

Publication Date: 13 August 2019
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 174. The unique role of the commissioner's office -
with Chris Irons**

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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.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome. I'm Amanda Farmer and this is Your Strata Property. Today, I am joined by Chris Irons, the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management in Queensland.

With over a decade of experience in leadership roles with the Queensland government, Chris has a wealth of experience in areas as diverse as real estate, liquor and gaming, and tourism policy and legislation. Prior to his appointment as Commissioner in November, 2014, Chris worked on a number of significant public policy initiatives, including the Safe Night Out reforms to alcohol-related violence, and legislative reform of Queensland's property agents and motor dealer laws.

As Commissioner, Chris leads his team of 30 officers in providing information and dispute resolution services to Queensland's community title sector. The Commissioner's office has exclusive jurisdiction to resolve body corporate disputes, while it's information service aims to prevent disputes from escalating. In particular, Chris plays an active role in engaging with the diverse stakeholders of this sector and is a regular presenter at body corporate seminars, forums, and conferences.

Today, I am delighted to welcome Body Corporate Commissioner Chris Irons. Welcome, Chris.

Chris Irons: Thank you very much, Amanda. Thank you for having me.

Amanda Farmer: It's a pleasure to have you on the show, Chris, and we met in person earlier this year at the Australian College of Strata Lawyers Annual Conference in New Zealand. It was lovely to see you there.

Chris Irons: Thank you.

Amanda Farmer: And I didn't actually know very much about your role until I heard you speak, and we had a chat. I very quickly, as a New South Wales resident, became jealous of Queensland's Body Corporate Commissioner. I think it's fantastic.

Chris Irons: Look, it's interesting that you say that, Amanda, because as everybody knows, there is a fair bit going on in strata world in New South Wales at the moment. It's very topical. I know that the government there has talked about it's intention to introduce, what it's calling most recently, I think, a building commissioner, Amanda. I think, previously, it was called a strata commissioner. I think they maybe had a different name before that.

But, you're quite right. My role and what my office does is not replicated elsewhere. So, right around Australia and, indeed, right around the world, governments provide strata or body corporate dispute resolution, and most of them also provide some education. None of them provide it in the same place from the same entity and certainly, nobody provides it linking the two together, as we do.

Amanda Farmer: It's very unique, and I think very, very useful for those who are in Queensland, and can access your services. Chris, I've mentioned a little bit in that intro about what it is that you do, but would you mind, just briefly, explaining your role and why it's important for people who live in body corporates to be aware that you even exist?

Chris Irons: We are established under statute in Queensland to provide information and dispute resolution services. As you said in your intro, Amanda, the dispute resolution services is an exclusive jurisdiction.

So, there's a small exception there for contractual matters. So, a good example of that is if somebody has a concern about the way in which a body corporate manager, or an onsite manager, performs their contract. That is a jurisdiction we don't have and that's

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handled by our Tribunal here in Queensland.

Chris Irons: Otherwise, every body corporate dispute in Queensland will need to be resolved by my office. So, that's one arm to it. And then, there's the information and education side of things, and we provide that in a couple of different ways. The main way, we have a 1-800 number. People call that number, they leave a message. We call them back, usually within an hour or two. We talk them through the issue. That is designed to inform, but it's also designed, I suppose, to dampen down disputes as well. A little knowledge can go a long way in this sector, as I'm sure you're aware, Amanda. I'm sure your listeners are aware too.

So, the dispute resolution side of things happens through two main ways. The first step in the vast majority of cases will be conciliation. That differs from mediation in that my conciliators will actually tell people they're wrong, which is quite confronting for those who've not used the service.

Amanda Farmer: That can be very helpful.

Chris Irons: It can be very helpful. It also results in people saying, "But that's not fair, your conciliator told me blah, blah, blah." And the response is, "Well, yes, that's their job." About 70-ish percent of matters which go to conciliation are actually resolved at conciliation, so that's a pretty good strike rate.

Then, after that, there's adjudication and that is a much more formal, on the papers, complete resolution process, in which an adjudicator, who's quasi-judicial akin, I suppose, to a magistrate in some respects, will make a decision on the papers. That decision can be enforced through the magistrate's court, and can be appealed on the point of law. So, that is the umpire's decision aspect of it, if you like.

