

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 17 JUNE 2015

The following article was recently run by SCA (NSW) – our industry association – we thought owners with gas would find this helpful - it was kindly prepared for them by Catherine Lezer – Experienced Chairperson and we have been authorised to re-produce it for you.

Gas Meters

Gas is used in strata common property generally for heating hot water, although some blocks have common gas BBQ facilities. It is good to know where your gas meter is located so you can check the reading against the bill. Some places to look for meters are in a service riser, in the ceiling, garbage room or in a plant room. Some examples of what you are looking for:



Newer buildings may also contain an MDL. These are remote reading units for all the meters (common area and apartments). The remote reading units send the gas usage on a weekly basis to the gas companies. It looks like this:

Your meter, the MDL and the gas company should all be reading the same usage on the same day. Just to make it confusing some meters show one or two decimal places and the remote reading unit doesn't.

What if the readings don't match or your bill comes out with an Estimate rather than a Actual reading type?

Gas leaks are rare, so other explanations are:

- A fault with the meter itself (most likely)
- A fault in the line/MDL remotely reading the meter
- The meter number being read is wrong ie not the meter for your unit.

Jemena (the people who own the gas meters) can check from their office if they are reading the meter at their end, so it is easy to eliminate faults with the line/MDL as the source of the problem. As is checking the correct meter number is assigned to the correct unit or common property which Jemena or your gas company can do. If your bill shows "Estimate" instead of "Actual" read type then it is very likely there is a problem with the meter and the meter may need replacing.



Survey by University of Sydney on strata living

You may already have completed a survey into strata living commissioned by the University of Sydney. However if you haven't, here is your chance to provide feedback on how living in a small community and the manner in which decisions can be made under the current legislation affects you.

To complete the survey, go to www.cityfutures.net.au – there is a picture of a high rise building under the “Contact” tab at the top, with bold ‘Strata Experience Survey’ in the text . You can read more about the survey by following the prompts, or just start the survey by choosing “Next”.

We were advised by SCA (NSW) this week that the new minister is again meeting with industry leaders re the proposed new legislation. We suspect things like the survey will be used by them and others who work in strata related fields to assist with the issues brought to light from such feedback. Accordingly we encourage as many of you and your friends who also live in units (even tenants) to give the 8 minutes of your time it takes to complete it.

How is Progressive Strata Services Pty Ltd different?

We thought this would be an opportunity to reiterate why we believe we go further than any other strata management company in terms of developing and implementing new and unique services.

1. All your financials are transparent: at your AGM we provide a report detailing every invoice the Owners Corporation has paid. This allows all owners to review where the strata scheme’s money was spent. Not all agents provide this level of information. Our philosophy is “It is everyone’s money and so all owners should be given this valuable information”.

2. The Executive are kept informed of payments made on behalf of the scheme: we forward via email, a monthly report as to income, expenses paid, and the balances in the admin and sinking fund. Further, work orders issued are uploaded daily to a secure website where the Executive Committee can view them.

3. Easy to access on-line information: each owner can view their lot statement – and print it out if they need to – eg at tax time. They can also view the Owners Corporation’s current financial statement (and if you have been with us more than a year, you can see prior years information also) using the password issued by Progressive Strata.

4. We encourage and work with scheme’s regarding water conservation and clean energy: We are always looking to save our schemes money. A strata scheme we manage in Auburn now saves 40% on their water bills after installing water saving devices and fixing some leaks. The outlay will be returned in savings within 3.4 months.

Also they will implement a solar system in 2015 that includes the storing of solar energy in a 100% environmental way (ie not batteries – which is very expensive and uses a lot of common area space). It is expected that they will not require any power from the grid once this is installed.

5. Newsletters: We generate newsletters on a regular basis which cover aspects of strata living that are pertinent to Owners Corporations and their committees. We use these to convey decisions made by various courts in NSW which may affect our schemes and updates on when legislation is due to come in that may affect the management, eg the pool fencing regulations, etc. Newsletters are sent to all owners with their levy notice. Previous editions are stored on our website.

6. Proactive AGM agendas. Each year the AGM agenda is reviewed to allow our clients to take time to consider various aspects of their management. In the past this has included a review of the scheme’s sinking fund assessment and what projects are due to be undertaken. Additionally how they can reduce the risk that may result from poor workmanship or an injury caused by a contractor – by ensuring they are licensed and insured. By raising these points in this forum gives our clients the advantage of allowing them time to make well considered and informed decisions whilst considering the long term effects.

Other differences:

We also suggest that the scheme seek professional advice on which to make informed decisions: at the appropriate times we recommend to our clients that they engage specific advice from an expert to ensure that large items of expenditure are well managed, e.g. structural or geo-technical engineer, architect etc. These professionals are independent of our office and advise the strata scheme during a particular one-off project, such as roof replacement, etc. They are able to specify suitable tradesmen to ensure the defective aspect is rectified properly and in the most cost efficient manner.

Last, but by no means least - our managers are very experienced and well versed in the Strata Scheme’s Management Act. We believe this helps our owner’s corporations in making good decisions and will generally assist in reducing the chances that the scheme will be sued.