

Publication Date: February 28, 2018
YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 101. A better way to handle building defects disputes - with Chris Duggan

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Hi everyone, you are hearing from me straight up this week because its time to secure your spot at Your Strata Property Live. An evening with myself and some very special guests. The date is confirmed for Tuesday the 17th of April 2018. Will be at SMC Conference Center in Goulburn Street, Sydney, 6:00 PM registration for a 6:30 PM start and we should be all wrapped up by about 8:30 PM. I'll be putting dinner on for you.

Head over to www.yourstrataproperty.com.au/live and there you will find out all about our esteemed guests. We have Gary Bugden whose agreed to be our emcee, Chris Duggan whose also our guest for the episode today, Dr. Cathy Sherry, Natalie Fitzgerald and of course, it wouldn't be the same without her and her giggle Reena Van Aalst.

Now, Reena and I are going to spend some time that night covering our wins and our challenges. We are going to deal with some issues that you, in particular, our listeners have asked us to talk about. There will also be plenty of time for Q and A. We are going to open up the floor to our special guests who will sit together with me on a panel and be taking questions from the floor. We are talking about short-term letting, electronic voting and electronic meetings, by-laws. There are 6 CPD points available for strata managers who are attending www.yourstrataproperty.com.au/live.

Tickets for strata managers are just \$97 which is excellent value when you think about those 6 points and the level of content that you are going to be getting from our special guests. \$67 if you are an owner or another supporter of the strata sector. If you are a member of the Your Strata Property online community you are getting \$20 off those tickets whether you are a strata manager, an owner or a supporter.

Now, spaces are very limited. So many of you have already jumped in and secured your spot, well done www.yourstrataproperty.com.au/live. Now, as I mentioned, our guest for today is also going to be one of our guests on the 17th of April Mr. Chris Duggan, take it away.

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.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome. I'm Amanda Farmer, and this is Your Strata Property. My guess this week hardly needs any introduction. He is well known to many of you I am sure. Chris Duggan is the joint managing director of Bright and Duggan Strata Management Professionals, and he's also the current president of SCA New South Wales. He has been one of our most popular podcast guests, and you can check out [episode 25](#) if you want to find out more about managing a complex scheme direct from Chis. That episode is in our top 10 most listened to podcast episodes, so it is an absolute pleasure to welcome him back today. Hello and welcome to Chris Duggan.

Chris Duggan: Thank you very much, Amanda. Lovely to be here.

Amanda Farmer: Lovely to have you. You're a very busy man. Thank you for carving out the time yet again to be back with us. Now, we did talk about complex schemes last time, and since then you and I have caught up a few times, and we've been tossing around this idea I suppose with the new law here in New South Wales and the building defects bond that's now come in from the 1st of January. You and I have been talking a bit about building defects and how that process of getting those rectified, perhaps communicating with original owners, with developers, engaging lawyers, how that process is working on the ground from your perspective, from a strata manager's perspective. I thought you had some pretty insightful tips on how Bright and Duggan, in particular, manages that process, and so I wanted to bring you back and have a chat about that and share those insights with our listeners.

Chris Duggan: Absolutely. And it's always a pleasure to be here talking about cutting edge, innovative ways that we can serve our



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customers. I'll start from the outset and say that a lot of these learnings have been learned the hard way, and it has been very much an evolution through a process, and that process turned out to be in most cases tedious, costly, confusing, painful for lot owners. That made us realise that perhaps the process that we were undertaking on behalf of our clients wasn't giving rise to the best and most effective solutions, so we looked at doing things differently.

But what we found that owners were going through very large, long, protracted, costly exercises for defect rectification and were ultimately ending up, even in a best case scenario, with a settlement or a win, but they didn't feel like they were winning through the process because it was causing emotional drain, financial hardship, time, and also people just at the end of it really didn't feel like they were any closer to having the defects, which is what they were there in the first place, actually having them fixed.

We went about revisiting the way we did things and thought is the path that we're treading, which is respectfully being led by the legal aspect of defect rectification, is it the most cost-effective way to rectify defects in the best interest of all stakeholders, and we said no. And out of that, we developed what we call our collaborative defect management process.

