

Publication Date: 8 September 2022
YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 328. 3 Reasons for Apartment Residents to Host a Garage Sale

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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. My guest this week is Barbara Gill. Barbara is the General Manager of Garage Sale Trail Foundation, a not-for-profit social enterprise, on a mission to connect communities and get everyday Australians embracing the circular economy, all through the humble act of a garage sale.

In November each year, with support from local councils, over 200,000 Australians participate in an annual festival of garage sales, saving over 1.5 million kilograms of good stuff from landfill.

Barbara has over 10 years experience working in the charitable and fundraising sector, both in Australia and in the UK, including a stint working on the British Olympic Association for the London 2012 Games.

In this chat, Barbara shares how our apartment residents can get involved in Garage Sale Trail, even if they don't have access to a garage. I'll take you over now to my chat with Barbara Gill.

Barbara Gill, welcome to the show.

Barbara Gill: Thanks so much for having me. Great to be here.

Amanda Farmer: Pleasure to have you here with us. Let us know, Barbara, what is Garage Sale Trail?

Barbara Gill: In a nutshell, Garage Sale Trail is a festival of garage sales that happens all across Australia each November. Last year, we had over 200,000 Australians involved at over 10,000 garage sales, and would you believe it's been around for 12 years? We started way back in 2010, in Bondi Beach, and it came about because we were fed up with seeing all of this usable stuff lying on the curb, just left on the curb and going to waste. So, we came up with this idea of, "Don't dump it, sell it." and encouraged everyone in Bondi to have a garage sale on the same weekend of the year. And that year we had 150 garage sales. We never expected it to be that successful, but the community really got on board and 150 garage sales across the Bondi and the suburb of Bondi alone.

We kind of figured we were onto something and we didn't imagine 12 years on that we would now be organising and coordinating a national festival of garage sales as a job, but we are, and we now work with a hundred councils across Australia, the programs in every single state and territory. And as I said, we see about 200,000 Australians get involved every year, so it's really grown bigger and bigger.

One of the things we love is just to see the way people express themselves through the program. People come up with these kinds of fantastic, crazy names for their sales. They market their sales in really crazy ways. They theme them. We had a disco sale that had a massive glitter ball and frozen margaritas. I know. How good, right? And we've had the only Lionel vinyl sale that was selling only Lionel vinyl-themed vinyl records. Yes, so people just really go to town just and really express themselves and it's super cool to see.

Amanda Farmer: Well, I'm so pleased that I came across you and am aware of what you're doing and we will get into how people can get involved and have their own garage sales, definitely, but I think it is such a great idea and that you've been going now for 12 years is testament to that.

Let's go back a step. Why should we be passionate about garage sales? Why should we care?

Barbara Gill: Yes, it's a great question. And look, I think there's three big reasons why. There's a community benefit. There's an environmental benefit and an economic benefit. So from an economic perspective, a garage sale is a great way to make a bit of money on the side, and with the cost of letters at the moment, I think all of us could probably do with a little bit of a side hustle. It's a

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great way to make some money from something you no longer want or need.

So we've got a bit of research on our program, so we know that a household will make about \$500. A school or a community group, more like 1500. And obviously, if you're shopping, it's a great way to pick up a bargain and buy something and at least kind of 50% less than you'd expect to pay for it.

For us really, I guess the reason we started was environmental. Garage sales extend the life of the stuff we no longer need or want and Australians, shockingly we're the second largest consumers of stuff in the world just after the US.

Amanda Farmer: Oh wow.

Barbara Gill: A huge amount of that is just being chucked out. It's roughly a garbage truck of clothes if we just look at clothes, that are being landfilled every second. In a world of dwindling resources, more than ever, we need to be thinking about how can we get maximum value from our stuff and extend the life of it. And passing on, or selling the stuff we no longer want by having a garage sale's, a really great way to do that. So, the environmental thing is really important.

And then the community bit is the bit that's like most interesting in some ways from the research we've done because no one does Garage Sale Trail to meet their neighbours. Apparently not what they're interested in. It's all about decluttering, making some money. But the reason why they love it is because they met their neighbours.

So, they all come out of it going, "Oh my God. It was the best experience. I met Bob from two doors down. We've been neighbours for decades and never spoken before." It's that kind of connection that comes. A garage sale is that excuse to connect. We don't think we want it or need it, that social connection, but actually, the value that brings in our everyday lives, that there's someone that can help out when you've run out of coffee, or you've got a new buddy to go swimming with, those kind of connections that can really last a long time, are really, really important.

Amanda Farmer: That's why I was wanting to bring Garage Sale Trail to the podcast and share with our listeners this opportunity to increase connection, to build community. We talk about that a lot here on the podcast, in the context of apartment living, of course, and also hearing you mention these environmental factors and this passion, which I hope hearing that awful statistic, that we are the second largest consumer of stuff in the world. Hopefully, we're getting better at that and we're becoming less of a disposable society but I think our apartment residents may be on the front foot there with downsizing, or right-sizing, as some of us call it, wanting to have less of a footprint, wanting to only live in a space that we need to. A big enough space and not necessarily have the huge running costs of a free-standing home. Some people I know certainly choose apartment living for that reason, so I can really see these ideas would resonate with our listeners, I'm sure.

So, let's dig into challenges for our apartment residents. Can they have garage sales? How do they do it if they do want to have one?

