

**Publication Date: 27 November 2019**  
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald**

Listen to this podcast episode [here](#).

**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. With a career spanning almost 20 years in the strata sector, Natalie Fitzgerald is an advocate for innovation and leadership in strata. Newly appointed as the general manager for Concierge at Home, which is set to take strata management to the next level. You'll find Natalie also presenting for City of Sydney's strata one on one workshops, for Deacon University, The University of New South Wales, SCA and Women in Strata where she's a member of our steering committee. Natalie is also the author of a yes unpublished collection of short horror stories. Title, pending. Oh, I'm looking forward to that one. Today, I am delighted to welcome back to the show, Natalie Fitzgerald. Welcome, Natalie.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Hi Amanda. So great to be back on the podcast.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. This is actually your 4th time on the show if you can believe that. We chatted way back in episode 21 about strata management contracts. We also had a chat in episode 80 about diverse strata committees and Reena was involved in that one too and then in episode 130, we talked about bullies in strata. So, we've covered off some important issues and I'm really excited to have you back to add to the repertoire.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Very excited to be here. Thanks, Amanda.

**Amanda Farmer:** And we are again today going to be asking some difficult questions and working through some hard situations that you, Natalie, think that strata managers are facing more and more. These are situations where there may be ethical issues at play. There may be issues in relation to residents' safety, health and well-being. How do we deal with those situations in a sensitive, professional, responsible manner? And there may be situations that we don't talk about so much and we should be talking about it.

They are things that you've come across I know in your day to day work as a strata manager, and you've seen your colleagues come across and hopefully you've got some guidance for us on how our managers might better deal with them as well. So, looking forward to getting stuck into it.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Thanks Amanda. Yes, I think it's really important that we come back to the foundation of what we're doing, which is creating and supporting community. And so, we have to look past the legislation sometimes on past strata and its books and come back to that concept of community and consider what are community expectations. And that's why I came up with these questions, some of which were real and some of which are hypothetical at least so may, but I'm sure exists for other managers and though let's talk them out and find out what other people think as well.

**Amanda Farmer:** Well, let's start with a scenario. If that suits you, if you want to lay it out for us, a situation that a strata manager might be facing, that raises some difficult questions and let's get stuck into it.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Sounds good. So one of my strikes really close to home for me as a member of women in strata and somebody who really advocates for women's rights is the matter of family violence in apartments. And the scenario that I mentioned to you Amanda and unfortunately this is a real one, is a situation where we have an owner who is very obviously being abused by her living partner.

The abuse can be heard, it's disturbing other residents, it's causing them distress as you can imagine, and the police are often called into these situations.



**Publication Date: 27 November 2019**  
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald**

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** When the police arrive, the woman will open the door and tell the police she's home alone, obviously out of fear, the police disappear and I get phone calls from owners and tenants complaining about the noise. In this particular case, the next old tenant went to the property manager who was insisting that we go to NCAT and send an issue, a notice of comply in relation to the noise.

That was something I felt uncomfortable doing. I thought I didn't have the expertise to be dealing with an issue that I saw obviously that are family violence, so I actually reached out to some family violence hotlines and while... So, Ian and under result issue in Australia, there is some availability for help if you reach out for it. And the ones I got was absolutely do not send a formal letter because it could provoke the violence.

So, I took a pretty strong sense on that that I am not sending that letter, I'm not putting my name on something that could result in somebody being physically hurt or even worse, because it provoked the situation and yes, I understood it was uncomfortable for the rest of the owners and yes there was a noise disturbance, but putting this person's life and safety has to be the priority. And I was really surprised at the amount of pushback I got from taking that stance from committee members in some cases and certainly from the female property manager for the tenant next door who's only concern seemed to be that I'm going to lose my tenant if you don't resolve this noise issue.

Obviously this wasn't a matter of people having parties on a Saturday night. It was a matter of lack of safety. And for me it was so important that I took the advice of the experts who deal with this on a day in day out, rather than potentially caused by the harm to somebody.