Amanda Farmer: Okay, we're going to get into that. I know all of our listeners, particularly our lot owner listeners, our committee members, are on the edge of their seats going, "Yes, yes, Chris. That is exactly how we've been feeling, and we're really looking forward to the insight that you have to share." Was it a particular building that you were involved in that made you think this is just not how things should be done, or have you had 5 or 10 of these that you've been inundated with? Give us the lead into this need to revisit the way we do it.

Chris Duggan: We ended up at the end of processes around defect rectification having all parties unhappy. Lot owners felt like it had taken too long and it was too expensive. The stakeholders on the other side, developers, and builders felt like they could have fixed it better, more readily, more effectively if they'd gone down a different process, our managers were drained. And time. Time was the thing that was killing everyone in this process, and we're talking about some buildings taking 5, 6, 10 years to get to a process where they may well have had a settlement that on the surface sounded like a win, but when you put the time and the cost and the expenses down, they ended up with virtually nothing to actually fix the defects. You had to go through the process and the interruption to your building to have someone come back in and coordinate a whole rectification process.

There is one particular scheme that I won't mention just because the lot owners in there wouldn't like that, but we ended up going through a very protracted process that involved most if not all the law firms in Sydney. We had a very large building that had \$15,000,000 of legal expenses, and these were well-intentioned owners who wanted only the best outcome, which was to rectify the defects and to hold the builder and developer accountable for those. It ended up being a, in my opinion, disastrous outcome for those owners with good advice, decent reports, but a flawed system that ended up seeing them spend this amount of money, going to a massive amount of financial duress, and still end up no further forward with the rectification of those defects.

That was a watershed moment for our team to realise that this is an imperfect system, and rather than lament the fact that it doesn't work, we can look at better ways to deal with it.

Amanda Farmer: Okay. So, what were your first steps towards implementing that better system?

Chris Duggan: The first was to realise that the aspect that we needed to get control of was time. As you'd appreciate and as your listeners would appreciate that the statutory warranty process in New South Wales is very time sensitive, and the major time hurdle there is the 2-year expiry of the minor defects warranty under the HBA. That in itself captures most if not all of the defects, so we use that as the critical time point.

Amanda Farmer: Can I just stop you there? Just to clarify for our listeners, what Chris is talking about is that for building contracts entered into after the first of February 2012, the warranty period for anything that's not a major structural defect is 2 years only, two years from the date of completion of the work. That is a very tight timeframe, and I think you've just said there, Chris, a lot of defects fall into that category.

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Chris Duggan: Yes. We found most if not all defects apart from those that effectively made the unit or the building uninhabitable were captured as minor defects. That itself is another point of contention that we've been trying to address more directly with government to broaden the definition to allow more time for owners. However, recognising that defects cases were time critical was very important.

We advocated that you need to always to operate all of these defects cases with a very firm understanding of time, which is critical to get the lawyers involved very early on in the piece or conversely have the builder or developer provide via their own lawyers dates themselves around commencement of contracts, when they enter into, when occupation certificate is received, so then you can plot what your 2 year timeframe strategy is.

There is no better system there. Your own solicitors and all the developer's solicitors will provide that information to you along with those certificates, but once you have that understanding you can then make sure that you don't run out of time, because the next thing that we found was that schemes and developers and builders that were time pressure made poor decisions. So, understanding how you operate within that time and understanding how that works means that you can very early on in the process gather your team of consultants and your collaborative team that you're going to use moving forward.

I would couch this and try not to underestimate it, but it is incredibly important that your strata committee is on board with this process and wants to drive a tempo for rectification within that period. Oftentimes that requires the manager providing advice and the lawyers providing their strategy input to what can be achieved within that time period if collaboration is properly sought.

Now, the caveat to all of this is there are circumstances that will apply in about 10% of the case where you need to go very hard very early with a straight legal process against a builder developer who is not going to cooperate in this process. The process here is very much about collaboration. You understand your time. You pick a group of consultants, which is your lawyers who provide the upfront advice around the strategy. You provide a group of report inspectors, principally around general defects and fire, and you must make sure that those two are captured. We found that in most cases that will capture the vast majority of defects. In some cases, you may need a hydraulic engineer depending on the defects that are identified early on in the piece and whether you need to make sure that you separate those things out to properly capture all of the major systemic issues that are likely to occur in schemes in the last 5 to 10 years.