Barbara Gill: Yes, it's a great question because obviously, it's a slightly different kettle of fish to just setting up outside your house possibly. The big thing is obviously you always need to get permission from the property manager and we do provide support to do that. I guess the thing that's really important there is if you are a resident in a unit block or apartment looking to get your property manager on board, the key thing is to really point out what the benefits are to residents. And as we've kind of touched on already, there are lots there, aside from the community building aspects, which were obviously great, getting to know your neighbours. It's hard to dispose of stuff when you live in a unit. I myself, live in a unit, and when you've got things to get rid of, you often have limited space in the bin room.

It's often harder to arrange a council collection. Garage Sale Trail is a way to help residents get rid of stuff without it having to be dumped or left in a bin room, so there's some really good benefits, I think, to point out to property managers, to get them on board.

I guess the other challenge with units can be space. So, some of the certainly more modern apartment buildings may well have communal areas that lend themselves really well to having a garage sale, but that's not always the case and actually, with that in

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mind, we've developed a relationship with an organization called Neighborhood Houses, who I'm sure lots of listeners may well know about in Victoria, where they are opening up their community centres, in neighbourhoods across Australia, so that if you don't have space, you can walk up to your local Neighbourhood House and host a table or bring a suitcase along and sell from there. So, we're also looking at ways that we can provide for apartment dwellers to get involved if there isn't space actually where they live.

Amanda Farmer: So have you seen apartment residents have a garage sale from the common property, the common areas in their building, all get-together set a date and fly with it?

Barbara Gill: Yes, absolutely. We see lots of that. It's almost 20% of people that do Garage Sale Trail live in units and to date, mostly that has been people coming together in their communal areas with their fellow residents.

It might be as simple as everyone brings a suitcase or they put picnic rugs out and everyone takes a picnic rug and lays out their stuff. Sometimes they're kind of private events. More often, we really help them publicise the event and get people coming in and shopping from a wider community as well. So yes, we absolutely see that happen and it's just becomes a really fun festival-like community atmosphere within the unit block.

Often there's a barbecue and someone's got some kind of musical talent that gets unleashed on everyone and just like you see the kind of Easter egg hunts happening in unit blocks or the Christmas parties, we see them jump on board for Garage Sale Trail too.

Amanda Farmer: If you do live in an area with high density and you've got a number of blocks around you, you can just see how that atmosphere can build and grow if everybody has a stop along the way. If you like, down the street, go on into the front yard or the foyer, or maybe the basement garage, drop on by and see what gems you can find.

Barbara Gill: Well, that's right. And as a shopper, when you're hitting the Garage Sale Trail as a shopper, you tend to want to go to the events where there's going to be lots of people selling from. So a unit block sale, if there's lots of people there together selling stuff, that's going to be one of your first stops on the trail. You are going to be really motivated to get there to see what gems there are.

Amanda Farmer: You mentioned the Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria. I understand that through your partnerships with local councils as well, sometimes a local council can provide a venue for you.

Barbara Gill: That's exactly right. So yes, we work with almost a hundred councils around Australia and often councils will provide space, free of charge as well, for residents to be able to use that to sell from. Neighbourhood Houses, as I said, we have a partnership with. We're also working with Men's Shed this year and in some instances they'll be having bigger car boot market-style events, that people can jump on board and be involved too.

Amanda Farmer: Okay. So, how do our listeners find out whether Garage Sale Trail is happening in their area, or if someone hasn't already signed up, to kick off the community, how they can get it started. What's the first next step?

Barbara Gill: The first next step is to head to our website, which is garagesaletrail.com.au. We will be opening up for registrations from the 14th of September this year and from that point on, you can register your garage sale.

When you register a garage sale, you get a bunch of support from us, so you'll get emails and tips on how to be successful. We give you a bunch of promotional materials and free signage. Everything you'll need to make sure you are really successful. And you get a listing on our national map, so the whole program really is built around the website, garagesaletrail.com.au, where people go online and they can search a map to go what's happening in my suburb on the two weekends of Garage Sale Trail, which is the 12th to 13th and 19th to 20th of November. So yes, it's all about heading to garagesaletrail.com.au.

Amanda Farmer: Great and I'm really pleased that we're having this conversation now because this will give our listeners, perhaps a couple of weeks, maybe ahead of that registration date to start having, I suggest, this conversation with your strata committee. If

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you're a committee member, your fellow committee members, maybe your strata manager, and start thinking about whether you can host a garage sale in the community where you might have it. Garner support from other owners and interests from other residents and even have a chat to buildings in your street and say, "Hey, let's really make this a great street party and you bring the margaritas and I'll bring the tacos and we're good to go."

Barbara Gill: Yes, hopefully, we will see you there. That sounds fun.

Amanda Farmer: Barbara, when people go and register through the website if their council is involved, will they know through the registration process that their council is involved and that there's some extra support available there. How does that work?

Barbara Gill: Yes. So. The way it works is you can register irrespective of council areas, up to a maximum of 10. So if your council's not doing it, there's 10 spots, so it's all about getting in quick. If your council is doing it, there's unlimited access to the program for people that live in that council area. So, it becomes pretty clear when you're registering, which councils are doing and there's also a list on our website of all the participating councils.

Amanda Farmer: Well, thank you so much for sharing Garage Sale Trail with our listeners here today, Barbara. I'm sure you've sparked some ideas there for our apartment residents to build community, to become more environmentally conscious, and maybe to make some money too. Thank you very much for your time.

Barbara Gill: I loved being involved. Thanks so much for having me.

Amanda Farmer: Pleasure. Thanks, Barbara.

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?