**Amanda Farmer:** Now, did the other residents who were experiencing the noise, and the disturbance, and the committee in particular, did they know that this was a case of family violence? Is that something you had to explain to them, were they in the loop about that?

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Unfortunately, the noises as they are was so obvious in terms of the situation that was going on, calls of distress and help and it is horrible and they do the right thing in that the police are called. But I guess is the level of frustration that we so often say in the culture, we have a victim blaming.

So, they've got to the point of, well, it's been 2 years. We're calling the place, she's telling the police lies. Therefore, it's now her fault. I mean, anyone who works in family violence knows that the time of most danger for somebody leaving that situation is when they first leave or in preparation of leaving.

So, these are all types of things that we need to consider. But on the other hand I get what the residents are saying. They are dealing with this distressing noise. It's waking up the entire building. It's happening at 2 o'clock in the morning. They are feeling powerless to do anything. So, in their mind, the only power they have is well, as the strata committee, we can say in our little world send the notice to comply. So, I think in their way, it's almost a mechanism for trying to help and trying to control an uncontrollable situation. But unfortunately the advice we had, or fortunately depending on how you look at it, it was at that was not the right thing to do.

**Amanda Farmer:** Was the hotline that you called able to give you any suggestions for how you might deal with that kind of a situation helpfully?

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Yes, they suggest getting in touch with the owner and asking really open ended questions. Are you okay? Is there anything we as strata manager can do to help you with anything in your living situation? So that if her emails or phone calls were being monitored, it came across as a genuine, we're just checking in on you as the strata manager, are your levies up to date?

**Publication Date: 27 November 2019**  
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald**

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** So, giving her an opportunity to ask for help without directly asking, what's going on so that she had a window, she hadn't taken that window and that's okay.

We give no judgment. I heard that in time she's able to find the results that she needs. But that was the balance and the line to take of yes, we all want to help, we all want to fix it. But unless you have the expertise on how to do that properly, we needed to make sure that we took advice from them, the experts.

**Amanda Farmer:** I bear in mind here that you're in your role as a strata manager. You have the terms of your agency agreement to comply with. You have the relevant legislation to comply with, you can only act on the instructions of the strata committee. And you have by the sounds of that gone above and beyond and extended your investigations to contacting these kinds of resources, the family violence hotline.

You've gathered some information, done some research for your committee and you've taken that back to the committee. I imagine you have a bit of a task on your hand then to convince the committee to take the advice of the experts and it's not you in this particular situation, it's these third party that's saying this is the best way to approach this situation. You can only act on the committee's instructions. So, if they don't agree or don't take that advice, or say no, we want to issue the notice to comply anyway. How do you deal with that?

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Yes, absolutely. It was a really difficult conversation to have and I was fortunate in that was a committee that I had a really good relationship with, and that I could be really honest with. So, I just said to them, if that's the path you want to go down and you really want to send the letter, I'm happy to give you the template but I will absolutely not put my name on it.

And I had to take a really moral stance, a value stance for myself in relation to this is not the right thing to do. Thankfully, eventually they were quite wanting to stick to the strata law at first, and they were living in. I understood that they were dealing with the distress themselves, having done it and being in the situation and they were looking for a solution. And then their mind that was a solution.

But eventually by keeping that open communication and being really candid about the situation, they were able to recognise that at the end of the day we have to protect this owner, first and foremost. And that conversation went full circle. I said there were liabilities in sending the letter when we have advice that said don't do it, and that tells us that was well hang on, is there a liability in not doing anything? What if something would have happened to her and we knew there was a situation and hadn't acted on it.

And that's how that whole ethical question comes up. Which side of that coin is correct, which is part of the reason I went and sought advice, because I'm not an expert in this area. I don't know, would we be helpful in sending the letter or would account out and that's why I needed to understand what we should be doing.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, and a really important lesson there for our managers who are tuning in and a good piece of advice that we do need to remember to reach out to places that we may not have thought as strata managers or even as lawyers or other service providers to this sector. We may not have had to go in that direction, but thinking outside the box and what is going to be best for this building as a whole, which includes all of our residents as well.