With that process, you work with the owners corporation to quickly understand that things can be achieved far quickly, far more readily, and far more cost effectively by getting everyone around the table very early.

However, you still need to operate within the spectre of the law because the law provides an incredible time guillotine that you can use to create the appropriate pressure for all sides there to make sure things are done. And you need to have those preemptive steps ready particularly with your legal team in the event that things do fall over or you're not getting the attraction that you need because the one thing that will happen here is if you let time drag on, time will kill all deals. It will kill all negotiation. It will also force people into positions of making hasty decision. And that's on both sides of the equation from the owners and the builder developers.

Amanda Farmer: Just to your point about getting your consultants locked in and getting that initial strategic advice from lawyers, getting your experts on board and producing reports, something that I see overlooked all too often is for those experts who are producing the reports including on the fire and hydraulics if you need it, they should be providing a costing as early as possible of what it's going to cost to fix these things. And if it's not them who can do it and you need to get a quantity surveyor in to do it once you've got the itemised list of defects, then I always encourage my clients to do that very early because what do you do then? You compare that cost to the estimated costs of the lawyer.

Chris Duggan: Correct. And that is exactly right. Understanding the ramifications and the cost to rectify is critically important because there will be a point in time when as a group of owners you need to sit around and make a commercial decision around whether you wish to pursue the rectification of those defects. And again this is the acknowledgment, and being pragmatic around understanding it's an imperfect system and spending \$200,000 in the context of a legal case against a builder developer through

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their tribunal or the court will far exceed that. Best understanding and best having a trusted group of advisors, so the manager, the consultant lawyer, who have all been experienced through this process providing that input, working with an owners corporation who is open to the concept potentially of settling and making sure that they can just put this thing to bed is incredibly important.

Amanda Farmer: I do hear that from clients that they do want, from buildings, from committee members, they just want the problem fixed. They just want the defects fixed. They want to be able to use their swimming pool. They don't want their shower to be leaking anymore. And if you put it to them in a way that litigation is not the only path here, you can actually raise some money and pay for these and fix it yourself rather than going down that uncertain path of litigation, uncertain as to outcome and uncertain as to cost. For some buildings, they've never heard that before, and it's sort of that oh, okay, didn't realise that there was an option B. Any lawyers who are listening, our strata managers as well, if you're not presenting that option B, don't forget about it.

Chris Duggan: Yes. And it also involves a degree of maturity getting over what is fair. Often defects cases become very emotive. People believe this is their home, someone ought to be responsible for rectification of this and it shouldn't be the lot owner. And that is when what is fair and what is commercial and sensible may not align, and sometimes taking a step back, and this is easier said than done, and particularly it's easier for us as arm's length consultants. It's much harder for a lot owner who is living and breathing with a leaky window or a systemic defect in their building to say let's not pursue someone because it's not cost effective. That's why working with people who are experienced in that process and can give frank advice and having a trusted group of advisors is critically important.

Amanda Farmer: So, what happens next? You've armed yourself, you've got your reports, you've got your team around you. Let's say you are able to communicate with the developer and they seem to be responsive. What does Bright and Duggan suggest next?

Chris Duggan: Going back 2 steps, you need to have taken the developer and the builder on this journey as well, because often they are not used to or accustomed to this process of collaboration. So, you need to make them comfortable with A, the consultant team you're using, and I would suggest that you pick a top tier consultant firm that has the appropriate resources to be able to turn things around quickly. And that's becoming more difficult in the current environment with lots more buildings having defects, a lot more talk about people perhaps not dealing with those things in a timely manner, building defect bond requirements coming in, so getting the right consultants is critical.

