

Publication Date: 30 November 2023

YSP Podcast Transcript: 388. From Poor Cousin to Priority: the Future of Strata,
with NSW Strata Commissioner John Minns

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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, strata lawyer, Amanda Farmer. And my guest this week is John Minns.

John Minns was appointed as New South Wales' first Property Services Commissioner in December 2021. And just last month, October 2023, his role was expanded to include that of strata commissioner, the first we've had in New South Wales for around about three decades.

As you'll hear him share in this chat, our new strata commissioner, John Minns, has more than 25 years experience in the real estate industry, which includes plenty of exposure to strata management. He acknowledges the significant challenges we're all facing and lets us know what his priorities are and explains where you can go to have your voice heard. I'll take you on over now to my chat with Strata and Property Services Commissioner, John Minns.

Amanda Farmer: John Minns, welcome to the show.

John Minns: Thank you, Amanda, good to be here.

Amanda Farmer: John, can you share a little bit about your background in property, in real estate, maybe even in strata prior to taking on the role of property services commissioner and now strata commissioner?

John Minns: Yes, love to. And I guess importantly, strata has been an important part of my life, but yes, let's get back to that. Certainly from whether, yes, by design or good fortune, here when I originally came into this role, there was few people who probably had the breadth of what was being asked, yes, in a role that we were still trying to figure out what it was actually gonna do. So my background was business for 30 years. I think you and I have touched on that before and it was only in 2021 when I actually transitioned out of that business and then started to think, okay, what's next?

This wasn't what I was expecting, but I guess where I came from, we had a number of verticals in the business and certainly many people know we had a residential business, we had a project marketing business, but we also had a residential property management and probably importantly, a strata management business as part of those verticals within the business.

So I've not only owned and lived in a number of strata properties over the years, I've also had to front up to an owners corporation when a developer's gone broke and the building's not finished and explain how unpaid trades are probably not going to come back and rectify defects and all of those sort of things. So I kind of get some of the issues and have done at a variety of levels over the years.

Amanda Farmer: So in your role there as the owner of the business, were you also a practicing strata manager with a license and doing the hands-on stuff?

John Minns: I think our strata managers preferred me to not be too hands-on most times. Let's just roll him out when there is actually a purpose. We had some great strata managers in the business, but I was the managing director of a business and therefore licensed within the jurisdictions that we had. But one thing I haven't done at any stage of my career is day-to-day strata management across multiple portfolios, but I have been intimately connected with them at various levels. So, I've seen some of the challenges and also some of the great joys that I think the business can bring.

Amanda Farmer: Now you've said there that this transition into the role of what was first property services commissioner was not what you were expecting. Where were you thinking you might head and how did you get off track there?

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John Minns: Yes, look, I think my interests and much of what I was doing at the time was around the prop-tech sector and performance across the industry. And of course, so much opportunity, so much emerging technology and so many increasing consumer demands and none more so probably than in strata. But I think we could say right across the property sector, people are expecting more, they're under more pressure.

So a lot of that area, I was actually quite inspired about. I received a phone call saying, would you be interested in taking on a contract with the government, which my initial response was, I can't imagine I would. But we spoke for a day or two and thought, there is an opportunity to actually make a contribution here. So that was probably what dragged me in. But I must say after 30 years in business, if you suffer from imposter syndrome as I do, yes this was a pretty big step to take and it's been a wonderful exciting learning curve but yes it's certainly been a challenge.

Amanda Farmer: Now you were appointed to the role of property services commissioner in December 2021. What did that role hold for you? Anyone who may be unfamiliar with exactly what the property services commissioner is doing, what's your role with that hat on?

John Minns: So, if we look back to where it started, I guess maybe the easiest way to answer that is to talk about the key projects that we're working on because I think that'll give all your listeners a chance to get a sense for where we're at. So there were five of them, and as a very quick overview, Project Elevate was looking at professional standards right across the property services sector.

And of course, yes, this is something that has been increasingly focused on within the strata sector recently, which I think is very gratifying. Projects Engage and Project Connect were two that were looking at combined strategies to engage with industry and to look at how the regulator needed to lift, to take on the challenges of future and rapidly changing markets.

