

SMARTER *Communities*

EDITION
02/2019

*From drab to fab – a building
transformation*

Pets – more than companions

HEART RULES HEAD
purchasing the right place

**MAKING SMALLER SPACES
WORK HARDER**



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Finding life's opportunities



Building defects have grabbed media headlines of late and some commentators have gone to the extreme of warning against buying new builds altogether. Yes, better regulation and consumer protection is needed but home ownership is undeniably dropping thanks to rising housing costs.

For many young Australians, home ownership increasingly depends on who your parents are. And older Australians may not be able to downsize in the suburbs where they have lived unless governments allow and instil confidence to denser developments, particularly along key transport corridors.

Life offers us all opportunities, we just need to learn how to identify these and make the most of them, including making the most of what we have. Like transforming a tired apartment block from drab to fab, to recognising and designing buildings that respond to the culture of the local community.

In this issue we feature Mary's downsizing journey. After a massive life-changing event Mary, a retiree, moved from the family home into an apartment. Understandably hesitant at first, Mary now enjoys the lock up and leave lifestyle and has made more new friends of different ages in her apartment block in a short time than she ever met in her old neighbourhood.

Most apartment dwellers share the headache of trying to fit all worldly possessions into their unit/townhouse. Architect Brad Swartz shares how good design is not only about making a smaller footprint work harder, but also creating a really great quality of life and a sense of luxury in a tighter space.

We hope you enjoy this third issue of *SMARTER Communities Magazine*. If you like our content, subscribe and receive our monthly newsletter just like our 55,000+ like-minded followers, visit blog.smartercommunities.com.au

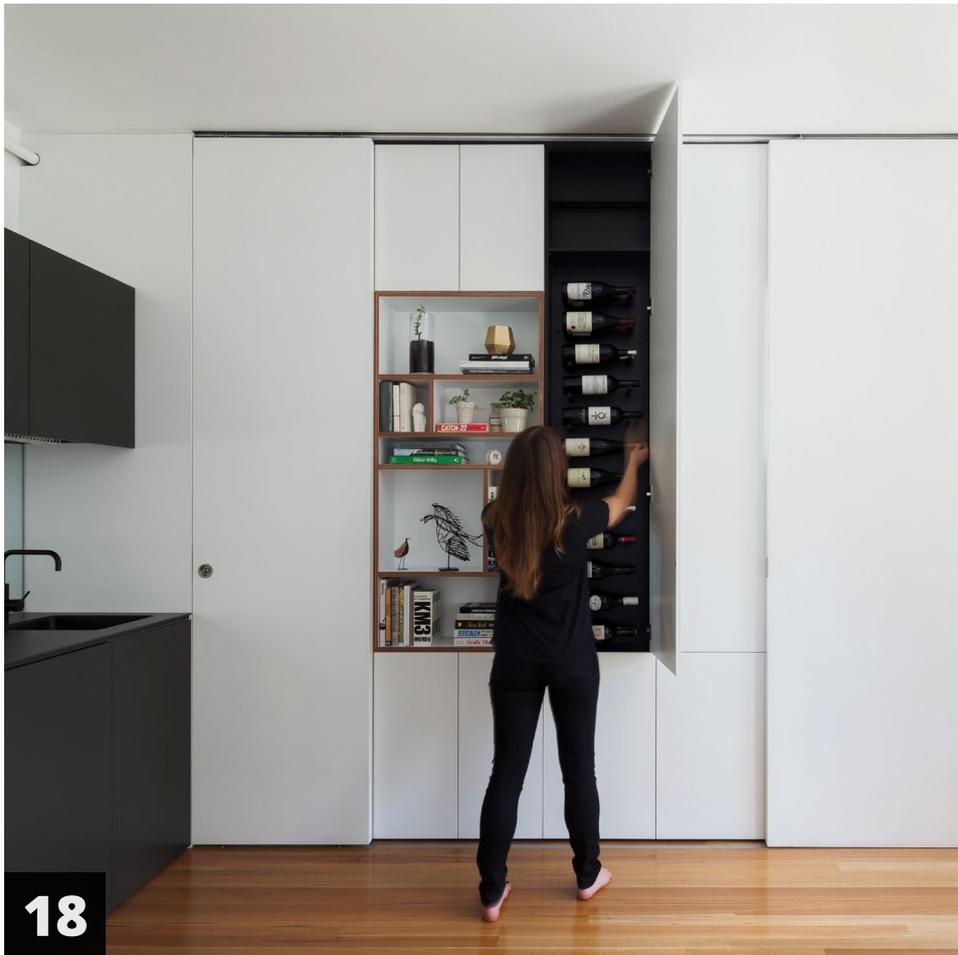
Best regards,

Timothy Lee

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Table of Contents





18

LIFESTYLE

- 13 The ocean is calling
- 16 Embracing its inner bohemian heritage
- 26 Weathering the exercise storm
- 28 Heart rules head
- 30 The impact of living longer
- 34 Pets - more than companions

STRATA MATTERS

- 06 From drab to fab
- 12 Homelessness is no urban myth
- 15 New strata locals
- 25 Standing the test of time

FEATURES

- 18 Making small spaces work harder
- 22 The LinkedIn of property

FINANCE

- 32 Super benefits of downsizing



ADELAIDE

From drab to fab – a buildings transformation



How a tired apartment block was transformed into an investment gem through the vision of a determined owner.

When Shaun bought into a Glenelg, Adelaide apartment block back in 2015, he looked beyond the outdated bricks and mortar and saw an investment worth the risk.

To be honest, the apartment block's appearance was tired and drab and the grounds looked sad. Most owners were investors. Not that they didn't care about maintenance but

keeping costs to a minimum was important.

As a result, due to the lack of street appeal many apartments remained on the market for over 12 months.

That was until an ambitious, creative visionary moved into the apartment complex and saw the building potential way beyond its fabulous location.

