had the greatest impact on you and why?

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** I've been reflecting on this. There's two key ones that I wanted to probably talk about. One's a brand new one, which has only just been released, so your readers and listeners might be quite interested in it. It's called, 'The Subtle Art of Not Giving a ...'

**Amanda Farmer:** Ah, love it!

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** And it's-

**Amanda Farmer:** I've heard about this!

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** It's not what I'd call a self-help book, but it just makes you think about what's important to you and how you can implement that within your own life through your thought process. It's about adjusting your thought process.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, I've read about this and I can't remember where I saw it, but it sounded fabulous. I'm gonna get my hands on a copy of that, definitely.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** You can miss it, it's a bright orange book. But what it was really interesting to me was, demonstrating you can only really be responsible for your own thoughts, actions and beliefs. That's really interesting because that has a huge influence on how you interact or how you build relationships with others and healthy relationships with others. Ones that are going to be beneficial for your own personal growth or beliefs and values. This value system.

The second book that I ... I was really influenced by Bryce Courtenay, so I've read pretty much all of his books, but one of the first two was, 'The Power of One', and also 'April Fools Day'.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** They really had a huge influence on my love of books. Being an academic, tend to read a lot.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, I'm always interested in our academic guests and their tastes in books. Those are fabulous recommendations Sacha, so I'll make sure there are links to those in the show notes. I'm definitely going to find myself one of those bright orange copies of 'The Subtle Art', let's just call it that.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** That works.

**Amanda Farmer:** Okay, now we before we wrap up Sacha, how do our listeners find out more about you and is there anything

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you'd like to add before we say goodbye?

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Okay, I'm based at Griffith University, so if you are interested in other research that I do, there's a Griffith University Expert's Page and you can just type in Dr. Sacha Reed, and all of the publications that I've been involved with, research projects, even higher degree research, other PHD students that I've supervised, a lot of their information can be found on that website.

**Amanda Farmer:** Great. Can you just give me that website, Sacha, and I'll put it in the show notes?

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Yes. The other thing is, I'm the Chair of the Griffith Strata Title Conference and it's going to be held again this year from the 6th to the 8th of September.

**Amanda Farmer:** Great.

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** At Surfer's Paradise Marriott Resort and Spa. The theme of this year's conference is all about engage. Engaging with industry, engaging across sectors. So it's not just for strata title managers, it's for all different stakeholders within the strata industry. Developing up the program, it's really pushing the boundaries and really is quite innovative and I think it will be really interesting for your readers if they are interested in getting a deeper insight into the strata Industry sector. This conference will be a great one. Registration will be opening soon. There is a website. Griffith University Strata Title Conference 2017 is the place to be.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, I'm sure it is. I have attended I think the last conference. It's only every two years, isn't it? So I think I was probably there two years ago and it is one of the highlights on the calendar of a strata sector stakeholder, for sure. I highly recommend it to anybody who's interested in getting to know a little bit more about the industry and starting in a place where you will be comfortable, you will be welcomed and you will be engaged.

Excellent. Thanks so much for your time today Sacha!

**Dr. Sacha Reid:** Thank you!

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