

Publication Date: 1 March 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 302. Smooth Moves for Western Sydney Residents

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.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome to this week's podcast episode. I'm your host, Amanda Farmer and my guest this week is Amanda Bombaci. Amanda is the regional waste coordinator at WSROC; that's W-S-R-O-C, the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils.

Amanda has worked in waste and resource recovery positions in local government for the past 14 years after a few years working in the federal government. Amanda has a Master's Degree in Environmental education and she currently works with 9 councils in Western Sydney to deliver regional waste projects including various education and community engagement initiatives.

One of these initiatives which you'll hear me and Amanda talk about in this chat is a free checklist for residents moving into and out of strata apartments. Now, I'm helping WSROC and their partner councils launch this free checklist to the world on the Smooth Moves webinar. I'd love you to join us.

The Smooth Moves webinar is for residents, committee members, strata managers, building managers, investor-owners. I'll be sharing how you can ease the pain of moving into or out of a strata building for the entire community including tips for reducing unnecessary waste and preventing illegal dumping. Yes, I am. You might have guessed, going to be talking about the power of by-laws that's for sure and I'll be giving you access to the Moving House checklist produced by WSROC including checklists in a range of languages other than English.

The webinar is on Wednesday, the 9th of March 2022. We are kicking off at midday and we'll run through 1:30 PM that's Eastern daylight time. The webinar is free but you do need to be registered to get your unique Zoom access link. You can register for the Smooth Moves webinar over at www.yourstrataproperty.com.au/webinar.

I'm looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible online on Wednesday, the 9th of March. I'll take you over now to my chat with Amanda Bombaci.

Amanda Farmer: Amanda Bombaci, welcome to the show.

Amanda Bombaci: Thanks for having me, Amanda.

Amanda Farmer: Pleasure to have you here with us today. Now, Amanda, you are a regional waste coordinator at WSROC, W-S-R-O-C. What is WSROC and who do you serve?

Amanda Bombaci: Well, it's an organisation that I'm sure most people won't have heard of. However, we do a lot of work with local councils in Western Sydney, so we're a membership-based organisation that the councils are members of. So at the moment, we have 5 councils that are members, that's Blacktown, the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Lithgow, and Liverpool City councils. And we do a range of projects across councils, looking at different issues that the councils are working on at the same time, things that are consistent, and that challenge the communities of Western Sydney. And one of those is waste and recycling services, and that's what I work on. And with all of our projects looking at waste and recycling, we also are joined by other councils, including Cumberland, Fairfield, the Hillshire, Paramatta, and Penrith, so we work with a lot of councils across Western Sydney.

Amanda Farmer: And I know we have plenty of residents tuning into the podcast from those Western Sydney suburbs, special hello to all of you. And I know that WSROC has, over the last few years, done some really great work unique to or focused on our apartment residents, and that's how I've come to be connected to the organisation. What are some of the unique challenges that you see apartment residents as opposed to residents in freestanding homes, what are some of the challenges you see them face in your local area?

Publication Date: 1 March 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 302. Smooth Moves for Western Sydney Residents

Amanda Bombaci: Look, across Western Sydney there are a range of different types of apartments. So we're talking from some very small blocks to very, very large blocks. And especially in Western Sydney, we're seeing lots of apartments going in areas where there's never been apartments before. So some of them are quite new and some of them have been there for many, many years. And one of the differences that we find living in apartments, compared to living with a single free-standing house, is the way that waste and recycling is managed. There are also other issues around the way the grounds are kept, around parking and the way residents interact with each other as well, that are quite different to living in a single house.

