

## Media Release

Attention Chief of Staff/Editors

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# THOUSANDS OF QUEENSLANDERS SEEKING STRATA CHANGE STRATA SECTOR CALLS FOR STATE BUDGET TO BE A PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

## INFERIOR CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS, CYCLONE PROOFING NORTH QLD AND PROPERTY LAW REVIEW MUST BE PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD

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Queensland's multi-billion dollar strata sector – representing over 400,000 community titled lots through the State – says this month's State Budget will be vital to the sector and will determine whether strata remains a key billion dollar driver in the State's economy.

Sector leaders say inferior construction products are endangering the properties and lives of thousands, and proactive measures must be taken to mitigate the risk.

They also say the sector is expanding rapidly but needs outcomes from the current property law review to address issues of growth.

Now Queensland's biggest property sector, the peak organisation for the strata sector says it is hopeful several issues affecting hundreds of thousands of stakeholders will be met with firm action from the Palaszczuk Government.

Strata Community Australia (Qld) says that if nothing changes past the July 14<sup>th</sup> budget, hundreds of thousands of strata sector stakeholders will continue to face grave safety concerns and restrictive governance.

In the State Budget, the strata sector wants to see three actions underway;

- A commitment to sector protection through the elimination of inferior construction products and building practices
- Funding for the cyclone proofing of North Queensland strata communities, still struggling between disaster seasons
- The fast-tracking of an ongoing state property law review

"The danger that countless Queensland strata property stakeholders are at risk via the widespread use of inferior construction products is an issue that should take centre stage here," Strata Community Australia (Qld) President, Simon Barnard said today.

“Other states have plans to move to issue independent audit notices to developers, builders, suppliers and a range of other groups to combat this issue and we urge the Queensland Government to get behind this proposed inspection requirement to support accountability.”

Mr Barnard is adamant the State Government must play a role in ensuring there is accountability in the sector, given the existing barriers for action.

“Make no mistake, any responsible groups will shy away from proactively arranging safety checks because of the financial bearing any findings will have on them. But bottom line, we need to know what is out there.”

Another issue the strata sector wants State Government commitment on is the cyclone proofing of North Queensland strata communities.

Strata Community Australia (Qld) welcomed the State Government's introduction of a North Queensland insurance taskforce in May, but says more needs to be done for struggling owners beyond the monitoring of premiums.

“It's the kind of thing no one likes to see; especially when one incident impacts the lives of so many people at once. Rather than focusing on cleaning up the damage time after time, the State Government should make funds available in this new budget to start improving the cyclone proofing of strata buildings,” Mr Barnard said.

“We have been assured by the Treasurer that the Government shares our concern for North Queensland strata communities in the wake more damage this season, and now is the time to reflect that.”

With damage to one building immediately affecting dozens of occupiers and owners; Mr Barnard argues that perhaps no group is faced with more damage than the strata industry.

“Inspection, replacement and maintenance are the big recommendations our members consistently receive. However, what we're seeing time and time again is that they simply can't afford or keep up with these steps when the cyclones are coming at nearly monthly intervals over the season.”

“We understand that it is impossible to guarantee a 100% cyclone proof building, but given the stakes at play, we implore the government to tip in \$15 million in this year's budget to get the ball rolling. These funds would be used as grants to the most severely impacted areas.”

The final deliverable that the strata sector is pushing to see come State Budget is a deadline for the ongoing state property law review.

“We’re really pleased with the collaborative relationship we continue to hold with the Attorney-General’s office, but the greater strata community in Queensland seeks some finality to this process,” Mr Barnard said.

As part of a recent community consultation process, Strata Community Australia (Qld), the Australian Resident Accommodation Managers’ Association (Qld) and the Owners Corporations’ Network (Qld) formed a stakeholder umbrella group to communicate the top issues Queensland strata stakeholders want legislative reform to address.

“Out of the 29 top issues submitted to the Attorney General’s office, as a group we agreed on 27; which is a huge milestone for a unified sector,” Mr Barnard said.

“One of the big things we hope the completion of this reform achieves is the freedom for self regulation throughout strata communities in Queensland.

“In the last couple of weeks, we have seen the issue of pets in strata dominate headlines; with rigid pet free and pet friendly legislation meaning that bodies corporate can’t bring reason and majority decisions into their communities.”

“There’s currently an excess of red tape involved in the governing of strata communities and we feel bodies corporate should have freedom to consult with their stakeholders, on how their community should be lived in.”

Mr Barnard said that until there is an end in sight, stakeholders will continue to be active in their concerns for the future of their community with respect to issues like pets along with others like smoking, parking, overcrowding.

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