

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

Watch the video [here](#).

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome to this summit session. I'm Amanda Farmer, the founder of Your Strata Property, and your Summit Host. In this session, I'm interviewing Cat Carmichael, the CEO of Strategy 123, and the immediate past president of the Community Associations Institute in the United States. Cat's focus is on community management. What we know as strata management. She is a powerhouse of ideas and creativity around improving the community management sector so it can best serve the many, many people living in community associations in the U.S.

All of what Cat shares in this interview is very relevant to us here in Australia. Now, this summit is all about shifting your perspective, finding new ways to tackle difficult problems. Problems that may have increased now that we have more people at home than ever before. The summit is also about action. How can we put these great lessons to work in our communities? Right after the interview, I'll be back to share with you my own summit shift. That's just one takeaway from this interview that I want to make sure you do not miss.

This one is really important. Cat calls out a very large elephant in the room in part of this interview. After the interview, I'll also tell you how you can get your hands on the Summit Souvenir Playbook. My special summit bonus that's going to be your ready reference for taking action once the summit is over. Right now, let's head over to my chat with Cat Carmichael.

Cat Carmichael, welcome.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Great to see you again, Amanda. Thanks for having me.

Amanda Farmer: Great to see you again too Cat. Indeed, it's not our first time chatting here today. You have been a very engaging, popular guest on my podcast back in episode number 176. That was a year ago. That was August 2019. Time flies.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: If only we knew what the world was going to be like.

Amanda Farmer: Well, exactly, isn't it a different world now?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Only 12 months ago. Back then we were talking about the question that Strata Managers must ask their clients. That's the title of that podcast episode. If any of you is wondering now I put that out there, the question that you recommended Cat, that managers ask their clients is, what do you want your community to be like?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: If our Managers were asking their clients, their strata buildings, their communities that question, then they were going to be able to better deliver the services that that particular community wanted and needed.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: That's exactly right.

Amanda Farmer: A really great chat that we had back there in [Episode 176](#). If any viewers haven't checked it out, go and do that. We'll put a link to that under this video. Today, as we've said, a little bit of a different world there, Cat. Times have changed. I want to ask you, where has COVID impacted community association management most significantly? Over there in the States, what we call strata management, you call community association management. Can you give us a bit of a summary of the COVID impact?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Absolutely. Well, one of the things that has been most obvious is that community managers have proved that their services are essential. In fact, in the U.S. several governors have actually even said that Community Managers and Property Managers are among the most important essential workers that we have. That's been vitally important to Community Managers, but as I said, of course, they already knew that. The biggest impact for managers though right now is that the nature

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

of their services is that they must be in their communities. The requirement to physically distance has been very difficult for them. They've had to learn how to do something that is generally an on-premise service, virtually, and that's been a real struggle. The way Managers are, they've found a way to not only serve their clients, but to be great service providers for their homeowners.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Now you said there, Cat, essential services, have you had in your law and in your government regulation, similar to what we've had here, certain services that haven't been able to continue in-person interactions and in-person or on-premise business and other services that have been legally classified as essential, and they can therefore continue? Are you saying community association managers have formally been put in that category?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: In some states that is the case. Yes. The governors of these states have actually said that community managers and property managers are essential workers. Although they went home to work virtually none of what they had to do to perform the business of the association changed at all. In fact, they had to negotiate tremendous struggles because some of the laws in the states in which we operate limited their ability to deliver some of their services virtually.

There's been a lot of innovation and a lot of risk taking but it just had to be done, because not only did the essential business of the association have to go on, but the regular business did too. We still needed to replace roofs. We still needed to paint buildings and hire landscapers and do all the things that make communities great. Yet, things that are legislatively governed by either the governing documents or the state law, like annual meetings, have been a real struggle because there was no guidelines.

We had to make it up and almost dare the legislature to catch up, let the law catch up with what the reality of service to community associations was actually like now.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. We have definitely seen that here too. The law, not quite keeping up with what we needed and indeed what we're doing on the ground. We're definitely going to get into some of those innovations that your communities and their managers have been coming up with.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: I know in the States, in some of your communities, you have a little bit of a different setup where you actually have the community manager on site and a full-time employee, if you like, of the community. Maybe a bit more like a building manager that we would experience here. Is that the case that you've got ... Am I right about that, that you've got community managers managing an entire community and that is their job, their sole client, if you like?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Yes. In fact, some of those large-scale communities can almost be looked at like a small city. They'll have a number of staff members that will report to the Community Manager. They'll have maintenance personnel, security personnel, a variety of other people. Frankly, they all had to figure out a way to get their work done without interacting with the public, which is the hard part of the community management job. This is not a property management job, it's community management. The key difference is that they're members of the community.

