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**YSP Podcast Transcript: 405. "It's not a jam stall at a school fete" - taking strata seriously**

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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 Bruce Minter.

Bruce is a strata committee chair and secretary of 15 years experience. His background in project management, process improvement and dispute resolution tells him that the world of strata has considerable room for reform and improvement.

Now, for a number of years, Bruce has been with us inside the *Your Strata Property Online Membership community*, and he recently dropped me a note in which he pointed out just how resilient one has to be in this modern day to serve as a strata committee member. Now, I thought the insights that Bruce shared with me and the experience that he has were worth bringing to the podcast.

Be sure to tune into this conversation until the end, because you'll also hear Bruce share his thoughts from the perspective of a strata owner on the recent media attention being given to Strata Management in New South Wales. I'll take you on over now to my chat with Bruce Minter.

**Amanda Farmer:** Bruce Minter, welcome to the show.

**Bruce Minter:** Good afternoon, Amanda. Thank you for this opportunity.

**Amanda Farmer:** Bruce, tell us a little bit about you, maybe your background. When did you come to strata? What do you love most about strata living?

**Bruce Minter:** The background in relation to strata, I come from a project management background. A couple of skills that I've learned along the way, project management process improvement and dispute resolution, which were all relevant to previous jobs and I've found them to be enormously useful in this particular strata role.

How did I come to strata? Well, that was all basically by chance. Me and my partner were looking around for a new place. We spotted one in the suburb that the houses in the suburb were either ridiculously expensive or basically we didn't want a house. I mean, I'd vowed all my life I would never mow lawns. A house would just be too big.

So we happened upon this townhouse complex, and we loved the unit. And so even though both of us, I guess, had reservations about strata and as much of, you know, some of the stories I'd heard over the years, we really didn't have much choice. And I was willing to give it a go and see what happens. So we bought this unit and it's been quite a journey since then.

I guess the strata journey probably started about six months after we moved in when we went to our first AGM and my partner and I had both pretty much the same reaction because we turned out was in the underground garage. It was like concrete bunker in the middle of winter in July. And most of the people with all due respect to aged people, pretty much, no one was less than about 75 or so. They were one or two our age. But my partner, we've both had the same reaction that, oh God, we've moved into a retirement village.

The first AGM gave us some sort of baptism of fire for what might happen in strata because one of the younger ladies here had wanted to do some renovation. She wanted to install some French doors. She was a very house-proud, very conscientious woman. She presented a very reasonable case for why those doors could be installed.

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She was very patient, courteous, all that stuff. But guess what, someone on the committee, the fellow who'd been living next to her apparently had some sort of vendetta to settle and he'd corralled, you know, his various friends in the strata here. And her proposition got shot down handsomely, with the exception of me and a couple of others voting for it everyone was against. That triggered that lady.

From memory, I think she left in tears. She certainly, the internal access door for her unit was just near where we're having the meeting. She got up that door, was slammed very heavily on our meeting with a few, you know, various abuse being at us. So there was the beginning of my strata journey and I thought, oh God, really are all these stories I've heard true about conflicts and people ganging up on one another, not letting things ruin, never letting things change.

**Amanda Farmer:** And this is the same community that you are in today, Bruce?

**Bruce Minter:** Correct. Yes, same one. So it's been, we've been here about just over 17 years.

**Amanda Farmer:** And do you have a strata manager, a building manager?

**Bruce Minter:** We do, my understanding is we've been using the same company since the inception of this block, which was back in the mid-1970s. So it's one of Sydney's older and quite a high profile company. I believe they've done all the strata management for all that time. In my time, the 15 years, it's been controlled by about four or five different strata managers. So yes, the short answer is we have a strata manager.

**Amanda Farmer:** And you're a townhouse style. How many?

**Bruce Minter:** About 30. And this is from the mid-1970s. It's a brick complex with a large, quite a very large central garden, which is sort of one of the prime features of the whole unit, a whole block.

**Amanda Farmer:** And has anything changed over the last 17-odd years? Is it still mainly an older demographic? Is the majority still knocking back some very reasonable Reno proposals?

