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## YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 318. Management Rights: “the original disrupter”

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**Intro:** Welcome to Your Strata Property, the podcast for property owners looking for reliable, accurate, and bite-sized information from an experienced and authoritative source.

**Amanda Farmer:** Hello, and welcome to this week's podcast episode. I'm your host, Amanda Farmer, and I have a guest for you this week. His name is Trevor Rawnsley. I'll introduce Trevor further and take you over to our interview in just a moment. Before I do, I want to make sure you know about a live, in-person event I'll be speaking at next month. The Smooth Moves event is hosted by Waverley Council in Sydney, and it's happening on Thursday, the 7th of July at 6:30 PM. This is a free event for strata owners, residents, committee members, strata managers, building managers. I'll be sharing precisely how you can more effectively manage the process of residents moving into and out of your buildings.

Now, in my experience, taking the time to connect with residents when they first move into a building is an essential step towards a more harmonious community. That's the time when you can introduce yourself as a resident committee member, or perhaps the building manager, you can share a welcome pack if you've put one together, make sure the new resident has an up-to-date copy of the by-laws, that they understand where they can and can't park. They know how to make an application for their pet to be approved. They know where the bin room is and what the rules for waste disposal are. You can arm them with the phone number to call for their bulky waste collection when they're getting rid of old furniture or when they're moving out again in 12 months time. With the right tools in place, which, you know me, includes good by-laws, communities can really leverage this point in time as a critical piece in the puzzle that is harmonious community living.

So on Thursday, the 7th of July, I'm going to be with you in person sharing some ideas, some tools, some suggestions for precisely how you can leverage this interaction, including giving you access to some template by-laws that I've prepared, especially with Waverley Council to assist buildings to achieve their goals of a smoother move in, move out process. Tickets to the Smooth Moves event are free, but they are strictly limited. So you want to get registered ASAP. You can do that over at [yourstrataproperty.com.au/smoothmoves](http://yourstrataproperty.com.au/smoothmoves). That link for you in the show notes for today's episode, it'll take you over to the Waverley Council event bright page, which has all the details for you. The event is happening at the Margaret Whitlam Recreation Centre in Waverley Park at Bondi Junction. We kick off at 6:30 PM on Thursday, the 7th of July.

It's been a while since I've delivered education at this level in person. We'll be spending at least 90 minutes together, lots of time for strata Q&A. I'd love to see as many of you there as possible. I'm looking forward to seeing faces for a change, rather than just names on a video screen or on a webinar participant list. I can't wait to see you. [yourstrataproperty.com.au/smoothmoves](http://yourstrataproperty.com.au/smoothmoves) to register for the Smooth Moves event.

To my guest for this week, he is Trevor Rawnsley, chief executive officer and company secretary of Australian Resident Accommodation Managers Association, also known as ARAMA. ARAMA is the peak industry body, which represents the interests of people who are involved in the business of management and letting rights. As CEO, Trevor advocates for and represents the entire industry across Australia and is responsible for the financial performance of the association, member liaison and operational advice. Prior to this role, Trevor and his long-suffering wife, Kate, Trevor's description, not mine, owned and operated the management and letting rights to Nobby's Outlook and later Aristocrat Apartments, both of which are tourist accommodation and residential letting buildings on the Gold Coast.

This is Trevor's 20th year in the management and letting rights industry and his 12th year as CEO of ARAMA. In this conversation, Trevor helps us to understand what management rights contracts are and why he says they lead to more efficient, better-managed communities. You'll also hear me mention if you are getting legal advice on management rights contracts, whether you are a body corporate, a lot owner, a resident manager, do make sure you're getting that advice from a strata lawyer, absolutely, but also a strata lawyer who is experienced in the management rights space. What I didn't say in the chat, but I do want to make clear right now is that you can find qualified, experienced strata lawyers via the member directory of the Australian College of Strata Lawyers. That's over at [acsl.net.au](http://acsl.net.au).