When association managers had to lock their doors and not let their customers walk in to ask questions or to conduct business, or transact simple things, it was really difficult for them. That's where luckily the population of the communities caught up very quickly with how the Managers were going to still take care of what their needs were. That's been the good news. They've adapted well as well.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. I'm going to ask you next, Cat, about this shift to online, but I just want to point out there some terminology that you've used. You said we're not Property Managers, we're community managers. I love that. As I said earlier, our managers here, we call them strata managers. Odd term, not used anywhere else in the world, they're managing a building. Well, no, we're not managing a building, we're managing people, we're managing communities.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Managers have a phrase that really is understood by other Community Managers and if we truly were just property managers we'd have the grassed mowed, the flowers planted and the buildings painted and be done by lunch. That's not what we are. We're Community Managers. When you factor in the human element to getting all those things

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

done, that's what differentiates community managers from Property Managers as well.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Let's talk about how we've been able to continue to consider, to factor in that human element at a time when we can't have, or have restricted or reduced community contact or person-to-person contact. Have you seen a dramatic shift to online? How has that played out?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Well, it actually has been a very dramatic shift and there's good news and bad news about that. There's no question that community management is a esteemed intellectual endeavor. You can't google how to be a community manager. You can google some of the things a community manager does, but you cannot figure that out because Community Managers' results are based on their education and their experience, not just on getting tasks done.

The technology has enabled us to get a lot of tasks done, but the Community Manager's skill has been in orchestrating all those tasks and achieving the board's goals and taking care of stressed-out residents and things like that. That has made the community still be healthy. Yes, online presence for routine tasks has absolutely exploded. I can't even imagine anyone wanting someone to bring a check into their office to make payment anymore, or to submit an architectural application over the desk of a Receptionist.

It just doesn't need to happen to anymore. That's good news because managers have a higher and better purpose, and that is to help these communities stay healthy and to help the boards achieve what their goals are.

Amanda Farmer: Have you seen in your experience, Cat ... And I know you work with a variety of different community managers and different businesses in particular that are offering the community management service. Have you seen some businesses more able to accommodate and adapt to that change than others? I imagine similar to here, some businesses have been operating on what I call that higher level, perhaps with more ability to interact online and have those services available to their customers, and others who've had to scramble to catch up and make that shift over.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: That's exactly right. If you were prepared for this going in, you were much better prepared to continue business without interruption, but there were some people who had to scramble. There were some dicey decisions that some management company executives made because they didn't have the capital or the infrastructure or the training. Or even worse, they didn't have the trust and empowerment in their teams to trust them to go work remotely and to produce what their contract said they were going to produce. That's been a short learning curve.

You can't sit on the sideline anymore. You absolutely had to keep your company afloat by competing at the same level as even the more sophisticated companies and getting the service to your clients through online meetings. Meetings is the most perfect example. I mean, Community Managers, I'm sure strata managers as well, might have a portfolio of clients that might have to conduct eight to 10 business meetings a month. In the U.S. most of those meetings are done after normal business hours.

That's been incredibly difficult and taxing for community management professionals. You just can't maintain that awareness and sharpness, and neither can the board members, frankly. The fact that we've been able to shift meetings to virtual has not only allowed managers to serve more clients. They've allowed them to do it during daytime hours, and have allowed more community association residents to participate. Because you can tune into a board meeting while you're cooking dinner, or you can tune into a board meeting when you're supervising your children's homework assignments.

That's been one of the greatest changes that I hope will never go away. This is one of those areas, however, where legislation absolutely must catch up. Sometimes legislation is written to penalise the actions of some bad boards and it winds up impacting the entire industry. It's going to be tough for the legislators, like in California, for example, who have laws on their books that say you must have a physical presence for HOA meetings. They haven't conducted any California state business any way other than virtually for the last 4 or 5 months.

It's going to be very tough for them to defend the position where they won't let small businesses and nonprofits like community associations to work in exactly the same functions as the legislature themselves work. We're actually excited about that.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Very good point I think, indeed, it has become a time of inevitability. This was coming, it needed to happen.

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

We've needed reform in a number of areas of our legislation. We're the same here in Australia and we're seeing that gradually start to happen because there's no other choice. These meetings have to continue on and they have to continue on in a way that's legal and is not open to challenge. I'm sure you're right that that change is around the corner.