**Bruce Minter:** Interesting question that you asked. So what happened that particular year, they were seeking SC members. So I put my hand up to at least get on the SC, me and another fellow who was about my age. So over that first year of SC activity, there was me, him and the chairman, the existing chairman who was probably in his mid-eighties. That first year, not terribly much happened. I mean, there were a few sort of meetings and various bits of small repairs approved. The following AGM that chairman who was in position at, at that time wanted to retire step away, which is quite understandable when you're in your mid-eighties. And he turned to me, there was no other interest in being the chair. And he said, what about you Bruce? Do you wanna have a go?

So I said, yes. I mean, it was pretty obvious to me that unless someone stepped in, unless we had more activity in the, at the committee level, not much was going to change. When we bought this place, our lawyer had gone over all the strata records, and I remember him clearly saying, A, I hope you are not expecting the levies to stay at that level, because he thought they were extremely light for a complex of this nature. And he said, B, they spent a fortune on plumbing. Oh boy, hasn't that come true?

**Amanda Farmer:** Right.

**Bruce Minter:** So one of the difficulties we've had in this complex is that the founding chairman, which goes back to the 1970s, had an obsession with making this block one of the lowest levies in this area, if not Sydney. And that has been a curse because that has set the mindset that the levies must be low and that any talk of increasing them is heresy. It was additionally complicated by the fact that a lot of people, it's a very pleasant block in a very pleasant suburb.

People seem to live here like they live here, they stay a long time. So, therefore, some of those original owners, they inherited that mindset from the chairman. He was, apparently very strict. I've heard stories from some of the original owners that, they would

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plead with him to spend a bit more on the garden. He'd knock it back. I don't know what he spent it on. It must have been purely essential repairs. But it had that negative effect of setting the mindset that levies both should be low and can be low.

So in a nutshell, one of my major battles and my committee over this past 15 years has been getting sufficient funds to do things. I mean, to an extent we've succeeded. I mean, I've managed to persuade them to pass a few special levies, which is good, but my attitude is we shouldn't need special levy. You know, special levies really should be for either emergencies or they're reflective of just bad planning. And I'd very much like us to get away from that. I put out a little newsletter to our residents, and a year or two ago, I quoted something from America because I'd heard that, Obama and people like Nancy Pelosi were always talking about the American experiment.

You know, in my view, any form of governance is an experiment. I mean the Australian Federation is an experiment, and strata is equally an experiment. So I said to them, and I quoted this story from the early days of America where they were setting up their form of government and all those heavyweights, like Madison and Jefferson and Hamilton were having their conference about deciding what form of government America was going to have. Apparently, at the end of that conference, Benjamin Franklin stepped out. He was the first to step out, and there was a crowd waiting to hear what the heavyweights had chosen. He turned around and said, "A republic, if you can keep it."

And that's very much my attitude. And it one of the lessons that I'm trying to inculcate in my strata. We have a wonderful little strata if we can keep it. And the main challenge in keeping it is funding.

**Amanda Farmer:** Well, sounds very wise to me, Bruce. And it sounds like your community is happy to have you. One of the reasons that I asked if you would come and chat to us today is because you recently relayed an anecdote to me that I thought was worth sharing and showed a lot of insight. Oh, look over to you. Do you mind sharing it with us here?

**Bruce Minter:** No, not at all. No, I know exactly the one you're talking about. So this actually goes back quite a few years, probably seven or eight years, where I went to my GP, not, I emphasize over a strata matter. It was just a general checkup, and the office was in chaos. There were boxes everywhere. I went into the GP and he said, oh God, we're gonna be glad to get out of this place. Strata is dreadful to deal with. And I said, oh, it's funny, you should mention strata. I'm a chair and secretary of strata. And this very generally, quite an expressionist kind of guy, very matter of fact, looked at me and his, for him, his eyes were effectively bulging. And he said, oh God, you don't do that, do you?

He said, "I have patients who come in here, they're in tears. They want sleeping tablets. They describe all sorts of stresses and what have you, and anxieties that come from their strata. He said, why do you do that?" And that is that sort of reaction I've noticed, if strata happens to come up and I, you know, by chance mention to people that I'm on a committee, the usual reaction is negative. It's things like, oh, really? You know, why would you do that? All those committees do is fight. Or they say things like, I guess someone's gotta do it, or that must be terrible. Or anyone on those committees is on a hiding to nothing. All those sort of, quite negative feedback. Even in cases where there has been a positive remark, it's kind of backhanded or it's double-edged. I mean, my skin specialist, another medic, she said, "Oh you poor thing, there'll be a special place in heaven for you." So, okay, well that's nice.