One vision of a facelift

Four months after moving in Shaun attended his first strata meeting and accepted what was to be his first committee position as treasurer.

Conducting his due diligence in his new role, Shaun became very proactive in the corporation and



Proudly managed by ASCM



Before

started reviewing old paperwork to familiarise himself with the history of the building and the financial health of the complex.

He discovered that, even though levies had been increased by 50% the previous year and minor remedial work had been completed, there was not substantial funds available for any major improvements to be made on the property.

With a background in property development, Shaun was well familiar with what could and couldn't

be achieved via a plan that would result in better return on investment for all the owners.

Expecting resistance from the other owners, he prepared his case for a building facelift, citing vacant lots for several months hence losing money for investors, unsightly grounds, poor use of space and unappealing street frontage.

According to Shaun 'there was no pride left in the building, it was tired and was lacking direction'.

Determined to make a difference,

Shaun invested his own time in researching building facelifts and received quotes to the tune of \$150,000.

With levies only recently being increased, there was not enough money in the account to cover the extent of the renovations. It would take over 5 years to acquire the required funds in the sinking fund. Plan B was a strata loan.

So, at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), Shaun encouraged all owners to make the necessary



improvements to increase the value of all their properties. All owners agreed to the \$100,000 strata loan plus what was currently available in the sinking fund.

A large part of the success of this was because the owners didn't need to provide any additional funds beyond what they were already doing, it could all be achieved through the loan.

Creating a tropical oasis

Fast forward to the approved building works, the list of improvements to the 20-lot complex was extensive:

- Replacement windows to rid of existing wood rot

- Trees shifted, new gardens planted and watering system installed
- Internal staircase repaired and painted
- New freshly painted front doors with hooks for safe temporary opening
- Car spaces repainted as per plan allocation
- LED lights installed in the internal building, on the outside and under trees
- Entire exterior of the complex was painted
- Cement driveways patched
- New notice board installed
- New letterboxes installed, designed to eliminate unwanted

post laying around

- NBN connection now hidden behind stylish feature wall
- Screens positioned for aesthetic purposes to stop areas being used as a thoroughfare

The renovations were nothing short of remarkable. The entire complex transformation ran as expected, resulting in the desired dream of Shaun's vision.

Until the money ran out.

Pride at Palm View Apartments

The good news is since the renovations three properties have sold and rents have gone up. What was previously the ugly duckling



of Glenelg is now a sought-after residence.

'People are now proud of their properties. They're not embarrassed, nor hide behind blinds and curtains. They are house proud and they open their blinds to enjoy the gorgeous view we have now,' says Shaun.

In the original property there was one huge palm tree. These days it is a palm tree oasis with seven different species now planted throughout the property.

'It was always my vision to make improvements to this place. The location is perfect and the area is only growing and becoming more appealing. One day soon I'm confident there will be more owner occupiers here than investors.

'Why wouldn't you want to live here yourself in your own piece of paradise?'

Shaun is certainly a problem solver and a prime example of how a productive committee member can drive your property to profitable margins.

In fact, he has invested in three of these apartments himself and renovated these, fitting modern technology and utilising style techniques to enhance its space. Now that alone speaks volumes.

But it doesn't stop there. Shaun has identified areas within the property that were underutilised yet had the potential to benefit all owners after some renovations.

Plans are well underway for this

alteration and we eagerly await details of Shaun's next vision for this fortunate apartment block in Glenelg. This includes the naming of the building and erecting a sign, Palm View Apartments.

'My advice to anyone looking to do a major renovation to your building complex is to make sure to do your research. When it comes time to present your plans to the other owners keep it simple so it's easy for them to understand.

'Just like in business, the simpler the message in your pitch, the easier it will be to gain momentum and support. At the end of the day, you do this because you love where you live and you want to make your home the most profitable it can be.' 



VICTORIA

Cure for Cancer



The Biggest Morning Tea, hosted internally at VBCS by Community Manager Vanja Knezevic in May, raised over \$1,500 for Cancer Council's annual fundraising event.

Vanja utilised social media to seek donations to raise vital funds for cancer research, prevention and support services, and hosted a beautiful morning tea in the office with colleagues.

Having tragically lost her father to cancer last year, Vanja knows by unfortunate experience how important it is to raise awareness and funds.

Overwhelmed by the generosity of support from her colleagues who brought in baked treats for the morning tea as well as donating, Vanja was able to smash her fundraising goal in honour of her father.

From all of us at Smarter Communities, we are deeply sorry for Vanja's loss yet so proud of her and the team at VBCS for their contribution to this worthy cause. 🌈

Vanja Knezevic – VBCS Community Manager
Raised over \$1,500 for The Biggest Morning Tea.



Busting strata myths

In August ASCM, partnered with Mellor Olsson Lawyers and CHU, hosted an educational event for owners at Adelaide's Convention Centre to address one of the most frequently asked questions... who is responsible for what in strata? Response was overwhelming,

reaching maximum capacity, with 100 owners in attendance. Presentations covered topics including the role and responsibilities of Officer Bearers, Committee Members and Owner Corporation Managers; who's responsible for lot owner property

vs common area / Strata Title vs Community Title; and who's responsible for debt recovery and what is the process. When surveyed after the event 90.4% of attendees replied they would attend another ASCM event, reinforcing education is priceless. 🌈



QUEENSLAND

Marathon for good

OUR GOLD COAST MARATHON RUNNERS RAISED VITAL FUNDS FOR CANCER COUNCIL

Congratulations to our athletes from Ernst and Challenge who not only completed the 10km Gold Coast Marathon in July but managed to raise almost \$600 in the process for Cancer Council Queensland.

Runners included Skye Dingwall, Hayley Wardrop, Rachael Curtis, Bridget Christie, Cloudy Fan, Steph Fischer, Steph Shepherd, Kyla Smith, Michael Lovell and Gary Willis.