I'll take you over right now to my chat with Trevor Rawnsley. Trevor Rawnsley, welcome to the show.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Hello, Amanda, how are you going?

**Amanda Farmer:** I'm doing very well, thank you. Thank you for joining me today. Trevor, let's jump right in. What is ARAMA? What is it that you do?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. Well, ARAMA is an acronym which stands for Australian Resident Accommodation Managers Association. So our members are not for profit peak industry body and our members traditionally work in community title schemes, and they perform a number of service functions to the owners corporation or the body corporate. One is onsite letting and the other is onsite building and management.

**Amanda Farmer:** So your members are building managers, caretakers. Is that what you call them in Queensland?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. Well, they're called lots of things everywhere, some of which I can mention today, but in Queensland and New South Wales and Victoria, there is an agreement called a care taking service agreement. So a part of what they do is carry out their contractual obligations under that care taking service agreement and in most places, they also have a letting agreement with the owners corporation or the body corporate. So they're often referred to as caretakers, but we prefer to refer to them as resident managers because they provide a variety of tasks.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. Let's talk about that. Resident managers, you call them that because they are themselves resident in the community.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes, for the most part, they live and work side by side with other lot owners or tenants, but essentially it's management in a residential complex. That's where we coin the phrase resident manager.

**Amanda Farmer:** Do they need to own a property in the community or maybe they rent a property from another owner?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Unless the contract stipulates that they must be a lot owner, that's not a compulsory thing. We find the business of management rights, which is ultimately the name given to the tasks that are carried out, works better when the operator lives on site as a lot owner and is part of the owners corporation or the body corporate.

**Amanda Farmer:** Okay. So let's talk about that. You've mentioned their letting and you've also mentioned management rights. Are these two different things? If they are, can you explain each of them to us?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Okay. So there can be onsite letting and offsite letting. Our members perform onsite letting, so onsite meaning they specialise in one particular scheme and they're responsible for managing the letting pool in that particular scheme based on the individual approval of lot owners. So in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, there's usually some kind of contract on an individual basis from a lot owner to the resident manager that gives them the authority to manage that individual lot. That runs concurrently with an agreement between the owners corporation and the business to manage the facilities or the building or undertake the care taking.

**Amanda Farmer:** So the agreement between the owners corporation and the resident manager regulates the delivery of building management or care-taking services from that resident manager to the owners corporation, and then there may be a separate letting agreement between the resident manager and owners whereby that resident manager assists owners to rent out their property, I imagine on a short term basis for tourist and visitor accommodation. Is that mainly the setup?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** That's what evolved. It evolved on the Gold Coast in the days where most of the lot owners were absent or interstate or for whatever reason and managed rights evolved as a service delivery model for those lot owners to manage their investment, their rental investment, particularly in the holiday rental market, but also maintain and take care of the common property. It actually sounds a lot more complicated than it needs to be, but that's why the owners corporation would enter into an

agreement with an onsite manager and the advantage of management rights is that an onsite manager has a vested interest to ensure that the scheme is well maintained and well cared for because they also have individual agreements with lot owners for rental.

So the owners corporation is not compelled to use onsite management. They may engage external service providers and those individual lot owners are not compelled to use the resident manager. They may use an outside letting agent, or they might take those lots to the market themselves.

**Amanda Farmer:** Is this something that's unique to Queensland, Trevor?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** No. It started on the Gold Coast because there was certainly some economic need. So there was consumer need for it to occur, but it's all over Australia in all states. It occurs in New Zealand. There's about 160 buildings that we recognise as management letting rights buildings or management rights buildings in New Zealand. In Fiji, in parts of the United States. So whilst it started about 50 years ago on the Gold Coast, it has grown quite considerably since.