But one of the big things for us that we've been looking at with councils across Western Sydney, is how do we provide services, waste and recycling services to get residents to be able to dispose of their waste, help them to get the right thing in the right bins, and also help them with a lot of the tricky items that come from whether you live in an apartment or a house, that aren't as straightforward as simply just throwing it in the bin. Now, when you live in an apartment, you're more likely to share a bin with some of your neighbours, you're more likely to walk further to your bins. So often residents will have to walk downstairs or take an elevator to a basement level where there are a range of bins that are shared between many, many residents. So residents don't have their own bins. And one of the great things about living in an apartment is that more often than not, you don't have to put the bins on the curbside yourself, someone will do it for you. So some perks in there as well as some downsides.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. And limited space for some buildings, I suppose, perhaps our older buildings, and I should say, this is certainly not a problem that's limited to Western Sydney, I see it right across the state with all the different residents I work with and councils that I work with, waste management in our apartment dwellings is a tricky area. So limited space, sometimes some unique disposal processes, for example, garbage chutes and then garbage rooms.

Amanda Bombaci: Yes, you'll find every different apartment more often than not will have different ways of disposing their waste. So sometimes it's residents walking it to a bin. Sometimes it's going into a bin cupboard, and there may be bins on every level of the apartment, with different bins for different types of wastes. Waste chutes, so one that we find in lots of the larger apartments, where you may open a cupboard or open a door and pop your waste into a large metal chute and the waste falls down to bins that are located on one of the lower levels and all the waste is collected down there. Now it can vary no matter where you are, and there are almost as many different waste collection systems as there are different types of apartments too. So that can also be tricky as people move around from different apartment building to another apartment building, sometimes across different council areas, sometimes across different cities, and they may find different infrastructure for collecting that waste that they may not of seen before.

Amanda Farmer: I know I have lived in an apartment building where there was a garbage chute and it is one of those, another one of those nice luxuries that you have in an apartment, where you don't necessarily have to take your rubbish down to the bins or out to the bins. You can just pop it in that cupboard that's just near your front door and it disappears. It's wonderful if it works, but definitely, the building that I'm thinking of has had its share of problems with that cupboard, that small room that had the chute, and keeping it clean and making sure that waste was properly sorted so that there wasn't food waste going in a recycled area.

There is, I think, in apartment buildings, a sense perhaps among some residents of anonymity, that no one can see what they're doing in the bin room, in the cupboard with the chute, no one knows it's their waste and they'll just get rid of it the quickest way possible. And they don't have to deal with the consequences because as you say, they're not putting the bins out onto the curb, they're not necessarily washing out the bins. It's nice to have a building manager or a cleaner that does that. I think that's a big part of the problem too, that I see in buildings that I work with.

Amanda Bombaci: Absolutely. And I think those building managers and cleaners, they spend a lot of their day dealing with waste, what has worked, what hasn't worked. And all it takes is someone trying to put a very large cardboard box in a chute, it may get stuck, it may get blocked. Some residents have to take recycling all the way down to the basement, rather than using a chute, because we know the chutes aren't perfect, there are issues with glass breaking and other items that shouldn't go down chute systems, particularly in those large buildings. So you have to balance all of those different approaches to managing waste, and that can be quite tricky, not just with the things that we think of that we use from our kitchen, our bathroom, our laundry, but also those things that we get occasionally that we're not disposing of every week.

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 302. Smooth Moves for Western Sydney Residents

So it may be the very large cardboard box that a new TV comes in. It may be that we get a new lounge and we've got the old lounge to dispose of. It may be that we've painted the walls and we've got some paint or leftover chemicals from cleaning, that we also need to get rid of. So there are lots of things that we have to manage, there are all the everyday items, but there's also the occasional items that are much larger because I can tell you, you won't fit a washing machine down a garbage chute, but how do you get rid of it? So it can change from building to building we've certainly been looking a lot at what's services exist. Councils do provide lots of different services, but also how can we help residents understand what services are out there, depending on where they live, trying to make it easier for residents to understand what they have access to, and also for those residents to be able to get rid of these items and not have to store them in their apartment.