I love that suggestion. You didn't say no to the committee, you didn't say, no, we're just not going to do it. I'm not going to follow in your instructions. You said you can do it and I'll give you the content for the notice, but it's not going to go out on my letterhead. And I think that's fine. I don't see a problem with that from a legal point of view, you're giving them the resources, the knowledge that you're engaged, probably engaged to give them under your agency agreement, but you are taking what you have determined to be in that situation. They prop up professional ethical, moral position.

Publication Date: 27 November 2019

## YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Exactly. And again, it just came back to the, what is my role as a strata manager? And I can read through my contract and I can read through the legislation, but I have to come back to the core if it's about community, and what does the community's values and expectations need these situations as well? And beyond that, what are the experts are saying are the right things to do?

So, it's stepping outside of your strata bubble and trying to find a solution that it's going to accommodate everybody as much as you can in a situation that unfortunately shouldn't exist but does.

**Amanda Farmer:** Now, do you, Natalie, have the details of that agency that you contacted, that hotline number that maybe we can add to the show notes for this episode in case anyone finds themselves in a similar situation?

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Yes, absolutely. It was a 1800RESPECT, which is the national helpline that the, I believe federal government runs and I also called the Newtown Neighbourhood Association who are very good and open with giving information. The building was obviously in that area, but I think they'd be happy to help anybody.

**Amanda Farmer:** Excellent. Thank you. Very important situation to be discussing and I'm sure you're not the only manager, Natalie, who has experienced that or indeed committee member or resident. Have you got another scenario for us?

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Yes, a little less emotional, a bit more pragmatic. The old fire alarm going off and calling the fire brigades. I think is now at \$1,750 for a false call out fees so big hits to the pocket, but understandable why that exists. The fire brigade, clearly are trying to maintain their resources remain valuable for real fires, but what also happens is the fire brigade don't charge if they haven't been out generally in the six months prior.

**Amanda Farmer:** Right.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** So we have our by-laws if we're all over this, lets say if you cause a false fire alarm, the cost of that alarm will be on charged to the lot owner who obviously then has rights for recovery against their tenant. But the situation that came up is what happens if you haven't had a fire alarm for quite some time. It's 12 months, somebody sets it off, there's no bills, so they don't get invoiced.

And just by pure luck, a chance somebody else sets off the alarm two weeks later and they do get a bill because it's been past say that six months. Both of those people are culpable, they've done the same thing, but only one of them is getting billed. So who should be billed in that scenario? You should. Is there any right to bill anybody? Where do you draw the line in terms of what's correct and then this particular situation, this is a lower income area, the owners inclined enough actually said I don't want to be responsible for causing a tenant to go on to raise and potentially lose housing because they didn't pay a fine that if they had set that alarm off two weeks early, they wouldn't have even got. Kind of really drew up where we all kind of got on board with these by-laws and it became so expensive to have these false fire alarms and, but we were doing the right thing to protect the owners cooperation and that's correct.

That's what you're doing. But ethically is it correct to charge person number two and person number one? Just by timing gets off with the same behaviors, so it was just an interesting one that I don't necessarily have a solution for. I'm not suggesting that we'll go and get rid of those by-laws. It good to have, but perhaps, and Amanda, I know this is something you always say about by-laws is you need to leave a line for discretionary decision making, and maybe that decision is instead of it being the whole fee, there's an administrative fee that might be somewhere in the middle, but everybody gets charged when the fire alarm goes off regardless of whether the fire brigade show up or not. Not totally, I think depending on their building, there's different ways to come up with different solutions, but it was one hadn't even thought of prior to this. I'd always just gone, yes, its great by-law, or yes, of course you should pay if you set off the fire alarm, but hang on. That's a really important point.

Publication Date: 27 November 2019

## YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. I think part of this comes back to the way in which we draft our by-laws and being very careful to incorporate room for the strata committee to have a level of discretion, when it comes to the recovery of these types of expenses. And often when I say that, we should allow flexibility as strata committee members should be able to use their discretion. People say to me, well Amanda, what if they're not fair, that leaves a lot of important decisions up to the hands of just a few. And my response to that is, well these are the few who you have elected to be your representatives and assuming that you attended, the annual general meeting and that you nominated certain people and voted for certain people, then they should be the people who you trust the most out of any others in your building to be making these kinds of decisions.