Project Beyond was looking at digital transformation. So this was a significant area for us, given that the industry is changing relatively quickly. And yes, much as there's some really great customer service experience that comes out of great technology, there's also consumer risk. So that was important to find the right balance there.

And crucially, the Project Transform, which was probably the first project we kicked off was the future briefing of the strata sector in New South Wales. So that journey has actually been going on for most of the 18 months. So that was also an important one. And there was a lot of good learning that came out of that time.

Amanda Farmer: And as if you didn't already have enough to do by the sounds of that long list, you have now been appointed as the strata commissioner for New South Wales. In addition to retaining your role as property services commissioner, tell us, how did this appointment come about? Is this something you applied for John? And if you did, what were you thinking?

John Minns: Yes, really good question. I'm still not 100% sure about it, but what I will say is, my original contract expired on the 31st of August and we were looking at what's next. And I guess what I needed to believe was that there was an opportunity to deliver meaningful change, not only in strata but across the sector. And that's important and it's probably something we would touch on a little bit later.

I think the other thing that changed was the role came inside of fair trading, which it hadn't been before. And there's a few structural changes happening around government, which I think within fair trading, that's going to be really important because strata and property will become really, really high priority alongside rental reform. I'm also now working side by side with Trina Jones, the New South Wales Rental Commissioner, which has also been, I believe, a really important initiative.

So, I looked at it and thought there is an important opportunity here that we can take on. There is the possibility and a commitment from the government that we do want to see change and, importantly, consumer protection driven further in the space. So that really just led to the ongoing discussion and, you know, I ended up agreeing to take on the new role.

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That said, probably should go back to what I mentioned before, there's been pretty big 18 months of discovery.

One of the really big things we did very early last year was to run a round table in strata, which was all about future-proofing and saying where is the strata sector going. And the work that we did there, along with the three expert working groups that emanated out of it, has actually given us a lot of really good foundation to build on in where we're going from here.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, so I've been aware of some of those round tables and expert working groups. And the fact that when you were appointed as property services commissioner, there was a real focus on understanding what was going on in strata, particularly as we've come out of the other side of the pandemic. And I think there's been a little bit more awareness from the government that we're over here, those who live in strata own in strata and serve this sector. There's a lot of us, there's going to be a heck of a lot more into the future.

And so paying attention to what's going on is really important for the government. With these changes that you've said are going to be happening at the fair trading level and looking at rental reform as well, do you see in the future that there might be a distinct separate role for a Strata commissioner or some other government representative just for strata and not otherwise taking on the burdens of property as a whole per se?

John Minns: Yes, look, it's a good question. And it's one that I think has been raised in a number of forums, whether with me or without me being involved in the conversation. I have a really important view. And look, I think there is a significant risk or challenge associated with what we're talking about here. The first point I would make if we're going to have 50% of Greater Sydney residents living in strata by 2040, which is commonly regarded as the trajectory we're on at the moment, that means that 50% of properties or more that are sold by real estate agents and rented by real estate agents are going to be in Strata.

And for many, many years I think Strata, within the property services sector, has been regarded as a bit of a poor cousin. What I don't want to see is strata sitting on an island all of its own without a bridge back to the mainstream property services area because what is very true is that it is very integrated into that entire ecosystem. If anything, strata is the most important sector for us for the future in property services and therefore for it to have that priority and that predominant focus which I believe in property it probably hasn't had in most of the years that I was in the industry is just so important.

So, for now, I can't answer for the future. For now, I think it's absolutely essential that those roles are integrated because otherwise, we're going to end up in silos. And I think we know when we end up in silos that, you know, things do break, things become invisible, and we don't actually make the progress that we need to make.

Amanda Farmer: Well, I like hearing those words priority for strata and predominant focus. And I'm sure my listeners do too. Do you have with this advent of the strata commissioner role, do you have resourcing there that is dedicated to strata, some members of your team, perhaps who are solely focused on assisting you in that particular role?