You mentioned there, Cat, trust. You were talking about businesses trusting their employees to work from home. What about the communities going through these shifts? These changes in procedure, the shift from in-person to online, different types of meetings. Do you see trust in your community trusting its community manager playing a role there as well?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: I absolutely do. It's not that community management is the first business to go virtual. It's happening in every single part of the world. You have virtual doctor's appointments now. Community managers are just acting like every other business in America is acting right now. The one thing though that we just haven't been able to replace is the social component of a good community association. People have tried. They've done quarantining parties and they've done karaoke parties and carry on and other fun types of community gathering events, but they're just not the same.

For people who are used to enjoying the amenities of their community, they're feeling cheated. Some of them feel that if they can't enjoy their clubhouse or enjoy their pool or their hot tubs that they think they should pay less of the assessment because that amenity isn't available. That's been a little bit of a challenge for managers and boards to explain really the breadth of the budget and where community association assessments actually are spent. I think really it's even more than just being able to take a dip in the pool.

I think it's just seeing each other and having that shared sense of similarity and belonging in the same community. I haven't figured out how any online tool makes that okay, and so think that ... I mean, in some community associations, as you know, in different parts of the U.S. there's different rates of infection in the United States. So different communities can take different steps that wouldn't be prudent in other places.

Those communities are getting a little bit more engaged. They're may be doing ... Like in my community association we have food trucks come on this weekend.

Amanda Farmer: Oh cool.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: You still get to grab your food and social distance, but it was fun just to see people.

Amanda Farmer: I love that. I love that. So creative. It's such a different way of doing things. You are having food trucks so you're not ... And may be in the past, you would have had the community come together and everybody brings their food or you go to a location, a function center or a space, and you all sit together. Having the food trucks, which I'm sure are all COVID-safe, as we say, and have the proper procedures in place, and then you can stand around in an open and outdoor space and enjoy each other's company. I love that.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: That was our next step in the right direction. Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Fabulous. You've mentioned there, Cat, assessments and people who are a little begrudging perhaps having to continue to pay their assessments at the same level. That's what we call levies here in Australia, in most of our jurisdictions, or contributions if I am to cover all bases here. We have the same issue here where people are saying, "*I can't use the pool. I can't use the gym so why should I be paying for it?*" Do you have any creative answers for that? What do your Community Managers say, or what do you help them say in response to that kind of complaint?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Well, that's tough. I mean, this is one of the hardest things that Managers have to do, is to be educators. I feel like you always have to start with the principle that people are well intended. Assume positive intent, and then just start to educate, help them understand that the assessments that they pay every month was set by a budget that was adopted at the start of the fiscal year and it covered insurance and reserves and a myriad of other line items in the budget. You generally can get people to cooperate.

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

The other interesting thing here is assessment collections. I don't know if you've experienced a rise in delinquent accounts. We haven't had as much of a surge as we had feared. We've had an uptick of about 2 or 3% per community association and that's been really, really good. We think that's possibly because people have record amounts of equity in their properties right now, and it's pretty easy for them to cover those expenses.

That's in the near-term, I think in the long-term, we're probably going to see more homeowners struggle and have to make tough decisions about what they're going to pay.

Amanda Farmer: Are you encouraging Managers to work with their communities to plan for that and to perhaps try and forecast out a couple of years? Maybe 5 years, best case, medium case, worst case scenario. What if half of our owners are not able to pay on time or at all, what reserves do we have in place? What's the contingency? What's the emergency plan?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: They haven't quite gotten around to shocking their financials that severely in the long-term just yet, but I'm actually quite worried about that. I'm worried about that for some psychological reasons. I'm not a psychologist, but I know that many, many people who sit on Boards of Directors average age in America is 65 years old of our board members. Those are the folks who were raised to have progressive growth in their income, practice prudent expense management and wind up with a really strong retirement at the end of that hard work and scrapping and saving that they had.