**Amanda Farmer:** Well, It's funny, the strata managers listening, and the few strata lawyers out there who I know are listening will be thinking, yes, we get the same response when we say that we are strata managers or strata lawyers. You sort of get that, oh gosh, yes, you poor thing. Or how could you do that job? We don't, at least I don't get, there'll be a special place in heaven for you. That's a nice one.

**Bruce Minter:** Well, there you go. Exactly. No good turn goes unpunished. There's another.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, exactly. Well, what do you think, Bruce, why do you think strata committees, let's focus on the committees. Why do they have such a bad reputation and elicit this kind of response far and wide?

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**Bruce Minter:** Yes. Well, I think you need to look at the nature of strata, Amanda, I mean, or strata committees especially. I mean, you are asking people to volunteer their time. You know, often among people there will usually be a shortage of people putting up their hands in the first place. You're very often not given much of a choice as to who comes onto your committee. If you are working in a company and you want to employ whether that company's a, you know if you, whether it's a cafe or a corporation. I mean, you look for people who've got the relevant skills, you interview them, you make your choices, and you've usually got a, you will have a selection to choose from. In strata, you are probably gonna be stuck with, they have to be owners.

They have to be willing, or they should be willing to give up some time to those preceding comments. I mean, people hear stories about strata, about disputes and negative. I think that frightens off a few. People may not want to take responsibility. They may not feel that, they just don't want that extra burden. But particularly in these days, I mean, I suppose people are always busy, whether it was 1960s or now, I mean, okay, we have things that can make life easier, like digital services, all that.

But nevertheless, spare time is generally short and people have other priorities. I've certainly found this role to be an extraordinary intrusion on my time. The opportunity cost of, if I look back on those 15 years, in fact, one thing I don't do is look back on those 15 years and try and calculate how much time has been spent on strata. Because I think that probably would send me to a, you know, seeking Valium.

The opportunity cost, you could measure it very, the books I could have read, you know, the cooking I could have done, improving my cooking skills, the languages. I mean, at one point I was learning Japanese, but I had to shell that because I just got too busy with strata to make it an effective investment of time. And all this is being done on a voluntary basis. You know, you're not even being paid if you're in a bad job in a company, you may shrug your shoulders and say, well, I don't like my boss, but at least I'm being paid and I can buy things with it. So strata is this unusual animal where you are asking a lot. And the other lion, which you may have heard me say or emphasize in the past, is that stratas are businesses. And even this one, which is considered small, it's still, there's many elements to it. It's quite a complex business. It's not a jam stall at a school fete.

**Amanda Farmer:** Accepting that you have taken on this burden. And I can very much relate as a strata committee member myself, very much relate to everything you've just said there, Bruce, as I'm sure many of our listeners can, accepting that this is the burden that you articulate. I suppose it begs the question, why, why do you keep doing it? Perhaps 15 years ago you put your hand up thinking you weren't quite sure what you were getting into. Why have you stuck around and why do you keep re-nominating for election each year?

**Bruce Minter:** Yeah, Good question. One reason is selfish in as much that our house is a large investment, I wanna make sure it's kept in good condition. And it's not just simply our unit on its own. It's part of a block of 30. So therefore, by implication, the rest of it needs to be kept in good condition. I mean, where we sell and we have no plans to, but people looking would not necessarily look solely at the unit. They would need to look, or they certainly should look at the entire block. So I would say that my main motivation is, I mean, number one, it's a challenge. I mean, I like challenges. Number two, or maybe it is number one, I like improving things. I like finding ways of leaving things in a better condition than I found them or finding new ways of doing it or solving problems.

And this strata has certainly thrown up more than its fair share of difficulties that need to be solved. So that's my main motivation and helping others. I mean, this, I'm certainly having Mother Teresa is not one of my heroes. And her saying about, give until it hurts is not my philosophy. But I do think people generally if they can spare the time, should do something for their community. You know, whether that's a church group or a school group or whatever, Model Row Air Club, people should give something back. And this strata is my immediate community. So that's kind of an easy way of doing it. Easy in concept, anyway.