**Amanda Farmer:** Is the key component here, just to confirm for our listeners, that this is an onsite resident manager? If that person is not onsite or resident, then you as ARAMA generally are not interested in them. Is that how it works?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Well, we're interested in anything which is in the best interest of the scheme and that is the beauty of this business model is it originally started as a lot owner living onsite, maintaining the common area and undertaking rentals. It's evolved now where there's large corporations who employ the onsite manager, but it still has that onsite speciality about it, as opposed to a outside property manager who might have four or 500 listings across town, some of which are in that scheme. Primarily management rights is about focusing on the needs of that particular scheme and that's why we call it onsite.

**Amanda Farmer:** Now, this all sounds logical, it sounds efficient, it sounds like a productive way to maintain a complex, especially if it's tourist and visitor accommodation. Why is it that we sometimes hear bad things about management rights or that term or those contracts? We hear about very long term contracts that people say they can't get out of. We read in the media criticisms of this model. What's all that about and why do we hear that?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes, so the business of management rights was the original disruptor well before Airbnb was even thought of, and that is that those traditional brick and mortar real estate agents who managed holiday homes and then started managing lettings in blocks of flats, they were soon surpassed by onsite management for letting purposes and where there was a cobbling together of outside service providers that might clean a pool or trim the lawn or whatever, it was soon realised that that could be affected more efficiently by that onsite component and having that same business or same couple or same person do both of those things. So management rights, as it has evolved over the years, have taken that market away from those outside agents. So they don't like us. Real estate agents don't like us. In those larger schemes where this business model works very efficiently, at the same time facility management companies, professional companies who do some large-scale cleaning or maintenance, they don't like us either.

Part of the reason for that is that our business model, the business of care taking on-site, is far more efficient. So it delivers more bang for your buck for the owner's corporation. It is in the best interest of the scheme. It's usually operated by somebody with a vested interest, a lot owner, and those commercial interests that may otherwise exist in that scheme that can't exist as efficiently will say and do whatever they can to try and persuade people to use their business model rather than the business of management rights. So we get a lot of bad press. The people that management rights operators need to please are the lot owners. Everything that a management leading rights business does should lead to better outcomes for the owners and should be in the best interest of the scheme. That's not necessarily the case with a multitude of external real estate agents or external facility management companies. So there are commercial interests at play that try to deflect from the fact that it's a very efficient business model in the best interest of the scheme.

**Amanda Farmer:** What about references to lock-in contracts or long-term, incredibly long-term contracts, maybe 25-year contracts? Do these exist? Are these legal? Is that what may be bothering the critics? You've said earlier, Trevor, that the owners corporation or body corporate can use another facilities manager if they want to, the owners can use another letting agent if they want to. Is that always the case?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Of course it is. The owners have the power. It's a democracy. Owners can vote. I mean, I think part of the criticism is that developers set these schemes up initially when the owners aren't necessarily in existence. The original owner group, the executive committee hasn't yet been formed, and some see a long-term agreement as being imposed on them. It's a quite a harsh word, but some people consider, "I've now discovered there's a 25-year agreement," or, "There's an agreement that may exist up to 25 years for the care-taking service provision, and I don't like it and I want to get rid of it." The point I, I guess, want to make to speak up on behalf of management rights is that there are already legislative mechanisms in place that allow the owners corporation to continue with agreements should they choose to, but often when the facts are put before them, the alternatives are more expensive and less efficient.

So then it becomes, Amanda ... maybe sometimes it's a power. Some people on the committee want to have power over an independent operator, which is what the resident manager is, and they don't like it that there's this safety net of a long-term agreement. We say long-term agreements equal long-term thinking and not everybody has a long-term view when they join a committee or when they wish to criticise what goes on in community title schemes. So management rights does have as a basis long-term agreements for the provision of care-taking service, but it doesn't have a long-term agreement when it comes to the provision of letting services. That really is where the profit is made. We could be out in 30 days if we don't deliver and in a lot of cases, if we lose the letting pill because of bad service delivery or whatever, then the business of management rights, just relying on the caretaking remuneration, is not viable.