Amanda Farmer: Now, how long has this process been around? Has this always been the process in Queensland? Or is this relatively new?

Chris Irons: About 20 years, give or take. Before that, we had, what's called a referee system. And we actually still provide referee services for a certain amount of schemes in Queensland, just a bit of carry over, a bit of legacy, I suppose.

It's been around for awhile, and it's an interesting kind of an issue and you would know, Amanda, at the conference you referred to earlier, we had a bit of a discussion about the role of my office. And there were at least a couple of people who weren't quite as enthused as perhaps as yourself, and didn't think it was appropriate that there should be one entity providing those 2 services out of the same place.

I get that. At the same time, speaking for historically why this is in place, I guess it's in place because there is a recognition, and this recognition is a law as well, that Queensland's body corporate legislation is complex, technical and difficult.

In fact, there is, I think, a district court decision which talks about the complexity of the legislation as it relates to compliance with it as well. So, because of that complexity, the government has decided and continues to decide that the best thing for those who are users, all those people who are participating, or living in, or owning in a community title scheme in Queensland, that they be provided with this service. If you want to think of it in philosophical terms or ideological terms, Amanda, if you own a lot in a community title scheme, it's expected that you are going to protect your investment by following through any issues that you have with it. So, that's that.

At the same time, in recognition of the complexity that entails, government provides a service which gives a range of options for people to, number 1, be informed. Number 2, to resolve the dispute if need be. Let's look at the flip side of that. You've got those who think that that might not be the best idea. So, you've got an arrangement, basically, where else can you have a situation where you're about to launch proceedings, and you contact the forum to launch proceedings and they will give you information about how you launch the proceedings?

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Chris Irons: You can't, for example, ring up the court and have a lengthy discussion with the court about what you can do to resolve the situation, how you go about doing it. That doesn't happen. But, it happens here. Now, that's an unusual set of circumstances. But, I would counter that, Amanda, by saying, "Well, we're dealing with a fairly unusual milieu, if you want to-

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Chris Irons: ... use that term. So, body corporate world is very much about justice services. I'm part of the Justice Services Division here in Queensland. It's very much about quasi-court, quasi-tribunal service. And yet, at the same time, body corporate world is also about social justice policy. It's also about housing policy. It's about a number of factors that are far less tangible than simply the delivery of a timely justice service.

So, even the slightly unique circumstances, Amanda, that's why these services are in place. And if I can put it in another way to you, body corporate disputes are entirely different than any kind of other dispute. So, say for example, you have a commercial dispute where there's a civil proceeding initiated. The 2 parties might have a court hearing, they might have arbitration. It ends, they go their separate ways and that's the end of the story. They don't see other again.

In body corporate world, you go through the dispute, it ends. But, you'll see them the next day in the car park. You'll see them the next day in the lift or you'll see them later on at a meeting.

Because of that unusual relationship, there is a recognition that body corporate disputes are unusual and they require a slightly, if you like, unusual method for trying to assist.

Amanda Farmer: I like that. I think that's part of the reason why I agree with you that this service works. I also have the experience of being in New South Wales without that service. We've talked about this a number of times on the podcast, the difficulties that owners, that residents, who want to commence proceedings face trying to get that right.

Particularly, where we have a tribunal, in New South Wales, that says they are an informal, non-lawyer space. They don't like us lawyers appearing. Yet, when an unrepresented person telephones the Tribunal to get some guidance on their application, they're unable to get that. And that's where I think there's a big benefit in the service that you're providing there, Chris.

Amanda Farmer: You have the adjudication process, which did you say, Chris, that's a paper-driven process?

Chris Irons: Yes, it is. Yes, on the paper.

Amanda Farmer: Do you find that people are getting lawyers to help them with that? Or is that more a non-lawyer space also?

Chris Irons: No. Increasingly so, we're seeing parties represented as a matter of course, Amanda. Informally, I think our stats are roughly a third of all matters now would have at least one or both of the parties legally represented. That's a reasonably significant number, I would suggest. And your point, just before, around informality is a really good one because that's how it's supposed to be here as well. Your average punter off the street is technically supposed to be able to access our services, make their case and get a result in their favour.