Amanda Farmer: And when residents are moving from building to building, suburb to suburb, different council areas, different, as you say, infrastructure in each building, different rules for waste disposal, different phone numbers to call to organise your large item collection, it's tricky. And apartment buildings, we see that problem magnified, I suppose because we have higher density. So we've got more people moving in, more people moving out on a weekly, often, in some big buildings, basis. And that's where I see a lot of committees and building managers, strata managers struggle with waste management, the say, "*Amanda, we don't know who these people are. They're turning up with all their new furniture, and suddenly the bin room is full of boxes. They're leaving and there's mattresses and there's the washing machine on the common property or on the council strip.*" And there just doesn't seem to be that understanding, that knowledge of the proper process for residents to follow when they're moving in and moving out of an apartment building.

Amanda Bombaci: Absolutely. And I think the fact that apartment buildings do tend to have less common space, space is at a premium within apartment buildings, and that can amplify these issues as well. If you're on a single house with a reasonable amount of space, you can probably find somewhere to store the old washing machine until a time that you can get rid of it appropriately. However, this is not always the case in apartment living, and that can build on some of that angst that committees and other residents are dealing with regularly. And it can be tricky, particularly if some of these buildings are not built the exact way we would like them to be built if they're not built with all of the appropriate storage and collection facilities.

And that could be something as simple as every week on bin collection day, you're not allowed to park your car out the front because there may be a hundred bins that need that space just to be able to be collected. Or it may be the truck comes into the basement and you have to wait to get out for a very short period of time while the truck collects the bins and turns around. There are lots of unique challenges to living in apartments, but at the end of the day, waste and recycling services are an essential service. We all produce waste, we all have to get rid of that waste, and councils are required to provide those waste services to residents. They do so happily, and they do them to the best of their ability to be able to provide the appropriate services to get rid of the amount of waste that may be generated from that apartment complex.

Amanda Farmer: And have you noticed, what I call the COVID affect, the last couple of years, more people are home than ever before, working full-time, living at home. I know from speaking with some other council colleagues that councils have just been under the pump when it comes to waste management in these times, have you felt that too, Amanda?

Amanda Bombaci: Yes, we have. And look, councils at first, they didn't really see it as much as we would've expected, but as the lockdowns went on, we did see a lot more disposal of bulky waste. Lots of people were buying new furniture, lots of people were doing home renovations, there were lots of people buying takeaway food and home delivery services. The packaging from home shopping boxes and bags that they wouldn't have had, had we not had the lockdowns and had COVID not hit us in Australia. So we are seeing some different waste types. We're seeing a change of the makeup of some of that waste and we're also dealing with some different challenges because people are home every day. People are seeing some of the issues that have existed for many years, that they didn't notice because they weren't at home for 5 days a week, 6 days a week.

And so that's becoming much more prominent, much more in our face and more people are aware of that now and concerned, but because they are spending more time at home, they are spending more leisure time with their families, particularly on the weekends, and they are looking at some of those simple pleasures in life, like taking the time to smell the roses that may be out front, but if you're doing so next to some overflowing bins, it certainly takes away the pleasantness of it.

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 302. Smooth Moves for Western Sydney Residents

Amanda Farmer: Yes, good point. So what are some of the resources that WSROC has Amanda, or Western Sydney Councils, that our apartment residents can tap into to improve waste management in their buildings?

Amanda Bombaci: Well, firstly, we have the obvious ones, which is the waste services that councils provide. So they are the bins that we put our waste and recycling in, some apartments may also have some organic bins, some green bins for garden waste or potentially even food waste, depending on where you live. And they're there to manage the waste that's generated within your house, and sometimes within the gardens or the common areas of your apartment buildings. The second most common service or the service that's most well known by residents would be the curbside collection services. So these are the services that councils offer to collect those bulky household items, things that don't fit in the bin, things that may need a special collection. And this very much depends on the type of apartment you live in, how the committee sets it up, and also how the council services apartment buildings. You may have a system for booking in a curbside cleanup, or you may have to wait till a scheduled time to be able to get rid of large bulky items.