The team from the Gold Coast and Brisbane offices were excited to take part in this popular marathon and agreed any funds raised would be donated to Cancer Council.

Sadly, cancer affects too many of us and this team was not immune. With some having family members affected by cancer this was used as inspiration and motivation to finish the gruelling 10km race.

Well done Team Challenge and Team Ernst on successfully completing this marathon. You are all an inspiration to us. 



NEW SOUTH WALES

STM finalists at strata awards

THE ANNUAL SCA (NSW) STRATA COMMUNITY CHU AWARDS GALA DINNER AND PRESENTATION WAS HELD ON FRIDAY, 26 JULY AT THE STAR, SYDNEY.



STM Strata Community Managers, Alexandra Leis (right) and Hira Zaheer (left) were both finalists in their nominated awards categories, Manager of the Year and Strata Community Manager Rising Star respectively, from hundreds of submissions over 11 award categories.

STM was also a proud finalist in the Large Strata Business category.

According to SCA (NSW), the strata industry continues to set the bar higher each year for young through to senior strata managers, strata management and service businesses, all striving for business excellence.

STM is extremely proud of these two young managers and delighted they received the recognition they so dearly deserve. 



NEW SOUTH WALES

Homelessness is no urban myth, it's very real.



For over 116,000 people nationally homelessness is a reality. An unfortunate reality they would prefer not to experience. And for most of us, hopefully, we will never have to experience.

Statistics show that 63% of all homelessness is found in capital cities like Sydney and Melbourne. These are cities where our offices are located. It's frightful knowing that many people don't have a safe place to call home.

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout is one way to proactively raise awareness about homelessness and the much-needed funds to help those experiencing unfortunate circumstances.

On Thursday 20 June Smarter Communities CEO Alex Lang took part in his very first CEO Sleepout at White

Bay Cruise Terminal in Sydney. Alex set himself a personal goal to raise \$5,000 and not only did he meet this, he exceeded it!

By August Alex had raised \$8,626 which will:

- help feed 156 families for a day
- help 71 families to stay warm this winter
- relocate 28 people to accommodation services, or
- help provide emergency accommodation for 17 families.

Donations make a difference

- \$55 helps feed a family for a day
- \$120 helps a family keep the power on this winter
- \$300 helps relocate a person sleeping rough to accommodation services
- \$505 helps provide emergency accommodation for a family in crisis

"This was my first CEO Sleepout and whilst one night does not warrant as sleeping rough, nor was I faced with the true struggles of the homeless, I know that I have made a small difference to those who need all the hope they can get.

"More than that, I've opened up the conversation with fellow leaders, colleagues, friends and family. The more we can drive awareness, the more we can do to help break the cycle of homelessness."

In 2018, a record \$6.9 million was raised from sleepouts across the country, and this year the goal was to raise \$7.1 million. As at the time of publication (August 2019), just over \$7.9 million had been raised, an amazing effort from all involved!

WOLLONGONG

The ocean is calling

Wollongong has moved on from its industrial heritage with its active arts and culture scene and incredible culinary environment just a small part of its diverse offering.





WOLLONGONG IS THE COUNTRY'S TENTH LARGEST CITY AND ONE OF GREATER SYDNEY'S MOST DYNAMIC DESTINATIONS.

Located in the heart of the Illawarra region, this area known colloquially as “the Gong” has it all when it comes to dazzling coastlines, epic adventures and impressive cultural, historical and artistic diversity.

While some believe the name ‘Wollongong’ means “seas of the South” in the local Aboriginal language, Tharawal, referring to NSW’s Southern Coast, others believe its true origin encompasses a host of other meanings, including “great feast of fish”, “hard ground near water”, “song of the sea”, “sound of the waves”, “many snakes” and “five islands”.

Yet it’s not just the 300,000 residents living locally who are able to appreciate the area’s wonderful offerings, with domestic and international visitors pumping more than \$1 billion annually into the local economy.

A historical perspective

Archaeological evidence indicates that indigenous Aboriginal people have occupied the area for at least 40,000 years.

Before European settlement, the region was home to the local Aboriginal people with the area originally inhabited by the Dharawal people who went by the tribe name of Wodi Wodi.

It wasn’t until 1796 that the first Europeans visited the area with navigators George Bass and Matthew Flinders claiming this unique title. The first settlers in the region were cedar cutters in the early nineteenth century, followed by graziers in 1812. Just four years later the first land grants were made and by 1856, the population of Wollongong had grown to more than 860.

An industrial haven

Aside from the quality of its physical setting, which sees it occupy a narrow coastal plain between a chain of surf beaches and a rainforest cliff line, the area is also renowned for its heavy industry, most notably its coal mining and port activity.

The first steel operations commenced in the area in 1927 when an agreement was entered into with the state government to build a steelworks at Port Kembla, beginning a long history of steel production that continues to this day in the region.

Culture aplenty

Home to the internationally recognised University of Wollongong, many are unaware that the city also plays host to the Nan Tien Temple - the largest Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere.



WOLLONGONG

New strata locals

STRATA TITLE MANAGEMENT (STM) ARE EXCITED TO BE OPENING ITS NEW LOCAL OFFICE IN THE HEART OF WOLLONGONG FROM AUGUST 30.



Other key places of interest sure to pique the interest of both residents and visitors alike include the Illawarra Museum, the Wollongong Courthouse, the Science Centre, the Planetarium and the Wollongong Botanic Gardens.

In addition, Wollongong maintains an active arts scene. The city is also home to various music and jazz ensembles as well as a number of theatre and dance groups.

Recreation is king

There are more than 17 seasonally-patrolled local beaches in this delightful seaside city yet the area's recreational offerings are significantly broader than just surfing or swimming, rock fishing or skim-boarding.