The reality, that certainly still happens, don't get me wrong, certainly still happens. The reality, however, is quite different. Particularly for very complex matters and there are some very complex matters in this jurisdiction.

It actually is in somebody's best interest to have a lawyer representing. And in Queensland, and I assume it's the same in New South Wales, Amanda, we are starting to see the emergence of specialists strata lawyers, specialist body corporate lawyers. That's certainly the case here in Queensland.

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Chris Irons: It is very difficult in some instances to argue for one's position without the benefit of legal advice in this jurisdiction. And that's a problem. Unless the other party is not legally represented. That's a problem.

Amanda Farmer: I know that cases in which I've been involved, whether as advocate appearing or whether as a lawyer assisting somebody from behind the scenes if you like, because they haven't been given leave to have me sit at the table, yet I can still be there passing notes and writing submissions and assisting from the background, I do find the cases where there are lawyers involved as advocates run more smoothly for both the tribunal and for those who are involved.

Our tribunal takes a view that only in the most complex of matters will lawyers be given leave. And that's even the case where both sides are going to be represented. I'm seeing that more and more, which is a bit of a shift for us. Often where 2 lawyers turned up, one for each side. The tribunal will say, "Well, you're both happy to have lawyers than I'm happy to give leave," but that's not really happening anymore. And I think that that may be to the tribunal's detriment, and potentially to the detriment of those using the tribunal, when it comes to the efficient conduct of proceedings and the quality of decision making.

Chris Irons: Well, it's interesting you say all of that, Amanda. I attended a body corporate seminar on the Gold Coast. We had, as we would normally do for a Gold Coast event, a big turnout, and shall I also say, a robust turnout. That's fine. I actually had a question from the audience from a lot than in a scheme who said to me, "Can you still stay in there and say that this is an informal jurisdiction where lawyers are not required?"

It turned out that this person was a lot owner in a very big scheme with a lot of complex issues. She was one individual who was having to launch proceedings against a legally represented other side.

She put to me that exact point, Amanda, and I had to say to her that I accepted her position and I accepted it was difficult. It still could be done, and I know for a fact that that particular person had a win against a legally represented body corporate.

So it can be done. I suppose the difficulty here is the intangible damage, if you want to put it in those terms. The stress, the time, the effort that goes into that. It's tough work. It really is tough work. I know this for a fact. I've got people who worked in this office, Amanda, for 20, 25 years, who the legislation inside out. But if those people are having to have a conference every other day with other members of staff to workshop an interpretation of a legislative provision, as frequently happens in this office, you can imagine how difficult it's going to be for the punter on the street.

Amanda Farmer: Absolutely. Just on that point about the expertise of your officers, this is another reason why I think your system is a good one and works for the unique situation that is body corporates. No doubt when people ringing your office for that information and education side, they are talking to your officers who are perhaps more experienced, more skilled in body corporate law than, say, our department in New South Wales, which is the Office of Fair Trading, which is dealing with a number of different consumer issues.

What we find when people are ringing up for information from fair trading, which is where our owners go if they want information, the quality of the information that's coming, often over the phone, is not very good. There is some inaccurate information that's being provided.

Do you feel that because of your system and because your offices are involved in the dispute resolution and the conciliation and adjudication process as well, then that level of education you've got a higher standard there of education when it comes to people ringing up for information?

Chris Irons: Yes, I would. However, and there of course is a but, isn't there Amanda? It's a double edge sword in a couple of respects. The first respect is that we tread a very fine line between our information and advice. We're very clear that we don't give legal advice. At the same time, there are plenty of instances where people will contact our office for general information, and our experience tells us that we know how that situation is going to pan out.

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Chris Irons: Classic example is in relation to keeping an animal in a community title scheme. That body of case law is now very settled, Amanda, by much. And we feel empowered to be able to say to clients, "I can tell you how this is very likely to pan out." So that arguably is stepping over the line a little bit. So that's one issue.