I would also suggest that working with the consultants around the type and format of their report is very important. Historically, we saw defects reports that were reams of paper to try and justify the value or the quantum of defects as opposed to a much more concise list of defects that is better understood by the builder developer, more accurately describes the defects themselves, and in some cases dismisses those that are clearly of the maintenance nature or a minor nature such as settlement and cracking.

We've worked with our consultant set to make sure that the defects reports being presented weren't automatically getting the builder developers offside because they were dealing with trivial issues that shouldn't have been captured in those reports.

Once you've got a better trust arrangement with the defects that have been identified are legitimate, you've got a better opportunity to bring those people to the table. Further, we encourage our consultants to accompany the builder developer representatives during the site inspection. This doesn't happen in all situations, however most consultants will agree to do this because it allows defects to be discussed in real-time on site, and if there is an alternative solution, if there is a methodology that should have been considered in assessing whether that is or isn't a defect, it can be understood there and now rather than putting it in a report, requiring a further discussion down the track, spending 3 months coming back saying well actually have you the fire engineer solution? Have you seen under there we've got photos to show that waterproofing exists?

Having that better understanding reduces items that do appear in the report, gets down to the brass tacks of what a legitimate defect. It also through that process gives integrity to the fact that both sides are well intentioned about wanting these defects fixed rather than going for a grab bag of items.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Very, very good advice. Too often, I have sat around the settlement table with those reams and reams of

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paper and realised that we've just spent about four hours arguing over something that's costed at \$1,000. For those more commercially minded clients who can do those sums, that's kind of heartbreaking. So, yes. Very good advice to remember straight up.

Chris Duggan: Absolutely.

Amanda Farmer: So, what happens next? We're going around the site. We're ticking things off the list. Maybe we've got some points of contention here between the building and the developer builder know these are not defects, yes they are. Where do you go next when you've got that conflict?

Chris Duggan: The next thing to do is to quite literally get all the stakeholders in a room as quickly as possible and try and work through things. And you'll find that having everyone around the table narrows down and funnels through to the legitimate defects very quickly. In our experience, there will be some legitimate disagreement around the type or the rectification that's required for those defects.

In those circumstances, we've brought in 3rd party experts and agreed at that time that they're adjudication would be final on those defects, or we've allowed further rectification to be considered or further methodologies to be put to our consultants.

We always advise our consultants to be open minded to alternative rectification or alternative solutions outside of what they would have stipulated because the Australian standards can be generally very, very broad, and they can also have DTS provision, which is deem to satisfy or alternative solutions. Allowing a builder developer, who probably best understands the building and the fabric and their consultants better than an external advisor, a way to devise a strategy that ultimately will still make compliance and then having a receptivity and an openness to saying will this actually address the issue, having that level of openness rather than a very fixed mindset around what you expect has been the single solution is very important.

If you can't get agreement on these things, you're also able to, as I said, refer them out to third-party experts. And there are consultants who will operate very quickly in a very focused manner on particular items, particularly around fire services, which we've found to be, I guess, most readily contestable these days due to the ability to have rather complex alternative solutions outside of the BCA.

Amanda Farmer: For those items that you can't agree on, is the only option then to head off to the tribunal if you're within their jurisdiction, or maybe we're off to the district court or the supreme court? Do we then go and have a legal battle about those things?

Chris Duggan: Typically, at this point in time we're getting closer to the 2 years, and this is where we've introduced what we see as another innovative way of trying to deal with the time matters, because as we said dealing with that negotiation with a guillotine of time sitting behind you means that things get more and more critical as you get closer to that timeframe as you can imagine.

So, 2 ways to relieve that pressure valve are A, to enter into a mutually agreed deed to extend those warranty periods between the builder developer and the owners corporation for a further period to allow you to work through, whether it be further quantification of the defects or further agreement around rectification, or alternatively if you're at a point where you do have agreement, to enter into some sort of a settlement deed, which puts it to bed. And that doesn't mean that all of the items need to be 100% locked down.