For those who prefer to spend their weekends indulging in land-based activities, Wollongong offers something to suit all ages and abilities including the 13 kilometre-long Wollongong to Thirroul Bike Track, as well as numerous bushwalks in and around Mount Keira and Mount Kembla.

In the lead up to indulging in such exertions it is important to ensure your body is fuelled and ready to go. Within the city centre and beyond its limits there are a legion of food experiences to tantalise even the fussiest of taste buds.

Within walking distance of the area's numerous bars and brasseries, there are also a host of exquisite restaurants providing some of the country's finest culinary talent producing a vast array of both international and Australian cuisine. 

A strata industry veteran, STM has been managing strata communities for over 40 years with offices in Tweed Heads, Ballina, Sydney's north shore and CBD, Taren Point and now Wollongong.

Offering a localised service from strata community managers who live within the regions they work, our teams understand the local environment and the unique circumstances of these regions.

NSW State Manager, Emily Doherty, is excited to be operating from her birth town.

"STM is no stranger to Wollongong, we've been servicing this region for many years from Taren Point. We're familiar with the diversity of apartments, townhouses and villas around Wollongong.

"It was time to look for an office for our local team so they can

spend more time doing what they do best, managing strata properties and supporting owners, rather than commuting."

Heading the STM Wollongong team, and Licensee in Charge, is Senior Community Manager, Daniel Goodwin.

Daniel has vast knowledge of complex strata legislation and extensive experience managing remedial works and building defects. His ability to future-proof his clients' properties with foresight financial planning ensures budgets and levies are realistic and kept affordable.

Daniel will be supported in the office by two strata experts, and both Wollongong locals.

Visit us at our new office in the mall located at Suite 2B, 129 Crown Street. Or visit our website at stratatitle.com.au 



Embracing its inner bohemian heritage

GRAFFITI AND TAGGING CAN BE PROBLEMATIC FOR MANY RESIDENTS AND IT SEEMS NO SUBURB IS IMMUNE TO THE ISSUE.

The estimated cost of graffiti and other forms of vandalism to the Australian community is a massive \$2.7 billion a year.

Whilst councils are committed to the quick clean-up of graffiti, the lure of a freshly painted wall is too attractive for taggers, an invitation to encourage new graffiti. And so the cycle goes on, proving an expensive

exercise to remove each time.

Sydney's Inner West Council has recognised it is time to consider a different attitude towards graffiti. The Perfect Match program is a renowned alternative council initiative to combat local graffiti.

Perfect Match is a unique initiative tackling unwanted graffiti through fostering legitimate creative expres-

sion and art in public spaces. This program has grown to become one of Australia's best-known public art and graffiti prevention initiatives.

The program's unique approach brings artists, residents, businesses, property owners and the community together to collaboratively create fantastic and appealing new street artworks in public places.



Artist: OX King

Historically this building site was a playground for graffiti artists wanting to hone their artistic skills. Since its development in 2016 the building has remained graffiti free.



Before development the building was constantly targeted by taggers

Newtown's Bedford Foundry

One perfect example of a successful response to battle graffiti is at the Bedford Foundry apartment block in Newtown.

Historically this building site was a playground for graffiti artists wanting to hone their artistic skills.

Located close to railway lines, proven attractive for offenders, the site's developers knew they had to find a new method to address the issue of constant tagging and feature this in the design of the new apartment development.

The developers, in collaboration with architect, PBD Architects, designed a

building that responds to the culture of the local community, and doesn't work against it.

The Bedford Foundry apartment block features space for a large street art piece on the surrounding, diagonally piercing blade walls.

Social media used to seek artists

The mission was then set to find the right artist for the development. A social media campaign was established by the developers calling for entries from artists interested in being involved in the project:

"Do you want to be the artist commissioned to paint the graffiti works on

this forth coming development? Send us what a draft of the artwork which you would install on this building. The judging will be based on community voting (i.e. likes, and comments) as well as suitability for the project which will be determined by the developers and architects."

Several responses were received and the decision was made to commission the artwork of highly respected local street artist, Steven Nuttall, well known as OX King.

The result was outstanding. This striking artwork spans the entire western feature wall in a burst of red, blue and orange colour. OX King's work adds a funky edge to the sharp concrete lines of this architecture. 

Making smaller spaces work harder



A SYDNEY ARCHITECT IS CHANGING THE WAY AUSTRALIANS PERCEIVE COMPACT HOMES BY SEEKING TO CHALLENGE THE WAY THEY UTILISE TRADITIONAL SPACES.

Architect Brad Swartz has built a career out of his belief that good design is not limited to large packaging.

A master craftsman when it comes to revealing innovative spatial solutions in compact spaces, Swartz rose to prominence early in his career after he applied his pioneering design approach to a tiny 27 square

metre studio apartment he owned in Sydney's Darlinghurst. The project saw him turn what was essentially a studio with a tight bathroom, into a fully functional one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment, big enough for two people to comfortably live and entertain in.

Swartz's unique approach and beau-

tiful attention to detailing has seen his career skyrocket off the back of his attempts to produce architecture that changes the perception of small spaces.

And it appears his timing couldn't be better with the results of a national survey among strata residents revealing the thing they craved most



from their existing apartment space was a solution to their storage woes. In fact, the AAA 2019 Apartment Survey, which sought responses from more than 3,300 strata dwellers across Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, showed that residents ranked more storage above more bathrooms or even a larger kitchen space when it came to vetting what





they would most like to change about their current apartment.

Swartz used his Darlinghurst project as the opportunity to experiment, and put into plan some of his more audacious ideas. Key to its success was building a clean white storage wall which effectively divided the space in half, making sure to incorporate a pocket window to make the most of the natural light in offer,

and affording the illusion of a wider living space.

From an amenities point of view, he began by ripping out the kitchen to build a bedroom, and taking out the bath to incorporate a shower and small laundry.