The second issue though, and this is a bit of a strange one, is that the more information we provide, it actually creates a rod for our own back, Amanda. I know this from actual experience, if me or some of my staff go out and do a public seminar, and that's right, we can expect a spike in calls in the following week or weeks thereafter because people who didn't know what they didn't know come along, get something clarified. The light goes off, "Oh, I didn't realise that our general meetings were not being conducted the right way. I better find out a bit more."

So the more we go out there and clarify, that's great. That's our role. It also creates a bigger demand on service as well, which in turn compromises our ability to continue to deliver it the way we'd like. So we're got to just balance that out. It's a constant issue to try and get that balance right.

Amanda Farmer: And looking at ways that you can deliver information and education, I know your website I've had a little poke around in, and you've got a question and answer kind of fill in a form and see if there's an answer that suits you. I think that's fabulous, and that's a really good idea that can be built on, building up a library of knowledge and pointing people in the right direction without them having to have a one-on-one with one of your officers.

You do point out a downside there to giving people information. I think on balance, my view is it's better that people are educated and understand what their rights are, even if that means that there's going to be a high demand on services. What we do in turn is become more a little bit more creative with how we provide those services and provide that information and make it as accessible and as user friendly as possible, which is definitely something that I think about with the way that I provide services.

I experience exactly the same thing. If there's an issue in the media or we've got a hot topic happening in New South Wales around strata, we definitely see the phone's ringing more and more. But I'm able to direct people to a podcast episode or to a media release where I've spoken about a topic, and I'm finding that that's really helpful, and that library just keeps building.

Chris Irons: Yes. No, you're absolutely right. I think on balance I would always preferred to leave people more informed, than less. Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Now, Chris, what does an average day look like for the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management?

Chris Irons: Goodness me. Okay, well maybe I do it by exception and give you last week's day-to-day updates. That last week, for example, I was out delivering a seminar to Mandarin-speaking on site caretakers, so a group of those. And I'm not sure if it's replicated in New South Wales or not, but there is an increasingly large sector of that client base in Queensland. That was really fascinating. Some needed translation, some did not. I got bombarded with questions. Fine.

2 days after that I went and delivered a workshop specifically with body corporate managers. We went through some common issues. And then we workshopped actually how to solve problems. I then delivered that in a different location 2 days after that. And then I delivered a public seminar, which was a question and answer seminar the next day.

So that was a slightly unusual, I suppose, day-to-day environment, but if you want to think about it on a day-to-day basis, it's a combination of all of the different arms of my office. So I might be having a discussion with my info team about our next round of seminars. I might then be having a discussion with our case management team about some of the issues in our dispute resolution process. Because our legislation is so prescriptive about the dispute resolution process, we constantly are faced with situations which don't easily fit. So, okay, what does natural justice demand that we do in this situation? We are always having discussions

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about that.

Chris Irons: Or I might be talking to the conciliation team about how that workload is traveling at any given time. Or I might be in discussion with the adjudicators about roughly the same thing. Inside, there is a balance of all of those different arms. Increasingly, Amanda, my role is about stakeholder management, as you might expect. It's not so much trying to keep everybody happy because that's impossible here. But it's about trying to keep everybody relatively not unhappy.

Amanda Farmer: Least unhappy.

Chris Irons: Exactly. Least unhappy. I've made the point of saying to our people and our stakeholder groups, "You've got an open line of dialogue to me. If there's an issue, give me the issue. If I can answer it, I will. If I can resolve it, I will. If need turning up to speak to your group is going to cut through on that issue, I'll do that too." So that's the approach I tend to take. Again, I come back to the point I made before, which is that's all great, but what that does do is just increases demand for that service side. Then it's about having to be creative, as you quite rightly pointed out, Amanda. So a lot of my work on a day-to-day basis lately is precisely on this point. How do we get a bit more creative in how we are delivering services?

We've got a few ideas that we're trying to push at the moment. One of those ideas is what I would term bluntness, or speaking a bit directly with our clients. So saying to them, "Look, you can do whatever you like. At the end of the day, we would suggest maybe not doing that. Here's why you're far better off taking this course of action."