Often we find those settlement deeds deal with some solutions, for example, that would deal with what sort of sign off we required post rectification, so it may have identified our leaking windows, it may have proposed that it needs to meet a certain Australian standard at the end of the rectification, and then that deed will give rise to a series of works that actually then leads to how that Australian standard is met. It may not be prescriptive insofar as what works are required to get there, but it may well have a standard of achievement that's required at the end of the day. And there is relief then under that deed in terms of the owners corporation to be able to come back and enforce some level of either compliance of extra works or get some sort of penalty remedy if that Australian standard isn't ultimately met.

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Amanda Farmer: It's quite an unusual approach, but it's one that I've seen before, Chris, and you've articulated it incredibly well. From a legal perspective, it's an approach that I can endorse and support, and we should be seeing a lot more buildings doing it. Have you been in recent times on the other side of one of those deeds and you've seen it work effectively if we need to return to the deed and hold somebody, either side, to their obligations, or are you still seeing that play out?

Chris Duggan: It really does vary, and I must stress that this is not a one size fits all solution. This is a method of rectification that we find that works with a builder developer who is interested and committed to their brand. So, A, they want to come back and fix the defects, which is in most cases the starting point for good collaboration, but also where they're going to be committed to the product long term. They're committed to the customer in terms of return service, and they're also committed to their business or the special purpose view and thought their views being around post completion to actually give the surety that we need.

Have we had examples of where we've had to enforce that deed? Yes, we have. Many of the builder developers we're working with have taken time to get comfortable with the concept of, A, extending their statutory warranties because this was a foreign concept to them, and also a time to get comfortable with somewhat of an open ended compliance based sign off as opposed to a specific scope being signed off. And there is a degree of trust involved there. Working with a consultant team that is reasonable, that they understand is going to provide a sensible level of understanding as to the sound off is very important.

On the flip side, we've had buildings where getting to the 99th hour there and you're getting to the point where you need to wrap things up and you find that you just cannot get a sensible outcome. In those situations then we refer back to our lawyers and advisors. They may consider commencing proceedings against that builder or developer because we don't believe they're going to get the relief or the rectification they need.

Amanda Farmer: And always keeping in mind what the cost of that litigation is estimated to be and what the cost of rectifying those defects is estimated to be and trying as best we can to take a commercial approach.

Chris Duggan: That's right. And that means that the lawyer are still heavily involved, particularly during the drafting of the deeds and of the settlement process. It is still very much a process that doesn't sideline the need for legal intervention, it just takes a different path as opposed to using that legal intervention as a single course track to NCAT or the supreme court. It's using that only as a last resort.

Amanda Farmer: I think we're going to see this becoming more and more common with buildings in this situation trying to enter into these types of deeds to extend time or to record agreements. Something that I want to remind strata managers and even committee members is to be aware that this type of contractual arrangement might exist and you might not know it because you've inherited the building from another manager or you've just taken on the role of secretary and someone's sold and left. When I have buildings coming to me saying, "Amanda, we think we're out of time but is there anything we can do?" I always engage in this type of conversation with them and say, "Look, there may have been some deed entered into. There may be some contractual arrangement where the developer has agreed to extend time, and you could still be within time. Let's search the books and records. Let's talk to the former managing agent. Can we talk to the former committee members and just find out exactly what happened at that close to completion stage when we were first looking at defects."

For managers, it can be a trap for some players there that if you don't realise that this is an option that buildings could have entered into these arrangements, make sure you're asking those questions just to cover yourself.

Chris Duggan: Absolutely. And I think some of the important things to not there is we have a new regime of disclosure of motions particularly around first AGMs and AGMs that require and obligate owners to consider building defects from day one. That, to me, is one of the most sensible inclusions because it has a conversation and a discussion with owners at the very outset about what is required. Typically, where we would lead defects to form, call it that, or to surface, we're now bringing forward that conversation so that the first AGM or for the first year anniversary of those schemes, we're advocating that those reports be done again to make sure that time doesn't march on and you don't end up being constrained or limited in what actions you can take.