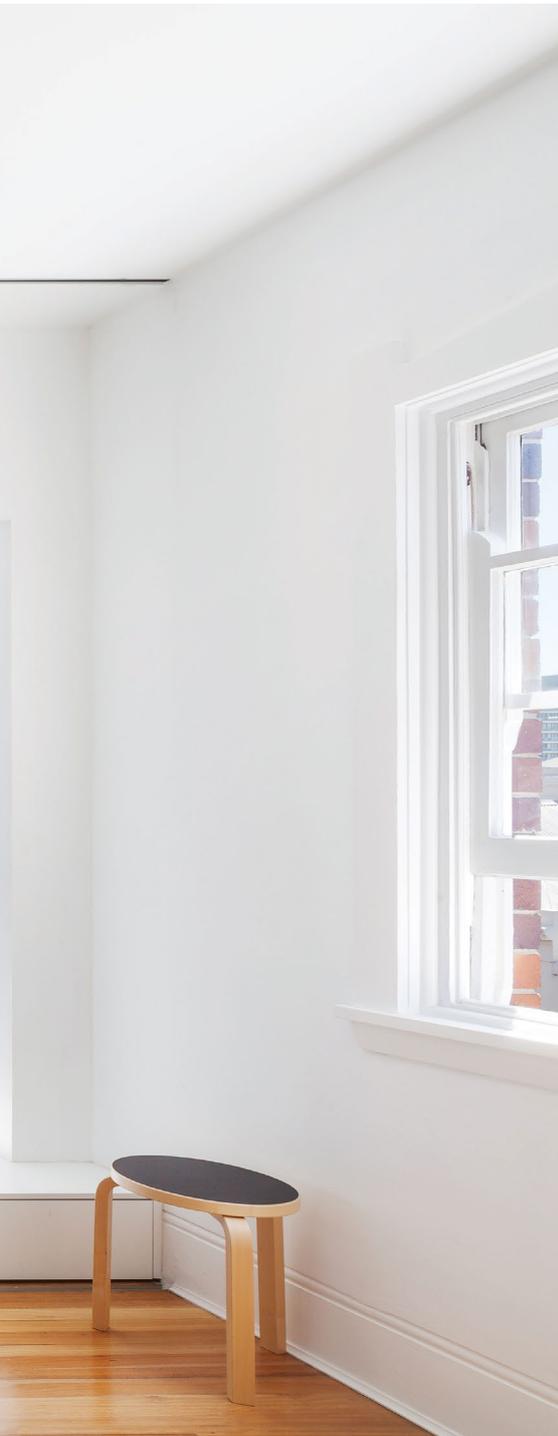
He also built the bedroom on a platform, allowing space for two shoe drawers and delineating space be-

tween the home's living and sleeping areas. Additional storage space was put under and above the bed while he freed up much needed space by creating a recess shelf – complete with power points and lighting - in the place of a bedside table.

Other clever storage tricks include setting his TV into the storage wall, with a fold-out desk anchored below for use as an office space and to allow



Scan to watch the *Never Too Small* episode.



the user to use the TV as a second monitor. Having claimed the former kitchen space as his new bedroom, Swartz built a kitchen into the storage wall with all appliances hidden behind cupboard doors. For added convenience he inserted a drying rack above the sink so dishes could be put away to dry vertically.

Ensuring no additional space remained unused, Swartz's joinery

highlights included incorporating an integrated spice rack, intercom compartment and key shelf into the storage wall.

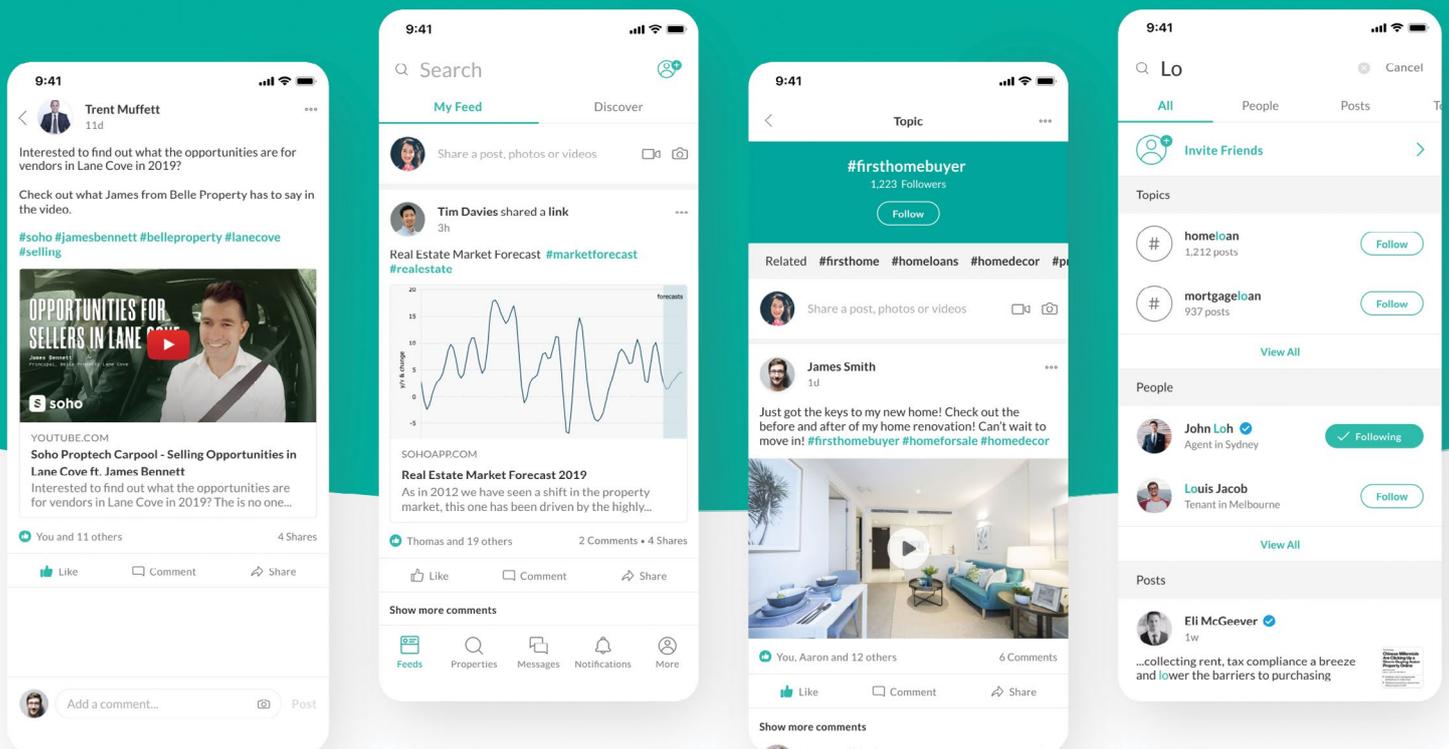
Swartz's award-winning development, which was highlighted in an episode of *Never Too Small*, a YouTube channel dedicated to small footprint design and living, set the tone for his signature style. As a result the Sydney architect has since

