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## YSP Podcast Transcript: 418. The life-saving addition to your common property

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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 I have a guest for you this week. His name is Kurtis Vuko. Kurtis is the director and founder of Pulse Defibs, which was established to assist owners wanting to improve the safety of their strata plan and the community. Kurtis' mission is to reduce sudden cardiac arrest statistics by supporting Strata plans in purchasing defibrillators and ensuring residents know how to use them confidently.

As you'll hear in this chat, Kurtis actually began his career as a strata manager. He then went on to explore other areas of property, including residential property management with a passion for assisting both owners and tenants while growing his knowledge in all aspects of property, in particular, strata living. In 2022, Kurtis took a break from property to pursue a role with Surf Lifesaving New South Wales. And it was here that Kurtis began his work with defibrillators. Since then, Kurtis has returned to the property industry, in particular Strata, however, not as a manager, but as a service provider through his company Pulse Defibs, who believe that defibrillators should be common practice alongside fire extinguishers and other safety measures within our strata buildings. I'll take you over now to my chat with Kurtis Vuko.

**Amanda Farmer:** Kurtis Vuko, welcome to the show.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Hey Amanda, thanks for having me.

**Amanda Farmer:** Pleasure. Let us know Kurtis, what your company does and how you came to be serving our strata communities.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Simply put, what we do is we help owners that are wanting to improve the safety of their buildings. And we do this by providing them with defibrillators and ensuring that all residents know how to use them effectively and confidently.

**Amanda Farmer:** Excellent. You popped into my inbox, Kurtis, or maybe it was LinkedIn somewhere along the way. I saw what you're up to and I went, that is awesome. I am surprised that I haven't seen this before. We need to get you on the show and make sure as many buildings as possible know what it is that you're doing, I mean, you're saving lives. Why is it so important for strata buildings to have one of these defibrillators available to residents?

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah. I did pop up to you on LinkedIn and I thank you again for having me on. Cause I think it is a really important thing to get out there. I guess you could say the reason why we've chosen to work in strata and why we specialize in strata is because 80% of sudden cardiac arrests happen at home within residential settings. So that's quite a big percentage. When you look at that and we're seeing Defibs pop up at bus stops, sporting clubs, community spaces, that's really awesome. But to really effectively target the statistics, we need to have them in people's homes which is why we specialize in strata because obviously these things, they do cost money. They're about \$3,000. It's not realistic for every Australian home to have a Defibs. That would be awesome, but it's just not financially realistic.

However, through a community approach being strata, we found that it's more economical. We can have one Defibs serving up to 50 or more homes. And yeah, it's just a more economical way to approach these statistics. When you talk about why it's important to have these things in strata. The main thing that comes to mind for me is time. They need to be close. So when you talk about sudden cardiac arrest, they say that for every minute that passes without a Defibs, the chances of survival will decrease by 10 % per minute.

**Amanda Farmer:** Every minute. God, that's terrifying.

**Kurtis Vuko:** I know. So it's really important to have them close by. Owners will often say to me, you know, it's okay. We've got a Defibs down the road or at the sporting club or, you know, the hospital's close by. But what we really need to be asking ourselves

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is how quickly can we get there and get back? Or even more importantly, is the Defibs available to you 24 -7? Because if it's going to take, you know, five or so minutes to get there and back, and your chances of viable are decreasing by 10% per minute, or even worse, you can't get access at certain hours to that Defibs, it's probably not quite cutting it.

**Amanda Farmer:** And when you shared some of these stats with me, Kurtis, you talked about ambulance response times. Can you share with our audience a bit about that? Cause that made me feel really ill.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, definitely. So as I just mentioned for every minute that passes, it does show that 10% chances of survival decreases. When you look at that, what we're trying to do with a Defibs really is bridge the gap between the incident occurring and an ambulance and paramedics arriving.

So I know in my local area, the ambulance response time for an emergency is 8.1 minutes. I'd encourage all the listeners to actually jump online. You can find these numbers pretty easily for your local area. But if you're looking at 8.1 minutes, you know, that's an almost an 80% decrease in your chances of survival. So we really need to look after ourselves in a way and take responsibility for that time between the incident and the ambulances arriving. And there's one way we can do that. It's knowing CPR and the other thing is having a Defibs ready to go.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yeah, it kind of seems like a no brainer when you think about the number of people that are in strata building, the cost shared among those people. As you said, we've got them in public spaces and community centers. Why wouldn't you have them in strata? Have you heard about others who are providing this service, is yours and your company one of a kind? A bit of background into sort of how you got into this.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, totally. So I've actually got a background. That's a long time ago, but I did work as a strata manager at one point in my career.