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Again, needing to reiterate that at a point in time you need to decide what strategy to go down. Some of those strategies may well involve the more traditional supreme court actions or court actions, and they are still in some cases very effective at giving outcomes that are acceptable to owners. But our experience is that generally those arrangements were not proving to provide solutions or outcomes that were acceptable to all stakeholders.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, definitely. Now, we both mentioned at the beginning of our chat, Chris, the building defects bond, part 11 of the Stratus Schemes Management here in New South Wales commenced on the first of January 2018. Is that going to solve all problems? A loaded question

Chris Duggan: Amanda, it is a very loaded question. At a political level, it is a measure being introduced to provide better protection for consumers. Is it a challenging system with a lot of detail to be developed still? Yes. Will it be ultimately a solution for owners corporations? In my opinion, not in its current drafting.

The challenge that we're finding is that statutory warranties will still continue to apply, and the defect bond system is effectively a different set of warranties and rectifications under a different regime, and the 2 will operate a 2 step defects process within a building. Any lawyer worth their salt will tell an owners corporation that the defect bond under part 11 will continue to operate, and there will be defects identified under a certain Australian standard report, and the developer obviously has some liability to that.

However, you will still advise your clients that they have warranties under the Home Building Act that still need to be maintained, that apply potentially to different defects, to defects that are identified after the interim report, which is this 1 stop shop report done at a very early period in the strata plan's life, which is the one and only opportunity for those defects to be nominated, and the method of inspection is far different and far less detailed and invasive than we're typically seeing under more detailed Home Building Act statutory warranty reports.

So, do I see it as solving the problems? Probably not. Do I see it as a good step forward in terms of making builders, developers more accountable around the way they build buildings? Potentially.

Amanda Farmer: I don't do too much conveyancing these days, but if I do I generally do off the plan contracts, a little bit more involved, and particularly in this climate they need a bit more detailed expert advice. I'm working with some purchasers now just having settled and going through their defects liability period, which is generally 3 months after the settlement. Developers who have been around for a while have a good name. I find they're generally in there and they're fixing things. I'm not sure post 1 Jan 2018 that the fact that they've got a bond being held is going to change that attitude. So, I agree with you. It's not going to solve those longer term problems that we see crop up close to the 2 year or after the 2 year mark, and we certainly do have the Home Building Act still there to provide those protections to the extent they can. But I at least personally do see it as a more of a political rather than a practical move in this sector, because I do find that good developers are in there, and they're fixing these obvious defects that are arising once the scheme comes off anyway.

Chris Duggan: Yes. I couldn't agree more. It is a system introduced to keep the lowest common denominator accountable. Unfortunately, it's more likely to give rise to builder developers potentially abandoning the bond and just leaving that there whether that 2% is sufficient, and whether there is appropriate administration of such a complex system in place is yet to be seen. There's still a lot of detail.

I do applaud the fact that the government has recognized that consumers need better protection, and we all agree with that. I don't know whether this is the most effective mechanism to achieve that, however like anything, you need to try it. We need to see how this pans out, and perhaps at the end of this we will either put it down as a raging success or use it as some sort of iterative process to a better protection system for owners and strata.

Amanda Farmer: For sure. We've got listeners, Chris, who perhaps they've just bought into a brand new building, perhaps they've been there for a couple of years. The committee is still trying to work out how to tackle this whole issue of building defects. Maybe they're working with their strata manager, maybe not. What's your advice for some quick action steps that those listeners in that

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position should be taking now to get started on this process or to approach this process a better way?

Chris Duggan: Firstly, understand time. It is absolutely critical because once you go over that time hurdle, you have no opportunity and no recourse. There's very little remedy you have outside of some very complicated negligence claims, which in our opinion are not overly successful and are very costly and risky. However, understanding time up front is key. If you're in a new building and you don't understand those timeframes and how they apply, that is your absolute number one priority.

After that, you need to get a group of collaborative advisors together, and that is a lawyer, an engineer or a series of engineers, and your strata manager, and understand what process you'll undertake and how you will do that. Then I've always found that engaging with the builder developer particularly based on our relationship that we have if we have advised the builder and developer through the inception startup days, we can use our leverage and our rapport with them to get at least a conversation started about what process is required or what interface we would like to see moving forward.