But curbside cleanups are a great service offered by council, to help you get rid of those bulkier items, those household items that won't fit in a bin. Now, then there are some additional services that councils provide, and often these are services that are offered to residents where you can take your waste along for special disposal. Now these may be targeted at electronic waste, they could be targeted at bulkier household waste, or they may be targeted at items like household chemicals and items that are a little bit problematic to dispose of, that have a little bit more harm on our environment if they were going to the bin. Now, some of these are drop off collection services and sometimes local councils offer small scale drop-offs within their own facilities. So it maybe the council chambers, it may be a library or a neighbourhood centre where you can take problematic items like batteries, fluorescent globes, small electronic items like cameras or old mobile phones to dispose of for more efficient disposal so that they're causing less harm in our environment.

Councils do offer different services depending on the council, so the best thing is to contact your local council to find out what they offer. And most councils these days have very good websites, which spell out all of the different services that they offer, where they operate and how often you can access those services. So there are the services firstly that are offered to residents, but then there's also a lot of information that councils provide that residents find very useful to help them understand what to dispose of at the right time, how to dispose of it properly, and also to just leave a small impact on our environment. So it may be some information about reducing coffee cup usage, or it might be about reusable bags. It could be about how your local community cleaning up the environment. We do have clean up Australia day coming up as well soon.

There are lots of opportunities for residents to participate in activities that help our environment and reduce the amount of waste that we see, but there are also lots of services that councils offer to help residents manage their waste at home.

Amanda Farmer: And I think that's a great tip to get in touch with your local council, wherever it is that you are, by phone, checking out that website. I do know that there are many councils who will actually have a good chat with committee members, strata managers, building managers, about unique problems within a particular building. And if there's a need for signage or stickers, for example, councils will be ready and willing to come out and drop those off to you, make some recommendations perhaps about where they should go.

I know a big problem with waste management is often just getting the right things in the right bins and where you have a very diverse community, languages other than English being spoken, that can be the missing piece that people just don't understand our somewhat complex waste sorting and recycling program that we have here in this country. It's great if everybody knows how to use it, but it can be overwhelming if you're not sure what colour means what, and in different council areas, we can have different colours and different bins, so having stickers and signage and pictures, a lot of councils I know, provide those resources for free to apartment buildings. So worth checking that out too.

Amanda Bombaci: Absolutely. Most councils welcome any inquiries from building managers to help them get the bins and the bin rooms right, as you mentioned, stickers, signage. Another one is simply getting the right colours on the bin. So sometimes those bins have been there for many years, they may be broken, they may be missing lids, and we want to also make sure that it's easy for residents to use. So if there are issues with the bins that are making it harder for residents, don't hesitate to contact your local

Publication Date: 1 March 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 302. Smooth Moves for Western Sydney Residents

council and ask them to help fix these things up too, because that can also make a really big difference to help residents understand what to put in what bin because if they're all missing their lids, it does make it a lot harder to tell the difference between a recycling bin and a garbage bin.

The other thing a lot of councils are doing, which is fantastic, is there's lots of waste apps available for different councils. So you can contact your local council, they may have their own app, or they may have a waste specific app, which tells you all the information you need to know, it may include what day your bins get collected, which bins go out each week, reminders for special events like electronic waste collection days. It has information on what might happen around Christmas time, if there are some extra services offered, and has lots of information to help you dispose of your waste correctly and get the right thing into the right bin.

Amanda Farmer: An app, I'm going to check that one out and see what I can find there. That's a good tip. Now we often talk about problems here on this podcast Amanda, we talk about the challenges that our apartment residents and owners are facing, but we also like to talk about solutions. And I know that WSROC has been working on a solution to the problem of waste management in our apartment buildings, and I want to invite you now to share with us the ultimate and essential moving checklists that WSROC has developed, specifically looking at that process of tenants moving into and out of apartment buildings.

Amanda Bombaci: Yes, absolutely. Look, one of the biggest issues is the waste that's generated at moving time and that's not always something that can be foreseen or managed very well. Some residents are given lots of opportunity to prepare and plan for their moves. Sometimes residents will move very, very quickly, or it may be in response to changing circumstances. This is a challenge faced by many councils and our councils work together often on these sorts of issues, to try and come up with solutions and things that can help residents to make it easier for them.