gone on to complete several other similar projects.

Swartz believes that living in an apartment shouldn't have to be a compromise to living in a house.

Good design, he says, is not only about making a smaller footprint work harder but also "creating a really great quality of life and a sense of luxury in a tighter space". 

New property app a game changer

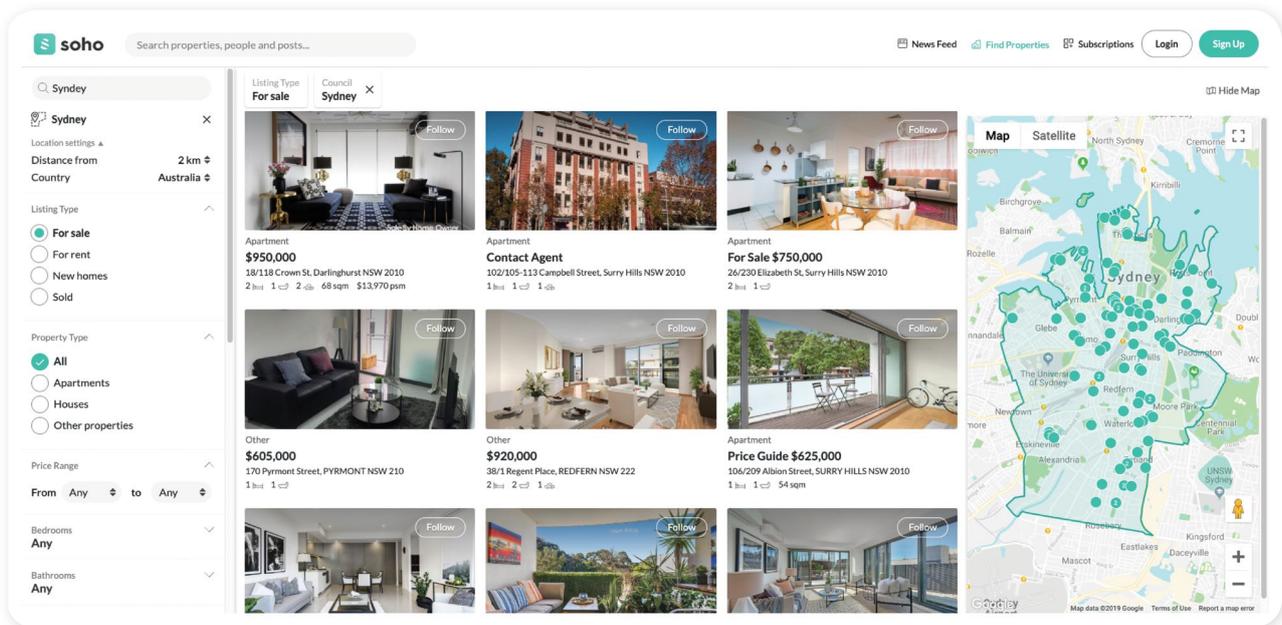


The ‘LinkedIn of property’ is changing how Australians do real estate

Buying a home may well just be one of the most important investment decisions you'll make. Where to live, what to buy, should you live there or use it as an investment property? You've no doubt spent endless hours researching the property and finance markets for trends, attractive offers and suitable opportunities.

So when the time comes and you make your purchase, you may be tempted to think that is the end of your property and finance journey. On the contrary, it's not. This journey is long-term. Regardless whether you choose to be an owner-occupier or investor, it makes good financial sense to stay

informed of your local property market happenings, as well as the wider mortgage market. To help you do this is Soho, a new property app launched in 2018. Soho is described as the LinkedIn of property, which could be the key to help you cash in on your investment.



Property and finance knowledge = profits

Keeping abreast of your local property market is valuable in so many ways. By having a clear understanding of your local property market this will help you to make better, more educated decisions about:

- when is a good time to buy or sell properties
- which renovations earn the best return on investment
- which real estate agent to choose should you decide to sell

Staying up to date of the mortgage market is equally as beneficial when

it comes to:

- refinancing options or offers
- switching from fixed to variable interest rate
- deciding to move from interest-only to principal-and-interest repayments

These are decisions that can literally make or cost you tens of thousands of dollars.

Stay in the loop

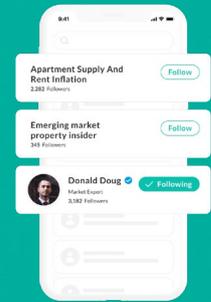
Launched in 2018, the Soho app features properties listed for sale and rent, just like Realestate and Domain, but includes individual

user profiles and news feeds, just like LinkedIn.

Soho combines the best elements of online classified sites with the best elements of social media, yet it is a community dedicated completely to real estate.