In some cases, that will not be possible, and you'll need to strategise outside of their involvement. That's why it said this is not a one size fits all solution. It's worked well for us because we are able to exercise our experience and our leverage with our stakeholders. Particularly if the builder doesn't exist anymore or if you can't get them in a room, then you need to strategise how you deal with those things in a much more effective manner, and collaboration may not be a solution. You may need to go for the jugular from day one and make sure you preserve your rights through the courts.

Amanda Farmer: Thank you very much for sharing that, Chris, and being so open and frank about the Bright and Duggan approach when it comes to this process. I think it was only a couple of episodes now that we had David Hampton on the podcast, and he was talking about the sharing of information and the specialisation, I guess, of certain aspects of your strata management business. He used the example of building defects. We're all dealing with it. Who's really focusing on it and who is developing those systems and sharing that framework so that we can all benefit from it and we're not repeating the same mistakes and all butting our heads up against the same problem. I think this has been a really valuable chat, not just for owners who are living this but for managers as well, so thank you very much for giving us that opportunity.

Chris Duggan: Oh, absolutely. This is an industry that does share information, and it does legitimately work in the best interest of owners. Strata managers do collaborate, and those shared learnings and that IP that we forward to better service our customers, to better enhance our skillset, and to be more valued to our clients is critically important. We all have a job to make sure that when we do come across alternative ways of doing things, which may not suit all scenarios but may be an option that owners can consider, I think we've got an obligation to make sure that we share that.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. I agree. Now, Chris, the last time you were on the show I asked you the book question. I want to ask you a variation of that question. I'm not sure if you're prepared for this or not, but what book do you most like to gift to people and why? And I will say I'm channelling my inner Tim Ferriss here, which is a question he likes to ask on his podcast. I'm stealing it. What book do you most like to gift?

Chris Duggan: Well, Amanda, you will find this either uncanny or not, but it is actually Tim Ferriss' "Tribe of Mentors"--I kid you not--which I will admit was given to me prior to Christmas a gift from one of my very close friends. I, too, listen to his podcast, and I must admit that I can go listen to his podcast, and then I'll pick up 3 or 4 books, and I just keep going through a cycle. I need to get through all those books. However, "Tribe of Mentors" as a book is a short series of those interviews with the best bits taken out, and they are literally life guiding bits of advice from people, not just similar to Bret Kelly's book that he put out, "Collective Wisdom", many years ago, which has taken the learnings from very successful people across a variety of industries and distilling that down into a book. I received it as a gift. It was very meaningful to me over this particular Christmas when I took some time out to reflect, so that will be my next gift.

It used to be Patrick Lencioni's "Five Dysfunctions of a Team," which I think I mentioned last time, however, I'm gonna shift it now to "Tribe of Mentors." Thank you very much to my dear friend that gave it to me.



Publication Date: February 28, 2018
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 101. A better way to handle building defects
disputes - with Chris Duggan**

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Very good suggestion. I purchased that in an airport I think when I was heading over to Hawaii just before Christmas, and I'm about halfway through it. So, no need to gift it to me, Chris. I already have it. You're going to have to think of something else.

Chris Duggan: I'll get something better.

Amanda Farmer: But if any of our listeners haven't come across that yet, we'll have a link to that in the show notes to make sure you can grab yourselves a copy. Highly recommended.

All right, Chris. How do our listeners find out more about you, and anything you want to wrap up with?

Chris Duggan: They can find out about Bright and Duggan at our website www.bright-duggan.com.au. You can track me down at LinkedIn, Chris Duggan. And what I'd like to leave your listeners with is all of this relies very heavily on a trust relationship between managers and their clients, and I would love to see that as an industry coming away from this that everyone better understands our role to work together and is more accepting of the fact that it's an imperfect system that is very complicated that we're all trying to solve. You will never get a silver bullet solution to these very complicated, expensive issues, but working together and accepting that you will have some hiccups on the way and those challenges are better accomplished together is what I'd like all of your listeners and strata managers to work with.

Amanda Farmer: Thank you. Very wise words. And I'll look forward to our next chat, Chris. I know it's there in the future. You'll be back.

Chris Duggan: I would love to be back. Thank you very much, Amanda.

Amanda Farmer: Thanks, Chris.

Chris Duggan: Cheerio.

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