Yet now here they are unable to really execute on those retirement plans that they may have had. I'm fearful that that kind of mentality could translate to community association budgeting where boards might say, *"Why should we plan for the future? We might not even have a future, so let's just deal with the here and now. Let's just make everybody more comfortable. Let's reduce fees. Let's not bother to reserve."*

I'm very concerned that there could be almost a psychological whiplash against that kind of planning that you just suggested would be so prudent because people are so fearful about the future. If you have any of your audience members who are Psychologists, I'd love to know what they think, because that's my own little theory, but I've seen boards before make bad decisions about long-term planning. We're in the middle of a pandemic so I feel like they may decide, *"It's not up to me to make my community healthy in the future because I don't know what the future is going to be."*

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Wow. That's a really scary thought, but I can absolutely see how that could play out. I'm sure there's many people watching this who are saying, *"That's my committee. That's what we call the committee or the council. They're exactly the people on my committee. Pandemic or no pandemic they've always been that way. They don't necessarily want to plan for the future and are only concerned about the bottom line right now."*

That is a worry and that shouldn't of course be the case of the people who are trusted to lead our communities. I talked about that in my chat with Charles Vogl in another summit session, where we talked about how important it is for that small core, that strong core of leaders to build trust and for other owners, residents, to understand what they are doing for the future. That they are leading the charge here.

I suppose one way ... if you're attuned to that, as you are Cat, and concerned about that, one way to deal with that is to try and infiltrate, if you like, that board, that committee, that council as a person with a different view of a different generation perhaps, with different skills and experience to bring that forward and bring those ideas of planning for the future to the forefront.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: I think that's vitally important because people are all feeling slighted. They're feeling slighted for some reason or another, that they didn't get the European vacation that they had hoped or that they didn't get to use the pool today, and that's tough. You really do need someone who's a tremendous bridge builder to be able to hear and bring in those points of view, even if it's more difficult to build consensus. The road map is really unclear right now.

In spite of the fact that all of our training and all of our good judgment says that we should do this type of planning to make sure the association stays healthy, the human element right now is even harder.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. One thing that we do have in Australia is requirements, legislated requirements, to forecast and to plan. In

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

New South Wales, we call it a capital works fund forecast, or a capital works fund plan that has to be prepared for over a 10-year period and has to be reviewed every 5 years. Do you have anything like that in any US states that you're familiar with?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: We have it in about half the states.

Amanda Farmer: Right.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Only about half of the states require some kind of reserve planning and very few require that board's fund to the plan at all. Boards have a wide variety of discretion in their ability to decide how much to reserve for it. You're right. In some of the more legislatively restrictive states like California, for example, you have to have a professional research study done every three years and the board has to look at it every year and make a statement about its adequacy. They can still decide to fund it or not, but that's only half the states.

That's why there is needs for things like banks loans for some community associations, because they just simply haven't done the planning that you said. It's such a different world now. I'm actually thrilled to be in it because it's fascinating as a practitioner of community association management, to see what boards will do. The hardest part about it is it's still their community and that's really hard for Community Managers who could offer what they think is a best practice and yet the board is still going to decide to set aside their advice to save a couple of bucks for a homeowner per month.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. To their long-term detriment. I agree.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Look, I find this a very fascinating time as well. I find it a time of great opportunity for so many players in our sector, whether you're a Manager, whether you're a service provider like myself, like a Lawyer or an Engineer or an Architect, a Developer, whether you're an owner and a committee member. There's just so much change happening, so much force to change.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Then we're being forced to think about things differently. Meetings is of course the classic example that we're all thinking, *"Wow, this is easy. Why weren't we doing this before?"*

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Right?

Amanda Farmer: There's lots of examples of that. We talked there, Cat, about the social interaction and owners and residents suffering from the lack of that and how that's really difficult to replace. How are Community Managers going with the lack of social interaction? If your sector is anything like ours, I call it work hard, play hard, I know here a lot of the managers are missing their conferences and their interstate travel and catching up with colleagues? How are you guys coping?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: The same way. One of the best things about this profession is the incredible network of peers. It's funny, I'm talking to you tonight. Tomorrow morning I'm talking to a software company from Turkey.

Amanda Farmer: Oh, great.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Because they're hopeful to influence some technological advancements in the United States.

Amanda Farmer: Nice.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Aside from these amazing relationships, we just miss each other. You're right. We've had to cancel all of our local/international conferences and events. We really, really not only do tremendous amount of learning, but the connections are lifelong and so you really miss those things. The managers are doing the best that they can. Very small group interactions, a little bit of virtual get-together, that type of stuff, but it's tough for us. If you've got any great suggestions on how you

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

and your colleagues are handling it in Australia, we'd love to hear them.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Look, I've been part of, both within Strata and outside of Strata, some great group get-togethers using technology like Zoom and Zoom meeting rooms in particular, where you can actually have everybody together on the call in one room, and then you can send people off to virtual meeting rooms in small groups of four or five, to then have a little network and a chat together. I've seen groups that I've been part of have scheduled these kinds of events, where they have then sent out to you a little care package in the mail before the event starts.