So I think it comes back to that process, that time when you are electing those people to understand that if you do have by-laws that allow for discretionary decision making, then you're comfortable that you've got the right people in the job and if you're not comfortable, that you do something about that, that you put your own hand up for example or you tap your neighbour on the shoulder who you know is well qualified and quite devoted to stand for the committee.

These decisions have flaw on impacts and I think this is a really good example of a situation where the committee would have to sit down and say, okay, we've got this by-law. Do we have room to apply some discretion in our decision making? If we are going to apply discretion on what basis? Is that going to be applied? Is it because of the timing that we can then consider to reduce or waive the fee? Is it because of the tenant's particular financial circumstances, that we might make an exception in this case and how do we respond to criticisms, which we will undoubtedly get when we do that.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Definitely, and again, it's for me, it just comes back down to that building community and understanding each circumstance at the end of the day, there's by-laws and this legislation, but we're all human beings cohabitating, what is often quite small spaces. And the other thing I always go back to is has an effort been made to educate in relation to fire alarms? If you haven't told people about opening their door when the smoke is going to cause an alarm to go off, you kind of expect them not to do that.

Natural instinct when there's smoke in your apartment is to open doors and get it out there. Again, it's that education process and is not being done to the best standard it can be. And in that case you can wholeheartedly hand on hand say, here's your invoice, the causing the fire brigade to come out because we told you what to do on a fire and you did something differently. So it's about considering all of those elements and not just what's written on the paper.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. The other thing I want to recognise here, and it particularly relates to our first scenario as well, is the unusual position that the by-law making power puts us in as committee members, as managers, as people living in strata. Taking your first scenario as an example, if you were in a freestanding home, even if it was an attached terrorist or a semi-detached property and there was noise coming from the neighbouring property and it did sound like it was family violence, there would be no question to answer about whether you should issue a notice to comply or complain or exercise some rights under the law to complain. Because, by the way, you don't have one. So this unique living situation that we have raises these unusual and hard, hard questions about do we have a by-law, should we have a by-law? If we do have one, should we enforce it? And questions that some of us perhaps haven't had to think about or to answer before.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** I think there's also a miseducation out there that there's an obligation to enforce by-laws. That, of course, nothing in the legislation says by-law must be imposed. Then the case of the family violence situation, I actually had the property manager threatened to take me as a strata manager to NCAT to get an order to force me to enforce the by-laws. Now because I know there's no grounds to do that, but if somebody was less experienced to typically when those inexperienced property manager talking to them, they may feel falsely intimidated to go and take action that they don't have to take and the same goes for the committee. By-laws don't have to be imposed.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, it's a really good point to make. I get asked that quite regularly by clients and also by members inside our membership community. Where is it in the legislation that I can tell my committee, you must apply this section and you must enforce the by-laws. Well, it's not there, and we actually have case law in New South Wales to the effect that an owners corporation cannot be forced to make an application.

**Publication Date: 27 November 2019**

**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald**

**Amanda Farmer:** Of course, we have extreme circumstances where there may be a dysfunctional committee, a dysfunctional owners corporation that really should be doing things around the building and there may be room for an administrator to be appointed. But in the case that I'm thinking of, the solution of the tribunal was actually to recommend to the owners corporation that they convene an annual general meeting and put a motion to all of the owners in meeting, asking the owners to vote on whether a particular notice to comply, should be sent or not and not leaving it to the committee or the strata manager or the secretary to make that decision alone, but putting it to the owners as a whole so that the majority could have their say.