John Minns: Yes, look, I think where we're sitting at the moment is, obviously, the role has really only just been established fairly recently. So we're in the process of building a business case for presentation to the government in terms of what's actually needed. So I suppose understanding where some of those priority areas sit becomes fairly important around this. If I can maybe just go to the broader sector and come back to the strata for a minute.

There are a couple of overall priorities that we've got at the moment. Certainly raising professional standards across the sector, which aligns licensing, educational, and performance outcomes has been very important. And we've spoken about that before, Amanda. To me, that's never been more important because the roles of the future, not just in strata, but particularly in strata are going to be different.

We've got far more complex developments, far more complex challenges for owners corporations, and a lot of other things that are going on in that space that mean we have to get better, we have to become more professional, and we should have higher standards expected from the professionals who are servicing the sector. So I think that one's been very important.

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The second one, before we get back to the strata priorities is looking at regulatory practice. The truth is at the moment, regulatory practice also needs to evolve. Government needs to be just as empowered, accountable and trusted as we expect from professionals in the private sector in this space. So we need to ensure that people can have confidence that when they come to the regulator to try and solve a problem, there's gonna be someone there who can help them with that and do it in a timely manner.

So we're very focused on trying to drive intelligence-led and harms-focused regulatory practice as part of this process to make everything more effective and to mean people are getting more of the things that they should expect from government as part of it. So, those two things are also part of the business case.

And the final one is when we start to talk about reforming and future-proofing the strata sector, I think, your topics that you've covered over a period of time, your listeners and the people who are operating around the industry as consumers or practitioners are well aware of all of these. But from my perspective, we're talking end to end. We're talking about what happens at the point of sale when someone buys off the plan. What does disclosure look like? What could that look like? What should it look like if they're gonna turn up to the first AGM feeling empowered and confident to make the right decisions?

We need to continue to look at scheme establishment and make sure that is being done effectively and in a way that does actually empower owners corporations and protect owners who are buying into those properties. I think we need to have a good look at first AGMs and the model around that, because they can be quite a wall of motions and we want people competent to make great decisions at that stage has always worried me that the decisions made at the first AGM can actually be a significant part of setting up the future of the complex for success or failure.

And we need to start to get those sort of things right as well. And then the myriad of other issues, embedded networks that we know, in many cases, are something of a rort out there at the moment and costing people buying into these schemes a lot more than they should be because we've got some developers, perhaps on the shady side of grey here who are thinking it's easier to operationalise a lot of capital expenses they would normally have and pass them on to an owner. So, we need to get past things like that. We're going to have to address issues not just around resilience but sustainability because Strata is going to have to be a leader in the pathway to climate readiness and net zero. And certainly, New South Wales has been very clear that we're on the journey to do that.

And of course, we tie all that together and say that we have to solve for insurance and insurability because we really don't need schemes that are uninsured or underinsured. And of course, there's a number of those that probably exist in the state at the moment. So, there's a reasonably significant level of priority across all of this. And to the earlier point, I think that's going to affect more than just strata managers and strata consumers in New South Wales.

Amanda Farmer: And I can just sense my listeners who are tuning in and hearing this list and thinking, I got more things, more things to add to that list. And we'll come back around to how they might be able to get involved and get their views over to you, John. Now you've mentioned a couple of times there that we have had a chat before it hasn't been here on the podcast has been an offline chat. And in that chat, you asked me, John, you know, what do you see Amanda as the biggest challenge that owners are coming to you with whether just anecdotally through the podcast or through your members or your clients.

And I said to you, if I recall correctly, the issue of aging buildings and repair and maintenance in aging buildings. And I have to say, almost at about 90% of what I'm doing week to week in my legal practice is helping owners to get leaky windows fixed, to stop the water penetration coming through the roof, to take those off and long frustrating and by the time it gets to me, expensive steps to call their owners corporations to account to make sure those buildings are meeting their legal obligations and that all flows into insurance issues as well that you've already mentioned. Is that on the agenda in any particular shape or form at the moment? It's a very broad general problem but does that discussion feature?