**Amanda Farmer:** Look, I can definitely relate to that feeling of selfishness, perhaps in that you wanna be involved so that you can protect the value of your investment. And especially somebody who comes to the table with perhaps a little bit of strata knowledge. Definitely me as a strata lawyer, you perhaps as a sensible person who has experience in managing projects and other similar skills, watching others do it poorly is painful. And when you've got a lot of money riding on the investment, then that pain is amplified.

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**Bruce Minter:** Yes, precisely. And this unit, this block rather, was in quite poor condition, really, particularly for this suburb. I mean, it's, I would class this suburb as sort of middle class. I think anyone who lives in the suburb is, should feel quite grateful. It's handy to the city. It's classic, you know, Sydney leafy suburb. It's very pleasant place to live. But this block probably primarily in fact, in fairness to the owners at the time, it was probably a case of them all aging or getting old or getting disinterested or simply not being able to. But nevertheless, if you walked around, I mean, the number of problems that were in existence at the beginning, I mean, there was some of them were very obvious, such as paint peelings, there were downpipes with large holes.

I mean, things as almost as large as your arms. These weren't little pinpricks. These were large. There were the seals on some of the dorm windows were hanging down. The sump pump in the garage failed. And there was flooding in the car park because of that. It was roulette as to whether the roller door worked. You may get out and you may get back, or it may be stuck up for days or it may come down. But when I saw those sort of things and started listing what needed to be done. It really was a case of we needed to rescue this property. It couldn't keep sliding.

**Amanda Farmer:** And how did you do that? You've mentioned that you've got a couple of special levies across the line. I mean, what tips have you got for our other committee members or owners who are living in very similar aging, aged buildings where not a lot has been done, and they're facing this pushback from owners, especially now where cost of living is the refrain that you hear rising cost of living. When you're talking about having to shell out more for strata expenses. I mean, how do you get these higher levies across the line?

**Bruce Minter:** Well, one answer is communication and give them the narrative. I mean, Paul Keating always used to go on about give people the narrative. And I think it's critical. Tell them the story I mentioned before I put out a newsletter, it's an on and as needed basis. So it's not regular, but what I like now, people will not read minutes or very few will read minutes. So I don't depend on that. But if you put into plain words, simple words, communicate what you are trying to achieve and the reasons behind it, I think that has helped immensely get some of these things across the line.

And also, the other thing is give them examples of what happens when things can go wrong. And particularly if they can, if you can give them examples that have affected other residents that may potentially affect them. You know, there was a classic case where there was a patch of wet ground where nothing grew. And I said to the committee, we should look, I mean, there must be a reason. Why is that ground always wet? And there was, it was mucking around in the committee. Oh, they didn't, the plumbers were here. They had a quick look. They said, well, if you want us to investigate, it looks quite complex, we're gonna have to charge you.

The amount they wanted to charge was just above my authorization level. But the committee were ringing their hands and saying, no, let's wait. It might just be the weather. It might be, this might be that. The end result of that was that the unit that was just near that wet patch got flooded twice. And the final cause of that was diagnosed as a stormwater that had been infested with tree roots. But we could have, by spending a relatively small amount on investigating what the problem was and getting it fixed, we could have saved that resident going through not one, but two water ingress incidents and getting their carpet dried and all that. That was just one case. We've had a couple of long similar lines where things that are avoidable should have been avoided by spending relatively small amounts of money.

So, as I said, one of the things I can communicate, would you like this to happen to you? And another tactic I took in a recent special levy was gave them an example. Would you gather your family around the dinner table and say, Hey folks, I've got good news. We are gonna go to Europe, pack your bags, we are gonna go to Europe for six weeks. And then would you come back two nights later and say, well, actually there was a very good airfare deal that I found, but I've just done the calculations and when I forgot about all the food and transport costs and passport costs and all that stuff, I'm sorry, holidays off. I mean, would you do that? So what sometimes intrigues me and mystifies me about strata is that people seem to expect it to happen by magic.

In our block, since the pandemic has lifted, several people have been on multiple overseas holidays. We've got one resident having a quite expensive renovation done. Other people have been buying new cars. I don't begrudge them any of that. I mean, let me make that clear, that's fine. But when it comes to the AGM and we are asking for more money to do things properly, don't sit there and pull your pockets out and say, oh God, there's 20 cents that will that help? You know the

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message about the realities of strata being a business and really only being to able to survive. If the foundational elements of which money is one are in place really just can't be overemphasized in my book. You can do it gently, but you need to do it repeatedly. And as I said, use simple terms, use terms that they can relate to.