So our members and our operators have to do a good job as a letting agent on site and have to perform very well as a care taking service provider or else the whole business model falls apart for them. But our view is that the term of the agreement is relevant so as performance and behaviour and that owner corporations already have mechanisms to hold the operator accountable. And there are remedial action notices or breaches that can be followed and it doesn't matter if it's a three-year agreement if you've got a dud manager three years is too long, forget 25 years I mean, if you've got a dud operator, you want to move on, you want to get rid of it. And inevitably, what happens is that those schemes are terminated, it's usually because the committee volunteer their labour, and it's not unusual to see committee members combining about 40 to 60 hours of volunteer labour. And then I go, Oh, look, we've saved all this money. It's because that particular group of people have the time to do that work, but when they leave, the work doesn't get done.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. I've definitely seen that do with communities I work with. I'll ask you shortly, Trevor, to share with us your thoughts on what it is that makes a good resident manager. But first of all, do you have any advice or any recommendations for owners who might own a property in one of these communities? Maybe they're new owners, maybe they are trying to understand the caretaker agreement, the management rights contract. Where do they go, who do they talk to if they want to find out more about what their rights and obligations are and what the managers rights and obligations are?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. Look, I get that, Amanda. So I've been a resident manager. I've had a number of different buildings on the Gold Coast, deal both in short term, letting and long term letting. It wasn't unusual for a lot owner who entered the scheme and bought a lot in the scheme not to get the full picture from the real estate sales agent about what living in strata meant and I've had levies notices slapped down on the reception desk saying, "I'm not part of the body corporate. I'm not going to pay these levies. Nobody asked me." So it's not surprising when there's that level of ignorance about people who live in strata. There's less ignorance about those who invest in strata. They seem to be more informed, but there's that realisation that, "I've bought into something I don't fully understand," and that is the nature of living in strata. "I now have to pay levies. What am I paying for? Does this money go to you or does it go to the strata managing agent?"

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That's usually another complaint. When a lot owner who's new into a scheme, who has little involvement with strata previously discovers that there's now a 25-year or a long-term agreement no matter how many years, "I can't get rid of this person? Surely we can mow the lawn and clean the pool for much cheaper. Why do they need such long-term agreements?" So that's not uncommon. When they go and seek advice from those who have a commercial gain from seeing the demises of management rights or seeing a dispute created, they're going to get a particular biased viewpoint. So the solution, in answering your question, is if there's any lot owner that's not sure, the best thing to do is talk to the resident manager. Not attack them, say, "I can't get rid of you," but just talk, say, "Can you explain how your business works and why should I support you for the next 20 years?"

There's a scientific, very easy, independent way to determine what I've been saying and that is that management rights acts in the best interest of the scheme, and that is to get an independent assessor to come on-site and conduct an analysis, a time and motion study to examine the duties that the owners corporation may want to be conducted, or that are contained within the agreement and cost them out. Our figures show that in 87% of cases, the realisation is that the resident manager is underpaid, so actually charging less than they otherwise would pay if they were using external service providers. So a lot of people think that it's just money for nothing. I've had the allegation put to me that we're paying 400,000 and the manager's doing nothing and I said, "That'll be fantastic. Give me the address, because I'd love that job."

I don't know any job where you get paid to do nothing. So part of, I think, the conflict that's created is our members, let's talk about ownership, we don't explain our role very well. We don't demonstrate our role as well as we should. Where management rights works really well is where the operator markets to their clients and explains, "This is what we do." Reports regularly, works collaboratively with the committee and emphasises the advantages that that business model brings. In the absence of that is doubt, rumour, innuendo, misalignment of expectations. As you know, being a good lawyer, if we've got a customer with expectations out here and a service provider, like the resident managers with expectations out here, the space in between is usually full of conflict. That's where I think there's too much conflict and part of the reason is what I've outlined. We could avoid that conflict.

**Amanda Farmer:** Is this a growing industry, Trevor? Do you see more professionals coming in wanting to be resident managers coming to you and saying, "How do I secure one of these contracts?"