I thought that was a pretty good solution. Not relevant to all circumstances, but where there is a difficult question. Sometimes we forget that we have that opportunity to convene general meetings and just ask all of the owners. And in that way, I think it protects the committee members from criticism and certainly from personal liability and also is a helpful suggestion that a strata manager can give to a committee that's struggling to make a decision.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Absolutely. And it puts you back as the strata into that position of facilitator and not decision maker, which is one of the reasons I said to the committee with the notice to comply, no, I won't send it with my name on it, but I recognise your right to do that and I will give you the content to do so, because it's not my place to make the decision on whether or not to send it. That was it. Decision to make. It was just my place to facilitate the information they needed to make that decision.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, I really liked that. strata managers as facilitators, not decision makers.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Absolutely. And one of the big things I like to preach is don't have an opinion, which is why I went and got information from a source about this family violence situation. I may have had my own gut instinct about what I felt was right or wrong, but that was absolutely at the end of the day, irrelevant. What I needed was information from the expert to deal with this day in and day out, so don't have an opinion, don't make decisions. You're there to facilitate information.

**Amanda Farmer:** Okay. One more scenario maybe to wrap us up.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Sorry Amanda. Another one that's come up multiple times for me and I've had it spoken about at conferences is issues hoarding in apartment buildings, hoardings now recognised as being an a mental illness. It's something that we know is often something people can't help but do. It's part of the makeup of what they're going through in their lives, but there's no doubt that's an impact on how hoarding is and it's certainly a situation I've come across more than once. The question is when that hoarding starts having an impact on all those smell starts getting into, for example, into the common property often and in this situation, I'm thinking of an additional to having a hoarding problem. This particular Erna was a chain smoker. That was one of the mechanisms for dealing with their illness and that cigarette smell was also permeating into common areas and into other people's apartments. The question is where is the jurisdiction of the owners corporation? What rights does it have? And then also what is the moral and ethical responsibility to this owner who's not hoarding for fun. Nobody lives that lifestyle because they're enjoying it, they're doing it because they're unwell. So how do you look to support everybody through that situation where again, you're doing the right thing by all parties involved?

**Amanda Farmer:** Really tricky. I have been involved in a couple of cases where hoarding has been a problem and I became involved from an enforcement of by-laws perspective. This was a case where the balcony was being used to store quite a lot of items. So we were seeing a detrimental impact on the external appearance of the building and it was from that angle that the committee mainly wanted to attack the problem. And of course there is the health and safety issue where neighbouring tenants are affected by smell. Depending on what part of Sydney you're in. If you've got a balcony that's got a lot of stuff on it and things that shouldn't be there, you're going to have birds. You're then going to have what comes with birds. So indeed a difficult situation and from the safety perspective, fire safety is-

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Absolutely.

**Amanda Farmer:** ... another issue that comes.

**Publication Date: 27 November 2019**  
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald**

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Right?

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** It's also protecting values, right?

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** If you've got an apartment with somebody who's obviously hoarding and that's visible to people looking to rent or buying out apartment it's going to have a detrimental effect.

**Amanda Farmer:** But approaching that issue with the understanding that this is not necessarily a recalcitrant, unconcerned, troublesome tenant. This is a person who has a mental illness and I think if you can start from that point, that is going to change completely. The approach that you take, at least from the method of communication. Perhaps you might be trying to speak to this person rather than send letters and the time that you acknowledge this is going to take because you may have to involve, as we've talked about other agencies, other third parties who can assist maybe family members who understand how best to communicate with this particular person and to be all working together to solve a problem in the interest of the building as a whole.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Absolutely, and I think the first thing is to acknowledge is that nobody's saying there isn't a problem or that a problem that can be ignored. It can't be, either for the owners corporation and the impact on everybody else or for the particular or not, or tenant as the case may be in living in that hoarding situation. But again, sending a notice to comply isn't going to result in any outcome anyway.

Going to mediation, provided the other party or assuming they're even going to show up, which quite possibly they won't, again, not going to solve anything and even an order from NCAT, have you resolved anything? So you may go through the whole process and get as far as to get your order from NCAT that says comply with it, by-law or perhaps a financial penalty, but that hasn't resolved your issue of hoarding in the apartment.