One of the parallels for strata that came to me over the years is dentistry. Because I've never met anyone in my life who finds any joy in going to the dentist. And even the people who might say, my dentist is wonderful. She's very gentle, gets good results. There'll be a stab at the end by saying, but she costs a fortune. You know, so it'll be a positive, but there'll be a negative in it. But strata seems for some reason, people are happy to spend on all other, many other aspects of their life. But when it comes to strata, it's the last card in the pack. I think that has to change.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes, I agree with you, Bruce. And I think that's how we end up with strata committee members who receive abusive emails. It's all their fault when the levies are going up because they're the ones who have been mismanaging the building. I mean, we've gotta accept that those who are putting their hands up for strata committee positions have to be pretty resilient, if not made of steel. You gotta have your flack jacket on. As I often say to my clients, you've been doing this for 15-plus years and it sounds like you've probably had your fair share of flack thrown at you. How have you handled that? Some practical things that our committee members in a similar position can take on board?

**Bruce Minter:** Yes, I was fairly lucky. One of my jobs many years ago, I had to deal with disputes that had gone through all the normal channels of customer inquiry, call centers, letters, whatever, but hadn't been resolved. You know, these were angry people, frustrated people who ended up writing to the CEO or whoever they perceived to be the head of the company. And I was part of a small unit that had to handle those on behalf of the general manager at the time. So we had to get it right, this was the last chance. But we had, we sort of had the power or the influence to draw all the strings together and investigate that problem and find what the solution was and go back to the person with it, with that solution, make them happy.

Angry people will calm down if they know they're being listened to. If they know they're being heard, that they're not just being bounced or being given a line. And I think that is also applied in strata. There was a, they're actually, there were original owners and they're, well, they're not physically still here, but they still own one of the units. So these gentlemen are, it's a couple who are in their eighties, but one of them was an inveterate letter writer when I moved in. There was always something you either complain about or suggest he wasn't too rude. But he calmed down. And I bumped into him once and he said, oh, look, you are doing a really good job because things are happening. You know, I've made a complaint and I asked for this, and I got listened to.

I said, this is such a change. And all those regular letters stopped. And, now he is a very, as I said, they don't live here at the moment, but we're still in touch with him. And he's a happy chappy. So that can be one thing. I think I've been fairly lucky. The people here are reasonable. I mean, I've had a few who've been screaming, you catch them in the wrong mood. But I take the attitude, I'm fairly firm with them, that unless they calm down, this call or this conversation is over, we'll reconvene when you've calmed down. I'm not gonna accept any abuse.

But I've pretty rarely needed to deploy that tactic. I think the main tactic is to understand what their problem is, what is making them so agitated? And also give them some perspective. I mean, it may be a case that they've got an issue out of perspective. They're looking at it purely from the me perspective rather than the whole community. And I think that can be another thing I would emphasize to people, to always communicate the community mindset, try and get people into a community mindset.

On the resilience point, I mean, again, maybe I'm sort of lucky because I've always had a bit of a fascination with the big names and the big challenges. And I mean, I suppose Churchill is an obvious example. There was a guy who before America entered the war, was leading a nation, which, for all intents and purposes was facing defeat. And here he was leading it. How did he cope with stress like that? How did Maggie Thatcher, the first woman prime minister in Britain. How did she cope when she had, the economy tanked huge unemployment? The IRA was very active. The Argentinians were stealing the Falklands back, that huge fight with the miners, all of those fights she had to win. You know, where did these people get that steal from? And that's all that stuff, whether you agree with

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their policies or not, where does that inner strength come from? You know, the answer to it, I guess in simple terms is determination.