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. There's certainly demand out there. There's no lack of demand. It's a solid and reliable business model. The banks like it because it usually involves real estate, bricks and mortar, and it involves this agreement that's solid and has protections for both parties, both the owners corporation and the operator. They're being involved in accommodation, particularly in the last five years in Australia is a good business to be involved in. So the ingredients in the business model are favourable. Rents are increasing. Now that we're allowed to have holidays in Australia, tourism is back in fashion and your pools do not clean themselves and yards do not maintain themselves.

So it's a good business and certainly I was attracted to it from a hospitality and retail background. I was attracted to management rights because it requires very little labour to achieve the outcomes and most of that was my labour rather than employing a army of people, and there's no perishables. It's not like restaurant or cafe or retail where you have to hold a lot of stock. So the cost of doing business was quite low and that's reflected in the beneficial outcomes and the price of doing business with an onsite manager is lower than it otherwise would be. The overheads are lower.

**Amanda Farmer:** Are you aware of any communities that have had an onsite residential manager, have parted ways with that person, the contract's come to an end or they've decided it's not for them, gone to another operator in the market who comes and does the job and walks away at the end of each day, and they've realised the value of their resident manager and having gone through that experience and maybe come back full circle to a resident manager?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Sadly, it happens more often than not and it's all about personalities in strata is a difficult thing to deal with. It's one of the Ps, and so if you've got a committee that's hellbent on influencing the other lot owners to terminate the agreement, let it run down or whatever, the question that owners should be asking of those proponents or opponents of management rights is, "Well, what's the alternative? Let's get some costings on what it's going to look like to have our scheme maintained by external service providers. Will we be better off or will we be worse off?" So your question really was have schemes been terminated, have

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schemes terminated their agreement with resident managers? Yes. Have they regretted that decision? Oh yes, absolutely. But it's too late then because the foundations of that business model, the letting and the caretaking together in an agreement that binds all parties is then dissolved and it can be put back together again, but it's usually more costly.

That's the end result, is usually higher costs when dissolving a management of rights agreement, because the work still needs to be done. Usually the losers in that situation or most commonly the demographic of losers is the investor owner. The owner who's not there. The owner who pays their levies the same as a owner occupier who suddenly finds that their rental ... not only has the caretaking costs increased, but their rental returns have decreased because there is none of that onsite management looking after the entire scheme with the entire scheme in mind.

**Amanda Farmer:** Got it. You've mentioned a few qualities as we've been talking here, Trevor. What is it that makes a good resident manager?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. The realisation that they are a service provider and that's not always understood, Amanda, sadly, but again, when we talk about the care-taking element, we talk about the provision of care-taking services. If their customers are the body corporate, whether they're ... I mean every individual lot owner. If you're in a scheme with an average lot size of 47, which is the average size of a building or community for management rights, you have 47 different bosses who all have 47 different personalities who may require varying levels of serviceability and have different expectations. You've got to be able to handle those personalities and that's not a trait that comes naturally to everybody. It's something that you need to work out at.

I was quite confronted. Even though I had a very long and successful history as a service provider, when I went to my first committee meeting, I was quite confronted about the makeup of the committee. I had never dealt with a committee of owners who were making decisions that were likely to cost the scheme lots of money and could have negatively impact on my business as a management rights operator. There was back in the day a lack of preparation on behalf of new management rights operators and, certainly, as I've said, a lack of knowledge and understanding from their customers about what they actually do and what benefits they can actually deliver.

**Amanda Farmer:** So this person is someone who approaches the job from a place of service. Do they need to have special skills? They're the ones who are on-site fixing day-to-day problems, I imagine. Repair and maintenance. Is it generally understood that they do that work or if they need to bring in someone skilled, then that's at their cost? How does that work?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. So it depends on how the contract is worded. So you don't need trade skills in order to do this job or to succeed in this role. In fact, we often joke about what kind of skills, if you looked at it, and basically 20% of what our members do is a letting agent, a tourist provider or a tenancy, somebody who specialise in tenancy. So it's 20% letting agent, 20% caretaker, mowing, cleaning, unskilled kind of services and 60% politician. That's the hard part, Amanda, because of the reasons I've explained. You might do a really good job of cleaning and trimming, you might do a really good job of being a letting agent, but that's not enough because there's personalities involved in this business. When you live and work with your customers or your clients, it becomes very complicated in a way that requires all of your communication skills.