**Amanda Farmer:** Oh no way. There you go.

**Kurtis Vuko:** So I do have a background in property in strata. So the company does know how strata operates. And you probably have instances where you send an electrician or a plumber to your strata block, but they're not strata specialist, and it can just turn into a communication breakdown and not end too well if they don't know how sort of the strata plan works. I guess another thing that separates us from a lot of other companies that work in this space, because there is ton of companies that work in this industry of Defibs.

But I guess the main difference is that we've created a four-step services plan. So we actually come out and we do a consultation, we'll speak with the strata community owners and figure out exactly where the Defibs should be, which model they should have, how many Defibs they should have. We then go on to quoting and assist them through the process of getting it approved.

And then once it's approved, we'll actually come out and teach the owners how to use the Defibs. So that's probably the most important thing that is missing with this service in a lot of other companies is that, you you get given a Defibs, but if you don't have the confidence to use it, there's really not much point in having it there. So we come out and teach everyone how to use it. So if there is an instance when they have to get it out, they're confident enough to grab it and get going. And then another service we offer that separates us is we actually will come out and check the Defibs for you annually in a services plan.

**Amanda Farmer:** And in terms of residents knowing how to operate this equipment, I would imagine that that is an ongoing process as you have people coming and going from the building. You've got new residents, you've got new committee members, maybe you've got a new building manager, especially if you don't have a building manager. Having as many residents as possible, knowing how to use the equipment is going to be really important, isn't it?

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, definitely. As I said, if you don't know how to use it, it's not much point having it. When we look at statistics

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again, I like going back to the stats. Without a Defibs, the chances of survival are between sort of 5% to 10% in Australia. But when you've got a Defibs there, that jumps up to around 74%.

**Amanda Farmer:** Wow, that's huge.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah. And I might just mention, because there's a bit of a public perception around Defibs being just the machine that delivers the shock. That's sort of how people see them. But really a good Defibs, I like to see as a CPR feedback machine, because it'll actually run you through your CPR. It'll give you every step of the way what to do. It'll give you prompts such as push harder, push softer. It'll give you a tempo to follow because it's really not just the shock that a Defibs does and it's not just the CPR feedback. It's a combination of both. You can't really have one without the other. So I'm trying to sort of change the public perception of a Defibs from just the machine that delivers the shock to a CPR feedback machine.

**Amanda Farmer:** Right. Fair enough. Now, Kurtis, you've got a background in strata management. You understand how strata works. What are some of the challenges or some of the blocks to getting these devices into strata schemes?

**Kurtis Vuko:** I guess some of the feedback I'm receiving is there's a lot of fear and hesitation mostly around liability and who's responsible for maintaining the Defib. A lot of strata committees will often ask me, what if we use the Defib and it doesn't work or the rescuer doesn't know how to use it properly? Are we then liable?

And it's an important thing to address obviously, it's, liability is a big thing to consider, especially in strata. But, and quickly, this isn't legal advice. I recommend everyone does their own research, but the simple answer is no. And the reason is when you're using a DFib, the person using it's protected by a thing called the Good Samaritan Act.

If you haven't heard of that, you should jump online and have a quick look because every state's got a different act. But what that is, I've got a little snippet here for the listeners as to what they're, yes. The Good Samaritan Act offers legal protection for people who give reasonable assistance to those who are or whom to believe to be injured, ill or otherwise incapacitated.

The protection is intended to reduce bystanders hesitation to assist for fear of being sued or prosecuted or unintentional injury or wrongful death. So if you're using a DFib, you're protected by the Good Samaritan Act. And then further, owners corporations don't have a duty of care or a legal responsibility to have a DFib.

So if there's no duty of care, you can't actually be found negligent. On the flip side of that, for example, if you're a first aid officer at an event and you then do have a duty of care, for example, you need to have the equipment, you need to have the knowledge and the skills to act and provide first aid. However, strata plans do not have that duty of care.

**Amanda Farmer:** Fair point.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, so a simple answer, no. At this stage, there's no legal responsibility for you to have a DFib and therefore there's no duty of care and therefore no liability attached to having one.

**Amanda Farmer:** Good to know.

**Kurtis Vuko:** On the topic of liability, I've got a little story. If we've got time, it's quite an interesting one. It's not specific to strata, but it gives you a good idea and it gets you thinking around liability attached to defibrillators.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yeah, go for it. I'd love to hear.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Sure. Okay. So there was an airline. I'm not going to say which airline it was. But on said airline, during a flight, a gentleman had a sudden cardiac arrest, went into sudden cardiac arrest. And obviously on an airline, you've got a duty of care to

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look after the passengers. So of course, man's gone into sudden cardiac arrest, the flight staff and flight attendants have started CPR, ran and grabbed the DFib and began putting the electrodes onto the patient. Once they got the DFib out, they noticed that it wasn't turning on.