So again, it's pulling in those resources from multiple places as maybe, certainly I find reaching out to family members has been very helpful if you're able to do that. And usually somebody in that situation will have somebody close, a family member who is visiting on regular occasion. So, it does need somebody on site to be proactive and paying attention to what's going on the apartment, but kind of really reaching out to family members, reaching out to, again, other community providers.

What I found really interesting is if it's a house, and somebody is hoarding, council will get involved and actually even go through court processes to get access to deal with the hoarding in apartment building. It's like a very little help. In fact, even when I quote as a strata manager, the answer I got was called a strata manager, as a strata manager I'm trying to get some guidance from you as to how to deal with this.

So it was about, again, reaching out to agencies beyond where you would necessarily normally call and saying, I just need some advice. What can we do? What can we do to make this process so that the outcome is the good one for everyone, which is at the issue of the hoarding a result. There's a plan in place because it will reoccur. If it's an owner living there, but you haven't resolved their mental illness, it will happen again.

What is the plan you'd then have in place when there are signs that the mess is starting to accumulate again who do you call? What resources do you bring to try and resolve it? And I know I've heard what conferences people say, Oh, these people should just live in a house on a farm. Well, yes, maybe ideally. But we live in a world that that's not necessarily a solution and we are all human beings and we all have our flaws, and that's a pretty big one that we have to go or okay, there's a legal solution and we can be successful in that legal solution, but we haven't actually gone anywhere near the resolution that we needed in terms of community, which is getting the hoarding out of the apartment.

**Publication Date: 27 November 2019**  
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald**

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. And I think approaching these issues, recognising these shades of gray and the personalities that we are that take on these roles in strata management and in strata law, we have personalities that perhaps take a very black and white approach to the world and to problem solving. And that has served us very well for a long time, and maybe being part of our success and then encountering these new and difficult situations where we have to recognise the shades of gray and that yes we have our black and white approach on the one hand. But to be able to deliver that in a way that is retaining compassion, and understanding and recognising, that it's not one size fits all in our world.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** And you're not going to get the outcome that you need by applying one size fits all. I mean, just quickly, the other one that always comes to mind is the crying newborn in the apartment and people complaining. And my response to that is always I guarantee you that mom, dad, or mum and mum, and dad and dad, are far more stressed out about the situation in the crying baby than you are. And this till shall pass and you will once a baby and you may be having a baby sometime in your future.

We all just have to live with the fact that sometimes human beings like being in close proximity and can hear each other. And I live in a detached home, and I can hear the little girl next door who has nutness and runs up and down the hallway at 2 o'clock in the morning. I can make an issue out of that, I can go and have fights with my neighbours. I can be compassionate and go, oh my gosh, the poor thing and, hey mom, here's a bottle of wine. Because that must be really hard for you too.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, exactly. And living so close to your neighbours. What a great opportunity to knock on the door and say, "Hey, do you want me to sit here with you for half an hour while you put some washing on? Or have a cup of tea, or actually get something done because I'm right here and if it means half an hour a piece for you, then it's half an hour piece for me too."

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Exactly. It's coming back to that community that used to happen so naturally and I'm bolt back to it in that the hate waves that we've been having, and the fire issues of my mom reminded me, do you have at least neighbours go and check that they're okay in the heat, that they won't turn their air conditioning on because they're trying to save money.

So, it's just that reminder that we're all in this together and that we're human, and there are going to be good things and bad things and fullest that come with that. When you share a wall with somebody or a floor or a roof that's bought into even more magnified situations than it is necessarily when you are in detached housing situation.

So, I think the more we educate, the more we talk about the human element of what we're doing, and the shades of gray, the better the outcome is going to be. And if we focus on the outcome, which is in this case, the baby that eventually sleeps through the night, hopefully the woman who's able to get the help she needs to leave that relationship, that's obviously damaging to her and putting her life at risk.

The answer to the fire brigade call out fees or people getting charged, what's fair and reasonable for those situations. If we keep our mind on that, those are the outcomes we want to achieve and work backwards and put the human element into the solution becomes a little more obvious.