I'm a pretty good communicator and I had difficulty in the first year or so before I realised the magic formula, and that was keep your head down and at the same time go, "Ta-da, this is what we're doing," and not being right all the time. Sometimes being right is not the right thing to be, but it can be a highly stressful role if you're not prepared to put your customer first. So if I'm talking, if there's a resident manager out there or somebody thinking of buying management rights, you certainly do need to have some skill and some education and training, and that's why ARAMA exists. But you also need to understand that you are servicing the needs of a greater group, which is the owners corporation and your work is there to benefit the common area and it's not to benefit you. So that's not always apparent in business. You're usually in business for yourself. Here you have to be in business for others.

**Amanda Farmer:** There is a layer of complexity there when you talk about the customer, because your customer is not just the owners corporation, the body corporate, that's one customer, then the owners of the properties themselves, then the residents or visitors or guests. There's really three different categories there of customer all with different agendas, if you like, different needs. You may have resident owners, you may have investor owners. That's a lot to balance, isn't it?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** There's no shortage of complexity. One of the reasons why we call complexes complexes is because they're complex. So you add to that the complexity of exactly what you just outlined. One day they're wearing a hat that says, "I'm your landlord's agent to a particular person." Another time they're wearing a hat that says, "I'm your servant," which is how they're treated by some, and then another time wearing a hat that, "I'm the best person who can represent the best interests of the scheme. Because I'm on the spot. I usually know more about the scheme than anybody else." So there's lots of different roles that they play and as you said, lots of different expectations. So there's no shortage of things to complain about. There's no shortage of critics. There's plenty of them.

**Amanda Farmer:** If an owner or, for that matter, a body corporate owner or an owners corporation does have a dispute with its resident manager, what do you suggest they do? Where do they go?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** So, I mean, prevention's always better than cure and we have a model called the triangle of management. I mean, I could illustrate it like that.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, triangle.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Bottom points of the triangle, typical triangle, are the strata managing agent and the resident manager and their role is to service the owners corporation, represented usually by a committee and they should work together equally, collaboratively, be transparent in their communication and understand that their shared client, the body corporate, usually represented by a committee. That committee might only be one person or it might be a group, but their role is to support their shared client.

**Amanda Farmer:** Their shared client's at the top of the triangle. Just for our listeners who can't see your hands there, Trevor, the body corporate committee is at the top of that triangle.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Absolutely. Deliberately. Deliberately. The reason why they're there is ultimately they own the scheme and without them and without pleasing them, we don't have a business. Now, what's complicated is our members are part of the owners corporation when they're a lot owner and they're a service provider and that's where things get a little bit complicated. But that same respectful relationship between the strata managing agent and the resident manager, that needs to exist with the committee as well. You can't have a strata managing agent that's too dominant, or you can't have a strata managing agent that's too weak and just a yes person because that won't work. That triangle management will fall over. So as you know, with the human nature, a group of three, two generally side against one, and all three points on that triangle need to work together in the best interest of the complex or in the best interest of the scheme.

**Amanda Farmer:** If for whatever reason they're not working together, is there a process to follow for resolving disputes?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. Well, again, talking, understanding with respect, talking with respect rather than accusatory. There are wonderfully talented lawyers who specialise in strata and we would rather the lawyers involved to formalise an altered arrangement or new duties or something to make sure that amnesia doesn't kick in and then the thing all turns to custard. What can happen though is owners corporation go to litigation as a first step, if all of that talking and respectful interaction and good communication doesn't work, then sometimes the litigious pathways, the ultimate destination, but it should be the last step, not the first step. I mentioned at the start of this is that there are organisations out there, independent organisations, that can come on site, talk to the committee, find out what the committee wants or needs, can mediate, they're trained and skillful mediators, can try to bring both parties together, the owners corporation and that resident manager together in the middle.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Both parties may not get everything they want, including the resident manager, but they're more likely to succeed if it's a respectful conversation based on the needs of the business. It usually helps in the decision-making.