And unfortunately, the pads and batteries were expired and out of date. Not good. So unfortunately, the gentleman passed away and the family of the gentleman pursued the airline in court for negligence and not providing the duty of care that they should have been. Sounds like a pretty straightforward case, but actually the airline was not found guilty, surprisingly, yes.

**Amanda Farmer:** Right.

**Kurtis Vuko:** To pursue someone for negligence, for breaching a duty of care, you need to prove that the outcome would have been different if the DFib was working. And you may recall I mentioned earlier that with a DFib involved, chances of survival are around 74%. So they're not 100% even with the DFib. So even in that situation where the pads and batteries were out of date, when the case went to court, the defendant was still not found not guilty. So even in the worst case scenario, if your DFib's not working, there's still a very slim chance that you actually could be found prosecuted for that.

**Amanda Farmer:** Right, fascinating. And what about where I know you and your company, I think Kurtis, you're in New South Wales, where you're talking to strata committees and owners about installing this equipment. Is it recognized that this is an addition to the common property? Are communities taking the point of view that they need to approve this at a general meeting? Probably, I would think by way of a special resolution. Are there any blocks in that respect? Is that seen as a hurdle at all actually getting it approved to install and spend the money?

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, definitely. Every strata plan is different and the opinions of the owners are going to be different in each case. So I guess, getting everyone on board with the idea can be a bit of a block. We do at Pulse Defibs is we do try to assist with the approval process. So often when I give a quote to a strata committee, I'll ask them, you know, if there is any hurdles that you come across or any questions, you can have the owners contact me directly. If they've got any queries that they're unsure about, give us a call and we can talk through it. So we're there to help through the approval process.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yeah, excellent. And you know, I would be thinking if I was a resident in a strata scheme, you know, an owner-occupier who was both living there and responsible for helping make this decision, I would be thinking, what if it's me, you know, what if it's me who has that sudden cardiac arrest? and this is a piece of equipment that would save my life. It's interesting that people, as you're saying, turn to the thought of, well, what if I have to use it and I'm responsible and I'm liable or someone in the community uses it incorrectly or the battery's flat and we're all liable. As I said at the top before we started talking about these challenges, to me, it just seems like a no-brainer because I just see myself, you know, lying there with every minute passing 10% less likely to survive.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, totally. I'd say, if there is any pushback, to be honest, once you start chatting about the whole idea, there isn't much pushback. It is a little bit of a no-brainer. And if the funds are there, sometimes I guess the funds aren't there and that you're not able to do upgrades like this. That's probably the only time where it's a bit of a straight no. Once you open the discussion, it's pretty straightforward that everyone's on board. One thing I do touch on, when we're sort of trying to get it approved and get it over the line. And if you don't mind, I'll ask you a question, Amanda. So how many, cardiac arrests do you think there are per year in Australia?

**Amanda Farmer:** How many Australians each year have a cardiac arrest? I don't know. 50,000? 10 I don't know. Some thousands of thousands?

**Kurtis Vuko:** It's 25,000. Okay. Yeah, thereabouts. And of those, how many do you think happen in residential settings at home.

**Amanda Farmer:** 25,000, there you go, I would think it would be a lot. So 25,000, at least half of that.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yes, it's actually 18,000.

**Amanda Farmer:** 18,000. Yeah, just over.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, out of the 25. And then to tie that back to Strata, did you know that there are 17,000 in-home fire incidents per year? Yeah, so there are actually 17,000 in-home fire incidents, but there are 18,000 in-home cardiac arrests. Yet, it's mandatory to have all this fire, well, and it should be, but we know how heavily regulated fire safety equipment is in strata.

**Amanda Farmer:** And we're always talking about it.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Always, yeah. Yet there are actually more sudden cardiac arrests at home. So when you look at those numbers, it's a bit of a no-brainer that there probably should be some kind of legislation around it. However, there isn't yet. So we believe that our DFibs should be like common practice alongside fire extinguishers. I guess the reason that they're not a fire in an apartment block is gonna cost a hell of a lot of money, millions of dollars.

Whereas someone having a sudden cardiac arrest doesn't necessarily cost a lot of money, but you're now putting life and a dollar value in the same sentence. And we don't think that's really the right way. You can't put a value on a life. So we don't think that's the right way to sort of address that.

**Amanda Farmer:** Well said. You've shared a sad story with us, Kurtis, not thankfully arising in a strata scheme. Do you have any other stories or case studies, or buildings that have used this equipment and saved lives?