You've actually got a little mini bottle of wine or champagne, if you like, so you can have a little sip of that while you're networking and a little snack and maybe some inspirational cards or whatever it is in the care pack. You feel like you're going to the event, but you're here at home. You've got the goodies in the goodie bag that everybody else has got and then you're chatting, you're listening to the speaker in the big group, and then you're going off into the small group of 4 or 5 to do your networking.

At first, it's a bit weird and it is very hard to converse in a small group like that when someone's on mute, you don't know who's talking. You want to say something in particular to that person in the top right but you don't want to be rude. It takes time and it takes practice, but it is definitely a way and one of the few ways that I agree we can be finding that same connection these days.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Well, I think it's definitely worth trying. I certainly hate to sunset our careers without having the amazing ability to relate and to support and to enrich each other's lives. We're all sharing the same experience. There's no question about it.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. For sure. Now, tell me Cat, if you can, in a summary form, what are the things in the U.S. where you are with community associations that are being done really well right now?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Well, I think some of the things that are really, really good are some of the innovations that I have seen management companies do for their employees. For example, I know that in the U.S. there's been a huge struggle with whether or not schools will reopen. Many, many community managers didn't have a solution for what they're going to do if their kids don't go to school and yet they still have to get back to their teams, either within their office or virtually.

One of my clients took a look at her training room that she used for Board of Directors training and she created her own little bubble. She created her own little personal daycare and school for her employees and their kids. They put together their own school with their own books and Legos and toys. They brought in a teacher who had been furloughed, and now their employees can come to work with their kids. The kids have a designated space to go. There's structure around their learning. There's a professional in-charge and the employees couldn't be happier.

That's some of the amazing stuff that people have done. Unused commercial real estate is a big burden on a lot of commercial management companies and I'm seeing them streamline that tremendously. For folks that are under leases, they don't have as much flexibility except to sublet or to make their own little daycare center. But people are finding lift to their bottom line by getting rid of overhead that we've now proved is unnecessary. Those are some of the things that people are doing extremely well.

The other thing that I love what we're doing, without sounding predatory in any way, we see a great opportunity to bring more professional people into community association service. 'Community Associations Institute', for example, in cooperation with some local colleges have created apprenticeship programs where a student can graduate from an associate's degree with a professional credential, having worked at a management company for a couple of years and have no debt.

We're offering this to as many people as are looking for a steady, almost recession-proof career. So far, we haven't perceived any dips in employment. In fact, we've seen full employment of professional managers who want to be hired. We're taking advantage of this and looking to bring in as many people as we can. We've got relationships with some hospitality groups. We know hospitality workers tend to be excellent in community association services.

We're showing them pathways into community management, as well as some other professions that tend to struggle a little bit more when harder economic times are here. I'm really proud of how we've done that. We've put our arms around a lot of good

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

people who I think would be great service providers too, to the space.

Amanda Farmer: I love that and I have used those words myself recently, recession-proof. We have seen that in our industry. I've seen plenty of strata management companies out there hiring at the moment, because they're just so busy, so more overwhelmed than usual. I love that you guys have recognised that, and you're on the front foot with then targeting those industries where they are going to have people with surplus qualifications and unable to get back into the same roles. Saying, "*Hey, look what we're doing over here. This is really exciting.*"

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: That's exactly right. I mean, we listen to our members and management company CEOs are always saying, "I can't hire qualified people. I'm really struggling to get people to run my associations." We've actually even commissioned a research project called the Manager Engagement and Employment Survey. We're putting together some best practices with the help of a research professional organization to provide the management companies with some very long-lasting proven strategies to help them staff their teams.

I'm super proud of that. That's been one ... I haven't learned French or anything else that other people have said they were going to do during the pandemic, but we have kept those pipelines of good talented people aware of this opportunity.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. Well, I would love to see that report when it comes out. I know some of our industry leaders who will be watching this will hopefully be getting some ideas for how we can harness some of this talent that's going to be around more so than usual and bring it into our sector. We could definitely use it.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: I completely agree. I hope they stick because it's obviously a wonderful career and it's obviously a wonderful place to spend your profession.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. It is indeed. Give us your prediction, Cat. What does community management look like post-COVID?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Well, I'm cautiously optimistic. Like I said, economically, we have certainly seen that managers and service providers who support the community association housing model are in demand and they're going to continue to be in demand. They have shown their resiliency as Managers. Managers have a characteristic that they can handle the unusual. A lot of managers are like, "*Well, this is just the most unusual of the unusual.*" But, it's still just things that they've been trained to do so I'm very optimistic about that.