**Amanda Farmer:** You've mentioned lawyers there, Trevor. I do want to point out that there are strata lawyers, body corporate lawyers, as you say, and there are specialists within that category when it comes to management rights. I just want listeners to be aware of that, especially in Queensland. A number of my colleagues in Queensland focus on management rights and I think it's

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important if you are a community and a resident manager looking to get advice on a contract, that you are talking to an experienced strata lawyer who has a particular focus on management rights. As you've heard in this very short conversation, there are layers and layers of complexity there.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** I agree. I mean, I'm not trying to appease you and your audience, but you are a good lawyer who understands strata. That's a great start, but often disputes spin out of going to the wrong lawyer who doesn't quite understand strata and that's a recipe for disaster. So then within strata, there are different streams of knowledge and you've mentioned some specialist management rights lawyers, and that would be the ideal situation, is if every owners corporation who was seeking an advice went to a properly skilled and experienced lawyer. Because many of them will advise against litigation as the only pathway and will introduce both parties to mediation if they can't sort it out themselves. That's really where I'm coming from is there's far too much money spent on trying to terminate agreements from the get-go, only to realise later that that money they spend is wasted when they should have just renegotiated in the first place.

**Amanda Farmer:** Trevor, how do our listeners connect with you and find out more about ARAMA? If we've forgotten to cover anything essential, please do fill us in before we wrap up.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Well, look, we've got a website and I run a helpline so it's not unusual for me to receive telephone calls directly to my mobile from concerned committee people trying to demystify manage rights. I totally get it. I totally understand. It will usually come down to, "We should be able to get a better deal somewhere else." My response on that will be whatever it might be. So you can contact me through the ARAMA website. I'm available as a result of this and being clients of yours, Amanda, people want to ring me, there's no problem at all. I'd be very, very happy. If they tell me where they found out my contact details, if it was through your podcast, that would help me understand the context of the call.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. Great. We'll make sure that we have links to the website and Trevor's contact details in the show notes for this episode. Something that I'm aware of, Trevor, but we haven't covered yet, with the unique burdens and complexities, as we've said on our resident managers, I believe ARAMA has a crisis counseling service. Can you share a little bit about that? That sounds important.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Yes. We could spend hours talking about how complicated this world is now since COVID and as a result of COVID, directly as a result of COVID and the stress that that puts on our operators, we introduced a free service to members called the Member Assistance Program, which enables a member to ring a professional and get some crisis counselling straight away. There have been some horrible personal tragedies, not just as a result of COVID, but a result of just modern living and COVID has added a level of complexity. So our members now have direct access to professional counselling and we've so far had 27 members go through that program and they're all pretty well grateful. We see that as being a service for members to just cope with the stuff that goes on. So that's what the AMAP program is.

**Amanda Farmer:** AMAP?

**Trevor Rawnsley:** AMAP, ARAMA Member Assistance Program. See, we're very clever marketers, Amanda.

**Amanda Farmer:** Ah, I love it.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** So if you're stuck in a corner and you've got no way out, we'll give you an AMAP. We'll give you a map.

**Amanda Farmer:** Fantastic. Good on you. Sounds like an excellent service. Thank you so much for your time today, Trevor Rawnsley. I will look forward to chatting with you again soon, revisiting the world of management rights. We've only scratched the surface today. Listeners, do reach out to Trevor if you have questions and enjoy the rest of your week in strata.

**Trevor Rawnsley:** Thank you.

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**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 comment section, which Amanda will answer in her upcoming episodes. How can Amanda help you today?