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, totally. There are so many stories. There are only a few that I'm allowed to discuss due to privacy reasons.

**Amanda Farmer:** Right. Fair enough.

**Kurtis Vuko:** And it's actually good that we touched on this. The stories that we're allowed to discuss, they're part of our Heroes for Life program. So this is a program that we run in conjunction with the manufacturer of our DFib, which is Zoll Defibrillators. And just while we're here, Zoll, we only stock Zoll Defibrillators. I won't go into that now, because I could chat forever about why they are the best DFib on the market.

**Amanda Farmer:** Is that Zoll? Can you just spell that for us?

**Kurtis Vuko:** Z O double L.

**Amanda Farmer:** Z O double L if anyone wants to look it up.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, check that out. We only stock them. Again, if you've got any questions about why, feel free to give me a call. But yeah, as I was saying, we run this Heroes for Life program with ZOLL. The program basically, it exists to honor heroes and survivors of sudden cardiac arrest. So what we do is if someone shares their story, their survival story, they're then donated a defibrillator that they can donate to their sporting club, a local charity or wherever it may be, maybe their strata plan even. So that's where we get a lot of the survival stories through the Heroes for Life program. There's one in particular, I'll send you a link to all of the stories for the Heroes for Life program.

**Amanda Farmer:** That's great. We will pop a link in the show notes. Yeah, perfect.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Perfect. Yeah. Cause there is so many good stories and it also does encourage survivors to speak up and put their story out there. They get a DFib and hopefully can save someone else's life. So it's a really great program. So the one I'm going to share with you guys is from the Lavington Panthers bowling club.

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Okay, so everything and everyone seemed ready for lawn bowls at the Lavington Panthers last August. The rinks were marked out and the players were paired up for their matches. Don Fraser was a regular at the club and he'd seen fellow member Jeff Iles around. That day they happened to be playing in adjacent rinks on the bowling green. Jeff and his opponent were tied at 26-0 and Don was behind in his match but it started to make a comeback. When he noticed, Jeff fell head-first onto the green. He assumed Jeff had tripped, but kept an eye on the situation. When Jeff didn't immediately get up, Don ran to where Jeff was lying on the green and turned him over. Jeff was unresponsive, beginning to turn blue, and he appeared to be going into sudden cardiac arrest.

Don heard the other players saying they didn't know what to do. So Don took charge of the situation. He asked another bowler to get the AED from the clubhouse and another one to call the emergency services. Don began CPR immediately. Lavington Bowling Club keeps their AED in the clubhouse upstairs about 50 meters away from the bowling greens. Don had administered CPR for about four to eight minutes before someone was able to get back with this old AED. He attached the electrodes and the DFib immediately advised a shock. After it delivered the shock, it instructed Don to continue CPR. Shortly thereafter, Jeff was breathing on his own. Don put Jeff on his side in the recovery position, just as the ambulance arrived.

**Amanda Farmer:** Wow. Go, Don.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Although Don had done CPR training for work, he'd never actually used an AED in a life-threatening situation. He said, it was the first time I've used one in a life-threatening situation and the instructions were very easy to understand. Luckily, Jeff only lost a match on that day and not his life. It was incredibly fortunate that the Lavington Panthers bowling club had an AED on site and that Don was brave enough to step in and provide CPR when no one else knew what to do. The experience forged a bond between the avid lawn bowlers. Jeff and Don both wish they'd bowled better on that day, but continue to play in championships with a renewed appreciation for life.

**Amanda Farmer:** I love it. What a great story.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Yeah, and as I said, include the link in the show notes because there are many more similar stories. So it's an awesome program that one.

**Amanda Farmer:** Yeah. And sounds like a good resource to be circulating around your owners when you're putting this one to the vote, making sure everybody can understand the good that this equipment does. Well, Kurtis, where should our listeners go if they want to get a DFib in ASAP to check in with you, ask some more questions, to get some resources, where's the best place for them to head?

**Kurtis Vuko:** Probably just jumped straight on our website. It's [www.pulsedfibs.com.au](http://www.pulsedfibs.com.au) or they can shoot me an email at [info@pulsedfibs.com.au](mailto:info@pulsedfibs.com.au)

**Amanda Farmer:** Excellent. And do you serve right across the country or are you only in certain states at the moment?

**Kurtis Vuko:** Whole country. Anywhere they need a day feed, we'll go.

**Amanda Farmer:** Excellent. Good to hear. Thank you for the excellent work that you are doing specific to our Strata communities. Some good news stories there and no doubt more to come. Thank you for taking the time to share all of that with us today. Kurtis, I'll catch up with you soon.

**Kurtis Vuko:** Thanks so much for having me.

**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](http://yourstrataproperty.com.au).