Now, as moving time was identified as one of the most trickiest times for disposing of waste, and it also results in a lot of issues for building managers, strata committees, and other cleaners and building managers to have to work on, our councils wanted to come up with some resources to help residents understand all the things that they need to think of in preparation for their moving day. And what was developed were two checklists that residents can use, that committees and building managers can also provide to residents living within their apartments. And those checklists include lots of information about the things that you need to consider when moving, including how to dispose of your waste, the process to go about booking in a curbside collection service or find your nearest service provider, depending on what the item of waste is that you need to get rid of.

Amanda Farmer: I have seen these moving checklists and I have to say, what I love about them is that there is a timeline and a very clear process set out for what you should be thinking about when you are moving, right up to 6 weeks before your actual moving day. So a checklist for that 6 weeks out, and then what you need to be thinking about 4 weeks and then 3, 2, 1, and then what you need to be ... Start that again. And then moving day, and then what happens after you move in. And there is, I'm just scrolling through it as I've got it in front of me, to make sure I cover everything, one sec, after you move in, including celebrating your new home and those reminders there about contacting council and making sure that you're properly disposing of any extra boxes and furniture that you have around. So a really detailed checklist there, which I think is going to be incredibly helpful to residents moving into and out of apartment buildings.

Amanda Bombaci: We want to help residents make sure they have a smooth move. We want to make it as easy as possible, particularly around booking curbside cleanups, and making sure that no items have to be left behind or are left behind causing issues to any other residents that live in the area that you live as well.

Amanda Farmer: And I have been honoured to be invited by WSROC, launch the moving house checklists, the ultimate and essential checklists, and we'll be doing that excitingly on the 9th of March with a webinar. This is the smooth moves webinar where apartment residents, committee members, strata managers, we want our building managers there too, are going to learn how to ease the pain of moving, this moving process into or out of an apartment building. It is a free webinar, it's happening at midday on the 9th of March. I'll be sharing my tips as a strata lawyer working with buildings to smooth out this process, tips for reducing unnecessary waste, to prevent illegal dumping. And we will let you know on the webinar exactly where you can go to access the ultimate and essential moving checklists, so you can start using them yourself when you're moving in and out, sharing them with

Publication Date: 1 March 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 302. Smooth Moves for Western Sydney Residents

your community strata managers, start sharing them with the buildings that you are working with.

Amanda Bombaci: And really excitingly, Amanda, we've also got those checklists translated into 5 different languages, languages that are prominent across Western Sydney. So that includes Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, and Vietnamese. So those resources will also be available to be used within our multicultural communities.

Amanda Farmer: Fantastic, and really, really important. Those tuning in who have been on a webinar that I may have hosted previously will know that there is always special goodies, special giveaways for those who attend our webinars live. So I do hope you pop that date in your diary, midday on the 9th of March, 2022. And yes, indeed, I will tell you how you can register for free, head over to yourstrataproperty.com.au/webinar, super simple, that's where you register. Let us know your name and email address and you'll get your unique Zoom link to access the webinar at midday on the 9th of March. Can't wait to see as many of you there as possible.

Amanda Bombaci: We're very much looking forward to it.

Amanda Farmer: Amanda, how can our listeners find out more about WSROC and make sure that they can get involved in future WSROC events and access your wonderful resources?

Amanda Bombaci: Well, you can always try our website and that is wsroc.com.au. You can also follow us on our Facebook page, so just search WSROC, W-S-R-O-C, and on there, you will find details posted when there are workshops, when there are resources produced for the community, and when there are lots of exciting things happening across Western Sydney that you may be interested in.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. And I will look forward to seeing you, Amanda, and the lovely team I've been working with at WSROC, over on the Smooth Moves webinar on the 9th of March, hope to see everybody there.

Amanda Bombaci: We'll see you then.

Amanda Farmer: Thanks, Amanda.

Amanda Bombaci: Thank you.

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. You can also ask questions in the comment section, which Amanda will answer in her upcoming episodes. How can Amanda help you today?