So we're trying to change our messaging ever so slightly. Some of your listeners, Amanda, might be familiar with the concept of nudge theory, the idea that you push people ever so gently in the direction you'd like them to take.

We're definitely trying to do some of that work here in this office. Given that body corporate management in Queensland is legislatively stated to be about self management, self organisation, we're actually trying to push people more and say, "Well you know, if you want a resolution to your problem, that's great. We can give you this information, and we'd suggest that you think this way about it.

So increasingly a lot of my day-to-day role is working with the rest of my office to think about how we do that. One of the ways we do that is by partnership with some of those stakeholders I talked about before. So Collaborating on messages so that we can get a diversity of message. If I can give a couple of examples, we have recently developed a fact sheet on the installation of CCTV on common property.

Amanda Farmer: Great.

Chris Irons: This is becoming a huge issue in Queensland. I assume it's a huge issue in New South Wales, Amanda. It raises all sorts of issues for what the body corporate and it raises all sorts of issues for owners, privacy being most obvious one, but there are others as well. For example, an adjudicator's order in Queensland has clarified that if CCTV is a fixed common property, the footage of that is termed to be a body corporate record and therefore accessible by all owners potentially thereafter.

So that's now established. The issue for bodies corporate though is this idea that the footage is constantly overwritten in very short time frames. So what are they doing about record keeping? With that in mind, we reached out with Queensland police, and we developed the joint fact sheet about the installation and use of CCTV.

Chris Irons: That's now being developed and that's now out there in the public space, so every we get the call about CCTV installation, and we get lots of them, well as it so happens we have this fact sheet that we jointly produced with Queensland Police Service. Have a read of that and see what you think. Another example that we're working on at the moment is with our Department of Transport and Main Roads in Queensland to work on a fact sheet about towing. And again I assume that's a hugely topical issue in Sydney, in particular.

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It's certainly is in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. It's a hot topic issue. It's an emotional issue. It's a difficult issue for a lot of body corporate.

Chris Irons: What's the point of that? Well, the point of that is diversity of message. My office can talk very blandly about by-law enforcement, and how you get a towing. But Transport and Main Roads can talk about things like tow truck regulation. There are new tow truck regulations in Queensland that are now enforced, and which have some implication for bodies corporate.

So you get that message over there, you get that message over there. The combined message for the body corporate is, "Ah, okay, with us and the towing, here's what we need to do." That takes a bit of work, as you can appreciate, to get up and running, but we're starting to see the results of that, that diversity of message to get out a better spread of information on what seems to be just one topic. One topic, variety of perspectives.

Amanda Farmer: I love that. I just think that is so powerful. I love that your office is even thinking about this form of education, and is then even better actually taking steps to implement this stuff. So you've got fact sheets about a really hot topic. I posted about CCTV on the Your Strata Property Facebook page the other week, and we're running a poll at the moment. I'm talking about it. The lawyers post their articles, they post their fact sheets. But we don't have this authoritative body, like you do in Queensland, actually coming out doing the research, partnering with other authorities and groups to deliver these really important messages, that buildings can then access and if not solve a problem they're already in, avoid the problem altogether.

Chris Irons: Yes, you make an interesting point there about an authoritative message. I suppose, not being boastful, but we do have a pretty good brand. I have a pretty good brand. The office has a pretty good brand, Amanda.

2 things about that: That only comes about after a lot of effort and a lot of trial and error at, number one, but number two, branding and authoritative voices are much easier to lose than they are to gain. All it requires, from our point of view, is some missteps in our messaging, or some lack of consistency in what we are putting out there, or not being as accessible or visible or as engaged, and immediately that credibility will lessen.

Again, I come back to this point about double-edged sword. If we get results and we're achieving results, we have to keep achieving those results in order for it to continue to have value. Which is great, it puts demands on our services. This comes back to my point about trying to find different ways to deliver.

So your point about an authoritative voice is a really good one. I'm conscious of that, we need to actually maintain that voice in the sector. Because as you know, there are lots of different interest groups out there, all representing a particular perspective. The fact that there's one impartial body that can provide a variety of information and perspectives is really important in that context.