John Minns: Can I say that I entirely agree with you? Yes, the number one problem is, I think clearly around maintaining and repairing common property in strata schemes. And because of those issues the journey that I talked about and some of those

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priorities repair and maintain is impacted by things that happen every stage of the journey. If we tell people when they buy off plan or before they actually become an owner their strata fees are going to be \$3,000 a quarter and all of a sudden they're six and a half, then what we end up with is people looking to save money and reduce that rather than necessarily making great decisions around preventative maintenance and capital investment over a period of time. And that can actually repair and maintain from day one, as we know.

But at all points of the journey, I think we want people to be better educated and better empowered about what's going to be required about repair and maintenance. I'd like to see the regulator with more powers to be able to deal with that. Because, of course, one of the challenges that the regulator at the moment can deal with mediation and has been strengthened with a couple more mediators try and work through that process.

But if one of the parties decides they don't want to be part of that and particularly feels like they can manipulate it through NCAT or they've got deeper pockets to spend on legal fees than somebody else, that we can push back not just because of the time delays in NCAT, but because people are actually manipulating the system, we can push back the ability to be able to deal with repairs and maintenance well beyond the time that they should be. And that worries me, it genuinely worries me, because if I've got a water leak today, and I don't get a decision for six to nine to 12 months, then that water leak's gonna be worse, the damage it's done is gonna be more, and there's possibly people not able to live in parts of a building. So I'm super conscious of that.

And when we talk about resilience management, we talk about insurance. Those areas absolutely rely on repair and maintain being done effectively. In fact, the insurers are telling us that they're great issues at the moment. And the reason they are withholding insurance or the reason it's becoming very expensive is because people have either failed to repair and maintain or they're not effectively managing defects. They're the two major reasons in the simplest possible light why insurance is difficult to get. So completely agree with you, high priority and that's actually reflected I think through all of those priorities that we've got.

Amanda Farmer: Look, you've used the words manipulating the system, not my words, your words, Mr. Minns. And I see that also when I'm working with owners who are up against their owner's corporation, the owners corporation has the decision-making power and indeed responsibility. The owners corporation often has the funds and the owners corporation is aware that they can just sit back and wait to be taken to NCAT and sometimes I've seen these conversations, I've been part of these conversations where the building just says, well, we can't afford it right now. There's nothing much this owner can do. They can go and wait in the three-month line for mediation, then go through NCAT, that'll probably be nine months. To get it right, they probably have to engage a strata lawyer and that'll be tens of thousands of dollars. And lucky us, NCAT is a no-cost jurisdiction.

So I'm not sure that's exactly what you meant by manipulating the system, but I'm certainly seeing that. And I am encouraged to hear that there's recognition of that and I'm hopeful that there will be some protections built in for our owners who it's really left up to them to drive this process and pay for this process.

John Minns: Yes, and look, can I make the other observation that, sometimes what people are dealing with are not problems of their own making, particularly in older established schemes, as you know, that poor decisions that were made 10 years, 15 years or more ago. And interestingly, I have heard that eight-year-old developments are the biggest concern for a lot of the insurers at the moment. So go figure, that's not that old. But when those problems arise and when people are struggling with cost of living pressures you know, the natural thing is to say, wow, how do we deal with this? Is there a way that we'll actually reduce some of the load or we simply can't afford it anymore? We've got increasing numbers of special levies being imposed to try and deal with some of this stuff. And we've got in some of those older schemes, some older residents of New South Wales who really don't have the flexibility in their budgets anymore to be able to do it. So I understand the problem is complex. I don't want to in any way oversimplify this.

But I do think there is an issue that there are some people who buy into a strata scheme and when they discover there's a roof leak in the building next door they cannot understand why that's their problem and therefore will do anything to avoid it. And the fact is you know better empowered, better understanding and probably the greater good conversation here that if this project and the

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units within it are going to be worth a lot more money in a few years' time if we do a really good job of you know asset protection over that period.