I mean, there's a few other things involved probably, but determination, and, as modestly I can put it, I'm pretty determined to see this strata come to a better state. I mean, once I'm happier with a few of the elements, I'll back away. But, I'm quite frank with these people. I mean, last year when we had a yet another financial crisis, I wrote to them and I said, really, the rating for this strata is about three out of 10. You know, we are failing on some of our major measurements of success. We don't have sufficient funds to do the things we need. That has to change. So giving them a frank message, providing it's rational and backed up with explanations of what you will do with the money, how things will improve, and how by spending money, you can actually make other problems go away. You know, take the long-term view. Don't just call up the guy to fix the roller door. This once, get him on a program that he comes every three months and fixes it and the entire problem goes away as it has gone away.

**Amanda Farmer:** How many committee members have you got Bruce?

**Bruce Minter:** At the moment? Just three.

**Amanda Farmer:** Okay.

**Bruce Minter:** In the early days when I came on board, there was a bit of a, suddenly about seven people put and that was too much. That was unwieldy. And also people were very picky about what they wanted to stick their nose in where it was appropriate. Some of them others didn't want to do certain other activities, so it really wasn't effective. So I pretty quickly moved to making it a smaller three or four, I think is a fine number.

**Amanda Farmer:** And is that something that you make a strong suggestion of at the AGM? Because it is up to the owners to decide how many committee members they have in New South Wales. We can have between one and nine committee members. So how do you get them to stick to that three or four?

**Bruce Minter:** Well, good question. I mean, some of it is by chance in as much that some people simply leave. This strata, when we moved in was pretty much, there were a couple of places rented out, but probably only two or three outta 30. Whereas that the demographic has changed. There are many more tenants now, and therefore there are less onsite owners. So the pool of people who are willing to put up their hand or able to put up their hand is quite low. We've got a few older residents in their seventies and eighties.

I don't expect them to, I mean, they're willing to come on the committee if they want, but they don't wanna. But I think if you can set up a committee that can show people that you are on the ball, that you are looking after everyone's interests, not just the young people, not just the owners, you are willing to take that broad view. I think people will, they seem to be willing to go with that. But essentially in the last couple of years, it's been a case of we need to scrounge for people anyway. So it hasn't been a case of really needing to turn people away at the door.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yes. Bruce, you shared with me some rules, I think I'll call them, that you live by when it comes to your email inbox that I thought were very good and our listeners might be keen to hear about how do you manage the email overload as a busy committee member?

**Bruce Minter:** It's difficult to have firm rules or rules that I necessarily stick to a hundred percent of the time. But essentially, I try not to look and strata stuff on the weekend. Just like in a normal job, in a corporate job or whatever. You try to avoid weekend work if you can. It may be inevitable, there may be other circumstances, but I try to limit that, particularly after one bad experience on a Sunday morning where I did go into my emails and one of our strata committee members was calling me, it took 10 years, but I finally got called a dictator for making a very, a \$300 approval of a railing that they happen not to agree with. And that sport my Sunday morning, and also one other time, a few years before that.

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I'd foolishly looked at my emails about 10 o'clock at night and there was another rant, and that was probably the one time that my sleep got disturbed. I'm not willing to put up with that sort of stuff. Well, I wouldn't put up with that sort of stuff in a role for which I was being paid, in a company role or a professional role. And I'm certainly not gonna put up with it for a voluntary role. So I, in short, I try to put some constraints around when I'll look at emails, how much time I'll spend on them. It can be very circumstantial where it can be, you know, what is the issue? Does it need more research?

Is it something that I can bounce back to the person? One of the problems I think in this strata is that, and one of the risks actually is that it's become very dependent on me. If I decided to resign, if I just got totally pissed off and decided to resign or won the lottery, or, with all due modesty, I think they would, at this stage, they would struggle. I think there'd be a lot of catching up. And I think we'd go backwards for a while until they did catch up. So what I'm trying to do is primarily through RSC, but also through general mindset and through addressing finding long-term solutions to problems like plumbing and what have you, roofing, you know, get it to a state where it isn't dependent on me or me or my successor.

**Amanda Farmer:** Bruce, do you invest time or any money in your own strata education? How do you with confidence steer this community?

**Bruce Minter:** Okay, well plug for your website, Your Strata Property, Amanda. I mean that's been very helpful in, as much the forums and your various talks and guests. Okay. That's a pay for fee service. But there's also, as you probably know, there's other, I actually think there's probably a bit too much information out there at the moment. 'cause you could, if you were really conscientious about this stuff or active energetic, you could spend a huge amount of your week going on to look up strata and strata man and the OFT website and breeding the regulation. You could invest a lot of time.