Amanda Farmer: I think it should be protected. Chris, you are a man on the ground. You're out there doing workshops, seminars, talking to managers, talking to residents. What would you say the most common body corporate problems are, and what's the solution? Hit us.

Chris Irons: Okay, so from a stats perspective, from dispute resolution applications that we receive every year, the top issues invariably are maintenance and the conduct of general meetings. On the maintenance front, the obvious example there is that eternal question, who's responsible, the individual or the body corporate? It's rarely clear cut. In some cases it is, but in most cases it isn't. The dispute is often about whose responsibility it is, and that comprises the bulk of our work.

General meetings are unsurprising that that would be a big dispute topic because so much can go wrong, because it is so regulated, because you start right back from the notice period, the distribution of notices, the putting in of voting papers, the conduct of the meeting on the day, who said what, who voted what way? And then it's about the implementation of the outcomes of the meeting. So, all of those components, it's almost inevitable that something is going to be challenged in that process.

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Increasingly we are seeing a body of work around Pectus bids, Amanda, that is increasingly one of our most disputed-about topics, which is really unfortunate because as far as I'm concerned, it's probably one of the most simple matters to resolve. It's very clearcut, yet there are so many disputes and misunderstandings about it.

By-law disputes, generally we're seeing an increase there, particularly around vehicles and towing. Again, hardly surprising, I suppose. So that's hitting on the stats perspective. If your question to me though is where are we seeing those disputes come from? I would say that we're seeing it come from a few factors. It always stems, I think, from a misunderstanding or a misinterpretation or a misapprehension about what the legislation says.

Then it's also this idea that we're dealing with people's homes and side of the happy and joyous, Amanda. They come because there's already some distress about a particular. And our role is to try and nip that in the bud, but sometimes it just keeps going from that point.

So we're in the business of trying to step in at different points of the process and wind it back a bit. They are the sort of the main specific disputes that we're seeing a lot of in terms of content, and when I say content, the types of issues that are presented to us as inquiries I find, interestingly we're seeing an uptake in smoking provided inquiries and smoking-related disputes. It's a very, very difficult dispute to resolve the way the legislation is set up and the way the case law has emerged there.

AirBnB and short-term letting continues to be a really difficult situation for a lot of bodies corporate. And again it's an emotive issue to how that's done.

And then one of the other sort of main areas of dispute is around the committee process, and things such as who is eligible, who is not eligible, whether a proxy was appropriately used in a particular circumstance, whether a power of attorney was appropriately used in a particular circumstance?

And then just simple things like has the committee overstepped its jurisdiction in a particular matter? That is a very, very common dispute.

Amanda Farmer: Do you think some of these can be solved with legislative reform? And does your office play any role in that process?

Chris Irons: Well yes, it can be. And indeed, there's a legislative reform process happening in Queensland around body corporate legislation. It's getting towards the pointy end of that process now. So in not too distant future it's anticipated there might be some draft legislation to consider. Will it solve those issues? I think some of them it will solve. Some unlikely. We're getting back to the pet issues, for example. One of the suggestions on the table was the idea that one is corporately empowered to prohibit pets completely. As it currently stands, that's not really a live option for a body corporate in Queensland. That issue is definitely on the table. No decisions being made.

Will that solve disputes? Well, it might solve that part of the dispute, but then it might have actually shift it to another dispute type as well. Do we play around with that? Yes we do. We don't write the legislation, but what we do, we provide technical advice, we provide statistical advice for the policy makers. And then we provide some reality testing.

So if our colleagues who draft policy and legislation come to us with a possible legislative solution, we'll test that with our experience and we'll say, "Look, based on experience, here are the issues you need to examine," or we might be able to produce a couple of adjudicator's orders. So here's how that issue was tested in reality by the decision maker.

Amanda Farmer: Great. A really important process, and your office would be a very important source of that kind of information. So I'm glad that consultation happens.

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Chris, there would be many Queenslanders and no doubt others around the country who are very interested to find out more about what your office provides. What would you suggest their best next step would be to start learning more or benefiting from your services? What should they do?