So some of this is around education and uplift, some of it's around regulation. As I mentioned, this is not my decision but I'll certainly be advocating for increased powers for fair trading. I don't necessarily believe the Queensland system is perfect, but one thing I do like up there is they do have adjudicators in the system with quasi-legal powers who can actually make a decision which will also have standing should it get pushed to NCAT. And I know the resolution rate tends to be higher after a conciliation and adjudication approach rather than necessarily just out of mediation.

So there's a number of things that I think we probably and should be considering for the future. It'll be part of our recommendations to government. And as I said, once we've established, I think, what resources are available to be able to go out and do the job, then I'm fairly sure that you and others are gonna be the people holding my feet to the flames and saying, we're gonna hold you accountable for this.

Amanda Farmer: I was on a call with a member inside our online community recently and he said this,

"Owning a strata apartment is not at all like owning a small house." And people buying into strata for the first time have that concept, right? They want to downsize, whatever reason, they want the ease of lifestyle, maybe it's more affordable. I'll buy my apartment. It's like having a small house, just the same thing. Not at all. And all of those things you've just said about the common good, about recognizing your legal obligations, about fixing next door's roof, paying to fix next door's roof when it has nothing to do with you. All of that comes into play. And that is such a shock to most people. And I agree with you that the education at that point of purchase, and I've said this for many, many years, is a large part of the solution to that problem, just changing that whole mindset around what it is to own in strata.

John Minns: And I'll probably also, the professional lens over this as well, that strata managers ultimately don't necessarily need to understand the role of a salesperson or the role of a residential property manager. In fact, very often they just think they're a bit of a nuisance, which and vice versa. Yes. So we do have a situation where someone selling a property in strata has actually got no professional standards required for licensing to know anything about strata whatsoever.

Amanda Farmer: So true.

John Minns: And it's the same really for a residential property manager renting there. And I think this is where those three pillars that we talked about need to work together to try and ensure that this stuff is delivered because the professional future, we are going to need people who can rely on professionals far more in the future as complexity increases than perhaps they've been required to in the past.

And that involves that level of trust and that level of confidence that when I go to my strata manager or my real estate agent or wherever it happens to be, I can actually trust them to elevate this conversation and to help me with things that I simply can't do myself. So, this is where I think sometimes, because the emerging issues with strata happening around the world, but let's face it, New South Wales invented it in 1961, we've probably got some of these issues coming a lot earlier at us than in many other places.

This is the sort of area where better, more professional people and consumers with more confidence are going to get better results. Because what I don't want to see is that if we lose confidence in strata, we damage all those issues around affordability. We damage all those issues around housing supply. We damage social and economic well-being for consumers in New South Wales.

And that's too important for us not to address it, not to try and fill out the knowledge base or the knowledge gaps and try and ensure that people do know what they're buying into and can feel confident when they do buy into them.

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Amanda Farmer: Educating sales agents is such a big issue and I'm glad you've raised it. It's something that has come up for me before when I hear from you owners, what they've been told by a sales agent, whether it's about, yes, you own this part of the property or this is part of your lot and it's just not, or they're made promises about levies or about the state of the building. And it's just wrong.

But I have to say, I have previously approached sales agents with proposals to do some education for them at that level and even had them come to me and say, oh, Amanda, what would it cost? And when we have that conversation and they then look at the budget and then they say, "Oh no, actually we're really not all that interested. We can't see the return on investment." And I don't know if it's this mindset of, we just wanna get the sale, we take our commission and the purchase is done, we don't hear from them again, which is probably what happens.

Conveyancers are different. I have done a lot of education through the Australian Institute of Conveyancers and they're very, very interested in learning more about strata, understanding more so they can serve their clients at that contract stage. But generally by then the contract's signed. The purchaser is in, they've been made these promises by the agent. So I personally would really like to see some inroads there with sales agents understanding more about strata because they're the ones who are making these promises that then seemingly get broken by the strata manager who then has to deal with the disappointed new purchaser when they understand the reality.

John Minns: Yes, and look there's some highly professional strata managers and sales agents out in the market. I'm not a critic of 100% of the market. In fact, I think 80% of people in most occupations want to do the right thing, genuinely want to look after their consumers. I don't think there's any question there has been some poor issues around representation and there's also been some poor issues around competence, I think, within the strata sector.