So I've, over the years, I mean, primarily I've used our strata manager, I've used them to, you know, how does this work? So I've used them as a partial education source, but some of those ones I've mentioned particularly where they have case studies, you know, look up strata, I find very useful. So there's a fair amount of information out there. I even did one of those. It's, I'm an officially in assistant strata manager. Can you believe it? Of course, I did one of those courses at one of the educational facilities.

**Amanda Farmer:** Right.

**Bruce Minter:** Which, bottom line, I think to be a good chair or to be a good strata committee member, you do need to educate yourself, even if it doesn't, you don't necessarily have to do courses, but you do need to put in the effort to understand what strata is about. I came into this knowing pretty much nothing.

We'd effectively, well, we'd rented in a place, tickling, I'd lived in a strata, but I'd had nothing to do with it. So this strata role that I took on was from ground zero. And it's just been a case of familiarizing myself with the various processes over the years.

**Amanda Farmer:** Well, I do appreciate, as I'm sure our listeners do too, you making even more time to contribute to this part of the strata world. Thank you for sharing all of that. Bruce, is there anything that you wanted to add before we wrap up? Perhaps your outlook on the future of strata living, whether that's personal for you or whether you wanna make a grand public statement?

**Bruce Minter:** Right. Okay. On the personal level, I mean, I'm pretty optimistic about this block. We've got a reasonable bunch of people here at the moment. We're getting things done. Yes. We don't have enough money, but even that's being addressed. So I'd be reasonably optimistic that this particular animal can be put in its cage in a reasonable amount of time. On the general strata world, if you'd asked me that question a year ago, I went to an SCA, it was a one-day event about a year ago. And I came away from that quite optimistic because there were, the speakers were very good. Rob Mins was there, he wasn't the strata commissioner at that time, but he gave a good presentation and it was in a day of good information.

I came away from that feeling quite optimistic about where strata was going. I mean, strata is well and truly with us, and it is going to be increasingly with us. I mean, the number of blocks. So it's not gonna go away. It can't be ignored. However, just what is it, two weeks ago. I'm somewhat disappointed with the goings on in, in net strata and SCA, I mean, the scandal that's broken around that

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is quite disappointing. One company being run by someone who's engaging in sharp practices or even a board that's engaging in sharp practices is one thing. But for SCA to have the New South Wales president of their professional standards organization to have been engaging in these sort of practices is deeply disappointing.

To put it mildly, I think it sets the strata industry back quite a way. And I think SCA particularly is gonna have to do a bit of fancy footwork to recoup their reputation. I think it's a great pity, I think strata in my view before that, the scandal of a couple of weeks, I thought it was, and I was willing to support the view that it was on its way to getting better, long way to go, but on its way to getting better. So that's probably my major concern at this stage. I suppose if I was to give one bit of advice to anyone in strata committees out there, take the line of for your individual strata of balance and harmony, that I got that from him. There's a Neil Perry cookbook and apparently it's a Chinese concept and I think, it's very simple balance and harmony in your community.

How do you balance it? What is necessary to make things work? And just on one closing, I've just glanced down my notes. I've imparted to my strata the four Rs, which are respect, reasonableness, responsibility and rules, respect for others. Reasonableness as in, it's gonna be a give and take for your journey. You know, don't expect the paint colours to always go your way. Responsibility. Take responsibility for reporting things that are wrong. Don't assume someone else is doing it. You know, that's one example. And rules, I mean, we have there, there's strata legislation. We have by-laws. This is not being made up on the run. And the final R, the fifth R, which is not necessarily the individual community, is reform. I mean, that's, if there were to be one thing to be done in strata, it's reform.

**Amanda Farmer:** That sounds like a good place to end. Thank you very much, Bruce Minter for joining us, sharing your wisdom and your strata insights. I will look forward to hearing from you when perhaps you win the lottery and you're moving out of strata when you're handing over to your new leader of your community. You can teach us all about how that's done.

**Bruce Minter:** Yep. Before I'm 80.

**Amanda Farmer:** Indeed. Thank you for your time, Bruce.

**Bruce Minter:** Okay. Thanks, Amanda. Anytime.

**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 by the show notes at [yourstrataproperty.com.au](https://yourstrataproperty.com.au).