It was designed specifically to take into consideration that your property-researching needs often change once you've found your property.

When you're looking for a property, you research property listings almost everyday. But once you've bought your home, you won't need daily interaction. Soho is designed for users who want to check the market every week or so.



For sale properties in Australia

House NEW
Contact Agent
220 Victoria Street, Beaconsfield NSW 2015
5 beds 4 baths 1 car

Apartment NEW
Price Guide \$775,000
5/86 Cope Street, Waterloo NSW 2017
2 beds 1 bath

Apartment NEW
Contact Agent
B802/222 Botany Road, Alexandria NSW 2015
2 beds 2 baths 1 car 147 sqm \$6,428 psm

House NEW
Contact agent
118 Victoria Street, Beaconsfield NSW 2015
3 beds 2 baths 1 car

House NEW
Contact Agent
84 Tunstall Avenue, Kingsford NSW 2032
4 beds 3 baths 5 cars 618 sqm \$5,825 psm

Apartment
Price on request
9/20 Addison Street, KENSINGTON NSW 2033
2 beds 1 bath 1 car 98 sqm \$7,653 psm

Apartment
Price on request
430/159-175 Phillip Street, WATERLOO NSW 2017
2 beds 2 baths 1 car

Apartment
*** Inspect Now - 0488 388 081 ***
3 George Julius Avenue, ZETLAND NSW 2017
2 beds 2 baths 1 car

House
Guide \$1,000,000
24 Gordon Street, Rosebery NSW 2018
3 beds 1 bath

Apartment
Price Guide: \$1,360,000
73/6 Archibald Ave, Waterloo NSW 2017
3 beds 2 baths 4 cars

Apartment
Price Guide: \$1,100,000
472/2 Gearin Alley, Mascot NSW 2020
3 beds 2 baths 4 cars

Apartment
\$1,310,000
6-8 Crewe Pl, Rosebery NSW 2018
2 beds 2 baths 4 cars

Apartment
For Sale \$925,000
45/83-93 Dalmeny Ave, Rosebery NSW 2018
3 beds 2 baths 2 cars

Apartment
\$777,777
101/11A Lachlan Street, Waterloo NSW 2017
2 beds 1 bath 1 car

House
Price on request
6 Koorinda Avenue, KENSINGTON NSW 2033
3 beds 1 bath 3 cars 696 sqm \$4,310 psm

Top benefits of using Soho include:

1. Connect with local experts

'Follow' local agents and property managers to stay updated with prices, rental yields and the latest developments in your suburb.

2. Browse local listings and add property alerts

Keep your finger on the local pulse by regularly browsing your suburb's property listings. You can also create property alerts to know what's going on the market and price trends.

3. Master your mortgage

Stay well-informed of borrowing conditions, interest rate movements and new home loan products. Follow finance professionals to understand

how interest rate movements can affect your finances.

4. Get investment insights

Thinking about buying an investment property one day? Follow a buyer's agent to get the best advice on what to look for when investing and ask how to maximise your return on investment.

5. Drill down on key topics

Delve deeper and check out the #topics if you want to learn more about styling, auctions, first home buyers and other areas of interest.

6. Share your opinions

Soho, like LinkedIn, is a conversation rather than a monologue. Jump right in and share your own unique thoughts about property and

finance. You can do this by posting, commenting, creating or joining groups. As with all social media, there can be some lively discussions!

7. Keep it private

Private messaging is another way to have two-way conversations. You might wish to send a question directly to an agent or connect with others in your city who loves renovating just as much as you.

With over 300,000 properties listed and over 40,000 members Soho is a large community of owners, investors and property enthusiasts. Download Soho at the Apple App Store or Google Play store, or visit sohoapp.com to stay on top of all the latest real estate trends, latest property sales and rentals. 



Standing the test of time



Photos: Fender Katsalidis



One of Melbourne's famous architects, Nonda Katsalidis, who was a mastermind behind Melbourne Terrace, was recently awarded the prestigious Enduring Architecture Award.

Completed in 1994, the Melbourne Terrace project located in Queen Street was one of the first new apartment blocks constructed in Melbourne's CBD.

As a result of its construction, interest in city living flourished, as did the revival of Melbourne Terrace's location, previously renown for run-down industrial and low-grade retail premises.

Mr Katsalidis said Melbourne Terrace

represented the commencement of a new wave of CBD living and multi-residential developments, taking cues from early 20th-century European modernism.

The building has six to eight storeys featuring 60 residential apartments of various sizes plus carparks, and three commercial lots including a small office, a retail tenancy and a café.

VBCS Community Manager, Jared Jones, who manages the building says it is an honour to be involved with such an active and hands-on owners community at Melbourne Terrace.

"We've managed this iconic building for years and I love its history. It's in a fantastic location, the café is always

busy and generates a great deal of attention from street traffic.

Mr Katsalidis had previously said Melbourne Terrace showed how quality can withstand design trends and still be relevant.

"Longevity is essential in defining a city's design over a sustained period and it's an honour to be recognised for making such a contribution," he said.

The Enduring Architecture Award is given to buildings of at least 25 years of age that are of outstanding merit and that, considered in a contemporary context, remain important as high-quality works of architecture. 



Weathering the exercise storm indoors

COOLER WEATHER PLAYS HAVOC FOR THOSE WHO ENJOY EXERCISING WITH THE SUN ON THEIR BACKS. BUT THERE IS A TONNE OF EXERCISES YOU CAN STILL DO INDOORS TO ENSURE YOUR ROUTINE IS NOT DISRUPTED.

For strata dwellers who want to be active, fit and healthy, getting out and about to exercise is great on fine days but is not such an enticing prospect or when it's wet, cold and miserable outside.

Luckily there's plenty of ways you can keep up your exercise regime in a confined space without needing to install a home gym. Here's a few popular ones:



Push ups

All you need is an area of floor to accommodate the length and width

of your body and you're away.