And the ballooning complexity probably hasn't helped that because regulation and training packages and your requirements for licensing are never gonna keep pace, I don't think, with the rate at which the strata sector is changing and also the rate that things like digital transformation are moving through the sector.

So I have a passion for professional development. I have a passion for lifelong learning. I believe anyone who wants to be a professional in any field needs to have that same passion if they're going to be effective and going to be successful. I think there is a role for regulation to ensure that the minimum standards are set high enough. But I also think there's a role for professionals right across those sectors you mentioned to saying, the minimum standards are simply that, they're a baseline.

And that our goal is to know more, to contribute more, and to provide more value to the consumers we're dealing with because that's where the future of our business is going to sit. So I think there is a lot of opportunity for education. I think they'd be very well advised to attend some of your sessions because sometimes just getting someone into that environment where all of a sudden they say "This is stuff I didn't know, hadn't seen this before. This is really valuable." And we see that many times. It's one of the reasons why, we changed the way CPD is being, you know, being run in, in New South Wales recently. This was right across the property services sector because, I think strata training for salespeople, residential property managers and strata managers is going to have to be an important part of CPD because of that rate of change.

What concerned me was a number of CPD providers who were taking that very low-touch approach. Let's tick a box. Let's use this as a revenue stream. Let's get people through as quickly as possible. So get a certificate that says they've done the training that they need to do. And what we've said is that any licensing in charge needs to be on top of what their people are doing and they need to know and understand the performance they're getting out of it. We're now requiring them to report to the regulator on the CPD training for all of their team on an annual basis.

But we're also requiring training providers, and I think you're aware of this as well, we're requiring training providers to do, to operate in either smaller groups or face-to-face and have some level of interactivity because learning doesn't happen because I can tick a box or I can see an answer on one screen and a question on the other and just match those two up and suddenly, I've

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got a certificate. We actually want people to say, "I'm going to spend a few hours doing any form of training, wouldn't it be great if I got some value out of it that might improve me as a professional? And highly likely to add value to my business in the future, but also provide that extra level of protection for consumers." So, that's one example, but I think there's a lot more work to do in the professional standards.

Amanda Farmer: And I do know about that being an approved training provider myself this year, John. And the standard really has been lifted when you're talking about this small group training, we're really as providers having to think hard about how we deliver that training, making sure it's interactive, making sure that people aren't just logging on to a webinar and turning off their camera and then going off to do something else, which I think is how some of the trainings happened in the past.

So keeping those small groups engaged, doing the one-on-one sessions, doing the live events, which is what I've got planned for the future. We're really having to step up and I think that's great. I mean, I love all of that. Education is where my heart is and you can just see the benefits rippling through the sector when that's done properly.

John Minns: Yes. Look, I just had one other section to this and I appreciate the appetite, conveyancers and convincing solicitors have to this. The truth is, we've got really complex contracts that people are buying into at the moment. I don't have a solution off the top of my head, but what I do know is people don't always leave having signed a contract, having really any idea what they just signed in a lot of cases.

This is gonna be a challenge for us and I'm not quite sure how to solve something that's got 200 pages and you try and figure out what's important to an individual. But we are discussing with the registrar general and other things that can be done across the sector in consultation with the with Convalescing sector to try and improve that because I think that is also one part of that journey. That if we're going to get representations and disclosure right, doing that upfront and having people feeling more confident when they turn up to that first AGM is something that's really important to me and I'm sure that the legal and convincing fraternity have got the ability to contribute to that as well.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, definitely.

Now, John, on a daily basis, I am hearing from people, owners generally, who are struggling to solve their own strata challenges, those who are in New South Wales, who've heard about this magical new strata commissioner are saying to me, "Amanda, I need to tell the strata commissioner, I need to let John Minns know how do I do that?" Look, is there room for owners to be communicating with you directly or sending their experiences somewhere? Do you want to hear from others at this stage? Let us know how we can help you understand what's going on the ground.