I do firmly believe the state legislation has to change because we proved that new ways of doing business are fair and they're transparent and they're auditable. There's nothing fishy going on. People are just trying to make good decisions for good associations. In fact, you'll love your peers in Maryland whose attorney general said that she was going to void the results of all the annual meetings that were held virtually because the law didn't permit it. The attorneys in the state said, "*No, you're not.*"

She luckily came around and realised that that wasn't a good action to take, but that's the kind of stuff. I mean, it's a frontline fight all the time with people who I think otherwise are well-intended, but just don't get the reality on the field. The law has to catch up big time. I also think that we can figure it out. Even if we don't know what the future is, we can figure out how to get there.

Amanda Farmer: We are figuring it out-

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: We are.

Amanda Farmer: ... is what I'm hearing and what I'm saying. Yes.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: We are. It's services like you're doing right now. Like I said, I'm a lifelong learner and I think if everyone listens to a lot of different voices, they'll find something that works with them.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Absolutely. That's indeed what I do as well. Thank you so much, Cat, for spending time with us here today and being our special summit guest expert. Is there anything in particular that you would like to leave us with that we haven't quite

The Shared Space Summit - 2020
Cat Carmichael: The Future of Strata Management
Publication Date: 17 September 2020

covered here today?

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: Well, I'd like to say thank you, of course, to not only the front line healthcare workers, but to the frontline Community Managers. The job that they do is important and it matters. It makes a difference in people's lives every single day. I have to revise something I said earlier, I'm not cautiously optimistic anymore, I'm actually quite encouraged. I feel quite confidently that we're in great hands.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. So do I. Thank you so much Cat for joining us.

Cat Carmichael, CMCA, PCAM: You're so welcome. It's great to see you guys.

Amanda Farmer: You too.

I hope you enjoyed that interview with Cat Carmichael. You can find out more about Cat in the notes below this video. Now, the Shared Space Summit is not just about information. It's also about action. If you've taken away some action steps from this interview, I'd love to hear what they are. I'll be live over on the Facebook page each afternoon this week debriefing on each summit session, and hearing from you about the action you're taking in your communities.

There's a link to the page under this video. I'd love to see you over there where I'm happy to answer your questions too. Now, are you ready to hear my summit shift? Cat really got me thinking when she mentioned her concern, her fear, as she put it, that some board members may not be willing to plan for the future anymore because the future is so uncertain. The average age of board members in the U.S. is 65, and perhaps they're more concerned at this time with preserving what they have rather than investing for the future.

These words have been haunting me a little in recent times, as I'm actually hearing from clients that some owners, some committee members are indeed taking this view. I'd love to hear from you, especially Strata Managers if you're seeing this too. What I believe this teaches us is how important it is to have a range of voices heard at committee level and how we might need to communicate messages about the importance of planning differently in these different times.

Now, throughout the whole summit, I'm here as your summit mentor, supporting you to make the most of all the summit sessions and put into action what you've learned. I'll continue to give you my summit shift at the end of each session. Go ahead and line up which session you're going to watch next. Have you caught Reena and Gordon yet? Maybe you're looking forward to hearing from our New South Wales building commissioner, David Chandler. The summit closes this Friday.

The good news is, if you are a member of the Your Strata Property online community, you will continue to get access to all the summit sessions. I'm popping them over in the members-only video library at the end of this week. If you're not yet a member, then head on over to stratamembership.com because for this week only, just while the summit is open, we are welcoming new members into our community.

This is the only online community of strata owners and Strata Managers that is supported by a team of strata experts, led by me, a qualified practicing Strata Lawyer. We're answering your questions in our Q&A forum and giving you access to the templates, the tools, the resources that you need to ensure peaceful and profitable apartment living. You'll find all the details over at stratamembership.com, including the summit bonus. This bonus is especially for you because you're joining our online community this week as part of the summit.

The bonus is your Summit Souvenir Playbook. I've prepared for you a complete list of key takeaways from each summit session, including every one of my summit shifts and the action steps that you can take in your communities to implement precisely what our summit guests are sharing in their interviews. Valued at \$197, the Summit Souvenir Playbook is yours for free when you join the membership this week. Head on over to stratamembership.com for more details, and go and get ready for your next summit session. I'll see you there.