Chris Irons: Look, first option is to go to the website and have a look at the resources, Amanda. You can also go to the website and sign up for our newsletter, which is called Common Ground. That's available to anyone. I should have probably said right at the start of podcast, Amanda, that our services are available regardless of where you live so long as your interest is in Queensland. If you live in New South Wales but you own a property up here in Queensland, you can absolutely access our services and absolutely access dispute resolution if you want.

But getting back to that newsletter, if you sign up for that, that's how we'll keep people informed. That's also where you can get information about seminars. And again, for those people who are interstate, they might come up here for the holidays or work or to inspect the property, if that coincides with the seminar, come along. That'd be really useful.

Otherwise you can sign up for our webinar series which we are doing very similar to this. We're seeing a great take up in numbers on that moment. You can ask a question in live time. We then make the transcripts available thereafter as well, so that's the first place to go.

Then we have our 1-800 number thereafter. Some details about that are available on the website as well, www.qld.gov.au/bodycorporate, all one word.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. I will make sure that link is in the show notes for this episode. And the newsletter is called Common Ground and can be subscribed to via that web address.

Chris Irons: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. Now, Chris, I'm not sure if you are prepared for this question. Every guest on the podcast receives this question. What books have had the greatest impact on you and why?

Chris Irons: Well, Amanda, I'm assuming that a lot of your guests would possibly equate some kind of management or inspirational tome.

Amanda Farmer: Yes?

Chris Irons: I'm not going to. The book probably that's had the most impact on me is a book called Candy by Luke Davies. A film was made of it with Heath Ledger and Geoffrey Rush and Abby Cornish.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Chris Irons: I picked this for 2 reasons. There's the actual book and then there's the story behind it as well. For those I'm familiar with it, it's a pretty green tale of things going pretty badly for some people in their lives. Oddly though it has moments of kema, moments of unexpected poignancy. And it actually ends on a note of hope. And again, if you sort of read the book, you'll understand that that's a pretty surprising outcome for what the characters go through. So there's that.

Then there's the story behind the book. Luke Davies, the author, was recently the subject of the ABC's Australian Story. There was an episode where devoted to him.

The book is very much based on his own life, and was in a pretty bad place there for a long time. To the point where now he was nominated for an Oscar couple of years ago for writing the film Lion, the film Lion. The episode went into some detail about how he had found himself progressing from this bad place in his life to this place where now he's just written a new series for George

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Clooney. He's about to start work on a film with Tom Hanks.

Chris Irons: To me, that story is really inspirational from the perspective of there's always opportunities, if one is willing to think about it broadly. But there's also, I suppose, I like that idea of the survivor, somebody who has a very, very difficult set of life experiences and then emerges from it. Not necessarily being an Oscar-nominated writer, but emerges from it nonetheless. A bit older and a bit wiser for the experience. So I always return to that book over and over.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. Thank you for that suggestion. I know the movie. I'm going to check out the book. Well thank you so much Chris. Thank you for making yourself so accessible You're in a really important position and have so much important knowledge and experience to share. Not everybody in those positions does make themselves accessible, so thank you. I see you at speaking events. You just simply have to Google Queensland's Body Corporate commissioner or Chris's name and you'll see all the ways that he's contributing, both writing and speaking. I think Queensland is very lucky to have you, and hopefully you've been inspired some others maybe to take some steps in that direction in other jurisdictions.

Chris Irons: Thanks, Amanda. Much appreciate it.

Amanda Farmer: Now if there's anything you want to add, feel free. Otherwise if you do want to let our listeners know how they can contact you other than the website, feel free to do that as well, and we'll wrap up.

Chris Irons: Probably the other option for people is our 1-8000 number, 1-800-060-119. You leave a message there and we'll call you back. Again, to stress, you must have an interest in a Queensland property or a Queensland Scheme. You would be surprised the number of people who call us and have none of those interests but assume we will give them information about their property in Western Australia.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, I would not be surprised. I understand completely. We have a complex system, and the starting point is that they're all very different systems around the country, and not everybody knows that.

Chris Irons: Absolutely. I suppose if people want to find me on LinkedIn, they're more than welcome to do that too, Amanda.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. Thank you so much Chris. I'll catch you next time.

Chris Irons: Thank you.

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