John Minns: Yes, look, fantastic. I'm obviously very conscious that we've got over 89,000 strata and community scams sitting around in New South Wales at the moment. And at this point in time, if everyone came to me with some of the challenges they had, that would probably stretch things a little bit. But the truth is, we are looking and taking on a number of different case studies, or at least establishing where they need to go.

Would certainly encourage people to take the path they have been up until now and you're going to fair trading if there's something that's fairly normal sort of process or a typical complaint to try and get it dealt with, particularly to get it into mediation sooner rather than later if that's something that's required. Also if they believe there's professional standards issues with any professional they're dealing with in the property services sector, we want them to be more accountable and one thing to me that is important is that licensees in charge, do behave like licensees in charge. They need to be responsible for what's going on in their business. And we're keen to see issues like the supervision guidelines used more strongly to ensure that business leadership is also being shown in the space.

But to your question, we do have an email address. People can email to, which I'm happy if you don't publish with any notes around this podcast. It's propertyservicescommissioner@customerservice.nsw.gov.au. And they can reach out there.

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We at this stage don't have a bunch of regulatory resources sitting directly under me. We're obviously drawing those from fair trading right across the regulatory scope. But as I said, we're building a business case to take to the government and say, look, this is what we think is required to do this effectively. Fair trading is absolutely going to be far more property and strata-centric over the next period of time because of some of the other changes that are happening with the changes in machinery of government.

And I think there's some positive aspects there that provided there's sufficient resources there to be able to deliver within the expectations of consumers in a market that's growing rapidly, then hopefully we can help more people over the next year or two to resolve these issues faster, or at least reach a resolution faster, even if it's not necessarily to their satisfaction.

You can't solve every problem and not every problem is one for government, but we do want to interact with people and we do want them to feel more confident that when they're living in a strata development that these things can be solved rather than thinking this is going to take months and I'm not going to hear anything and the problem's going to get worse while we're waiting for that to happen.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Well, we will make sure that email address is there in our show notes. I have kept you for too long here, John, and I will let you go. But one thing I've neglected to mention so far is the legislative reform in New South Wales, our strata legislation amendment bill 2023, flying through parliament as I understand it. I've got a copy of it here on my desk that's been here for a few weeks. I've had a number of owners say to me, Amanda, there's more problems than just these 31 recommendations.

And what I've been saying is "Look, what I can see from the second reading speech is this is the first transfer of reforms. Government intends for there to be more public consultation, perhaps early next year." Is that something that you're going to be involved in as well, John?

John Minns: Yes, absolutely. As you know, there are 139 recommendations here in the original statutory review report and government at this stage, to the best of my knowledge, has accepted all of those recommendations as being important. There's been a bit of water under the bridge over the last few years. So we're working with that, but I'm expecting hopefully, maybe even just before Christmas, and it'll have a fairly long runtime. There'll be an initial consultation paper going out asking people just to confirm the issues so that we can run that over a period of time because arguably what's in Tranche 2 is going to be more important in addressing some of the more complex problems, but it's also going to require going out to the whole sector and saying, "What do you think? We accept we've identified the problems in the first round. Now let's have a talk about the ways that together we can solve them because I don't see all of the weight anywhere being carried by legislation and regulation. Some of this has got to be sitting around here. What can we do together as a sector and all do better together?"

So look, there are obviously 139 total recommendations. We've only dealt with 31 of them. There's a lot more work to do in that space. And I think I'm very excited to see that that's going to continue.

And what I do think is important though, as you said, is that this first lot go through, because there hadn't been a response to that over a period of time. And I think people will be very pleased to see some of those less contentious things at least locked in as early as possible, assuming they go through Parliament.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, well definitely from where I'm sitting, we're all pleased that there is finally progress on that reform and looking forward to what next year has to hold as well. John Minns, we've talked a lot about strata challenges today. Hopefully, I'll have you back on the show in the not-too-distant future talking about all the solutions and resolutions and achievements of your office. So thank you very much for joining me, our Strata and Property Services Commissioner. John Minns, I'll look forward to catching you again soon.

John Minns: Thank you so much, Amanda.

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