**Amanda Farmer:** I think what I'm picking up here as well, when we talk about being in it together and sharing space, I think we're also talking about sharing knowledge and sharing experiences, particularly among strata managers. And we've got a wonderful platform here where I'm able to invite people like you on the show to talk about these kinds of experiences and to share the methods that you've used to solve them and that is an incredibly valuable resource.

But how often are strata managers sharing their experiences and sharing their solutions? Do you feel that managers are able to ring up other managers in other companies or send an email and say, "Hey, I'm going through this in a building. Have you gone through it and how did you solve it?" Do we have a culture like that in strata management?

**Publication Date: 27 November 2019**  
**YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 189. Strata managers as facilitators not decision makers, with Natalie Fitzgerald**

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** I think in some ways we do. It's certainly a small industry or a small sector, and that's definitely when you know that somebody has done something big, so it's a public situation evacuating the building for example, then you will reach out to all the people who've done that, and these kind of smaller cases. I think the default more is to have a complain and a whinge about a situation rather than saying, "Hey, I faced this. This is what I did. What do you think? How have you dealt with it?"

And the hoarding situation is far more common than we're talking about. I'm sure everyone I bring it up too is how the situation, I've certainly had more than one in my lifetime off the top of my head, I can think of five. So, there's definitely re-occurrences of these types of situations where it's kind of almost easier to just go. oh, as opposed to saying, okay, but this works really well. What's worked for you? Let's pull these resources and come up with outcome driven solutions where everybody gets to where they need to be.

**Amanda Farmer:** And over time, hopefully we're learning how to do that better and we're building resources like this one where in strata managers can find the answers to those difficult questions or at least some ideas and some direction.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Absolutely. And the more we do that and then when we get rid of the verses that that has to be a win, lose. It is possible so often to come to win win if you just focus on outcome.

**Amanda Farmer:** Excellent. Now, I am, before we wrap up, going to ask you the book question, Natalie, what books have had the greatest impact on you and why?

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Yes, I'm a bit of a bookworm because I'm an insomniacs. I'm reading constantly. Then at the moment, I'd have to say about Heidi Dening, Her Middle Name is Courage, which is a book all about self-leadership as Heidi puts it, and about recognising doing what you love and it's so important.

I think for us to really affirm in ourselves that we're doing what we love and to make sure that we're putting ourselves first in those scenarios, particularly for women, it's really easy for us to put ourselves second or third or fourth or goodness, it's Christmas Season coming up. So, we attempt on that list and hiding self-leadership really puts you in a place where you can't hide from your own visions and dreams and it gives you the kind of tools to look to achieve the best from those.

**Amanda Farmer:** Thank you for sharing that. I do know Heidi Dening personally, and she is not just a fabulous author, but an excellent health and wellness coach working in the corporate space. I will definitely put a link to her book there in the show notes. I'm so glad you enjoyed that one, Natalie. Now, let us know how our listeners can find out more about you and perhaps importantly where they can contact you to answer these hard questions when they come up with a difficult situation, they know who to turn to.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Absolutely Amanda, I'm easy to find on LinkedIn's, Natalie Fitzgerald and as of January, 2020 you can find me hanging at Concierge at Home, where we're looking to bring services where the answer isn't no, but always a yes. So, really excited to be working for a company who are all about literally changing the dynamics of what it means to be a strata manager. So, you'll find me there, and we're doing some pretty big things. It's very exciting.

**Amanda Farmer:** Very exciting times ahead, we will be watching closely. Thank you so much for joining us yet again on the show, Natalie, and I'm sure you will be back sharing some more words of wisdom. I look forward to seeing you again soon.

**Natalie Fitzgerald:** Thanks, Amanda. Great to chat again.

**Outro:** Thank you for listening to Your Strata Property, the podcast, which consistently delivers to property owners reliable and accurate information about their strata property. You can access all the information below this episode via the show notes at [www.yourstrataproperty.com.au](http://www.yourstrataproperty.com.au). You can also ask questions in the comments section, which Amanda will answer in her upcoming episodes. How can Amanda help you today?