For best results: arms shoulder length apart, body in a straight alignment from head to toe, buttocks lower than your shoulders, feet together and head up with eyes facing forward. A single repetition should involve lowering yourself slowly until your chin is touching or close to touching the floor, then raise to full extent of your arms.

Repeat the reps in a slow, deliberate fashion remembering that fewer reps done well is far more beneficial than a large number done poorly. You can advance the exercise by lifting an alternate arm and leg at the top of each rep and introducing hand claps between each rep.

Great workout for shoulders, chest, arms and your cardiovascular system.



Planks

Planks are like push ups without the movement. Extend your body in the same straight alignment, descending from head to toe, but propped up with your forearms as the contact points to the floor with hands clasped. Then hold the position for a target time or until you can't cope with the burn for any longer!

Vary the exercise by planking on your side, propped up by one forearm with other arm raised in the air, then swap sides. Great for your core strength and developing mental fortitude.

Sit ups

There's loads of options to give your abs a full workout using even less space. Sit ups and their



myriad of variations - crunchies, bicycle crunchies, flutter kicks, leg raises, twists, mountain climbers etc, will achieve and retain those washboard abs in the comfort of your own home.

Cardio on the spot



Lack of space is no impediment to getting a decent cardio workout. Running on the spot is a great way to work up a sweat, especially when you vary the exercise with bursts of high knee raises – where you drive your knees up to waist level and butt kicks where you flick your heel up to give yourself a (gentle) kick in the derriere.

Wall squats

All you need is a wall. Put your back up against it and slide down until your hips, knees and ankles are all at right angles to the floor. Then

hold for as long as you can bear it and rest for 10 seconds.

Try doing sets of three to five squats for best results for your glutes, quads and thighs.



Lunges

Lunges are a simple way to work a lot of muscles - glutes, abs, quads, calves, hamstrings and hip flexors.

Stand up straight, hands on hips, then lunge forward on one lead leg with both knees bent at 90 degrees. If your right knee is forward place most of your load through this foot, keeping it firm and flat against the floor at all times. The knee of your trailing left leg should be a couple of inches off the ground.

Push yourself back up to the standing position and repeat the exercise alternating your lead leg. Three sets of 10 reps should do the trick. Advance the exercise by using a chair to elevate your trailing leg and with walking lunges and lunge back kicks if you have the room.





Heart rules head

OWNER OCCUPIERS BREAK ALL THE RULES WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT THEY ARE ATTRACTED TO WHEN PURCHASING A STRATA RESIDENCE, A NEW REPORT PROVES.

The decisions behind what compels buyers to purchase one strata property over another are about as varied as the personalities of those who are footing the bill.

But there are some common threads between the various groups of homebuyers.

Those who are purchasing a strata property as an investment are primarily motivated by financial returns and will often walk away if the numbers don't add up.

Similarly those homebuyers who are categorised as time-poor professionals

also take a more rational approach to their strata purchases. They too may strike a property off their prospect list if the apartment or unit they are looking at is not near to their work or inaccessible by public transport.

Owner-occupiers, however, are prone to adopting a more emotional perspective to buying a home, with a 2013 survey by Commonwealth Bank revealing that 44% of Australian buyers paid more for a property because they "really like it".

As well as acting on what their heart as well as their head is telling them,

evidence suggests they are also more likely to pay a premium for a property that ticks all the boxes in their attempts to find a place in which they can create memories.

The results of the Australian National Strata Data 2018 Report – put out by peak body Strata Community Association – show that nationally around 26% of those who live in strata residences are owner-occupiers, with the vast majority (55%) of these living in either New South Wales or Victoria.

A recent report by not-for-profit group Australian Apartment Advocacy

Apartment complexes such as Central Park in Chippendale, Sydney that encompass a shopping mall, transport options and are close to the city are favoured.



(AAA) asked respondents to rank the importance of a series of nine factors which influenced them to choose their particular apartment.

The findings show what many have always suspected: that this home buying group are clearer than most on what is important to them when weighing up a potential strata property purchase.

The most important factor for owner-occupiers when deciding which strata titled property to purchase is its location, with 85% of respondents

selecting this as their greatest priority.

The next most popular reason (55%) residents gave as to why they were drawn to invest in their apartment was because it was located near to public transport, while the fact it was low maintenance attracted the third highest (45%) number of responses.

The responses gathered from the study also show that while this group of homeowners require access to public transport, they are not too concerned about how long their commute to work may take them,

ranking this among the least important factors that influenced their decision to purchase their apartment.

The findings also showed that more resident owners than renters were attracted by the lock and leave lifestyle.

Overall the AAA report showed there were a number of notable trends, in particular the preference of investors and residents alike seeking larger apartments and especially in a village setting with public transport, shops and services nearby. 

The impact of living longer

THE ADVANCING AGE OF MANY AUSTRALIANS PRESENTS NUMEROUS IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF WELFARE, PENSION AND HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS. BUT WHERE SOME SEE CHALLENGES, OTHERS SEE OPPORTUNITY.

Declining fertility rates and rising life expectancy means the world's population is getting older.

A landmark report 'Ageing in the 21st Century: a celebration and a challenge' published by the United Nations Population Fund in 2012, estimated that around one in nine people of the world's population of 7.7 billion were over 60.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), there were 3.8 million Australians aged 65 and over, comprising 15% of the total population, in 2017.

And the number and proportion of older Australians is expected to continue to grow.

By 2057, it is projected there will be 8.8 million older people in Australia, that's 22% of the population.

The AIHW says as Australia's population ages, the profile of the

older population is also projected to change.

By 2047, it is anticipated there will be just under 3.4 million people aged 65–74, people aged 75–84 will account for 35%, or 2.6 million of the population, and 1 in 5 older people will be aged 85 and over. That's 20%, or 1.5 million of the population.

The impact of our ageing population is likely to be both positive and negative.

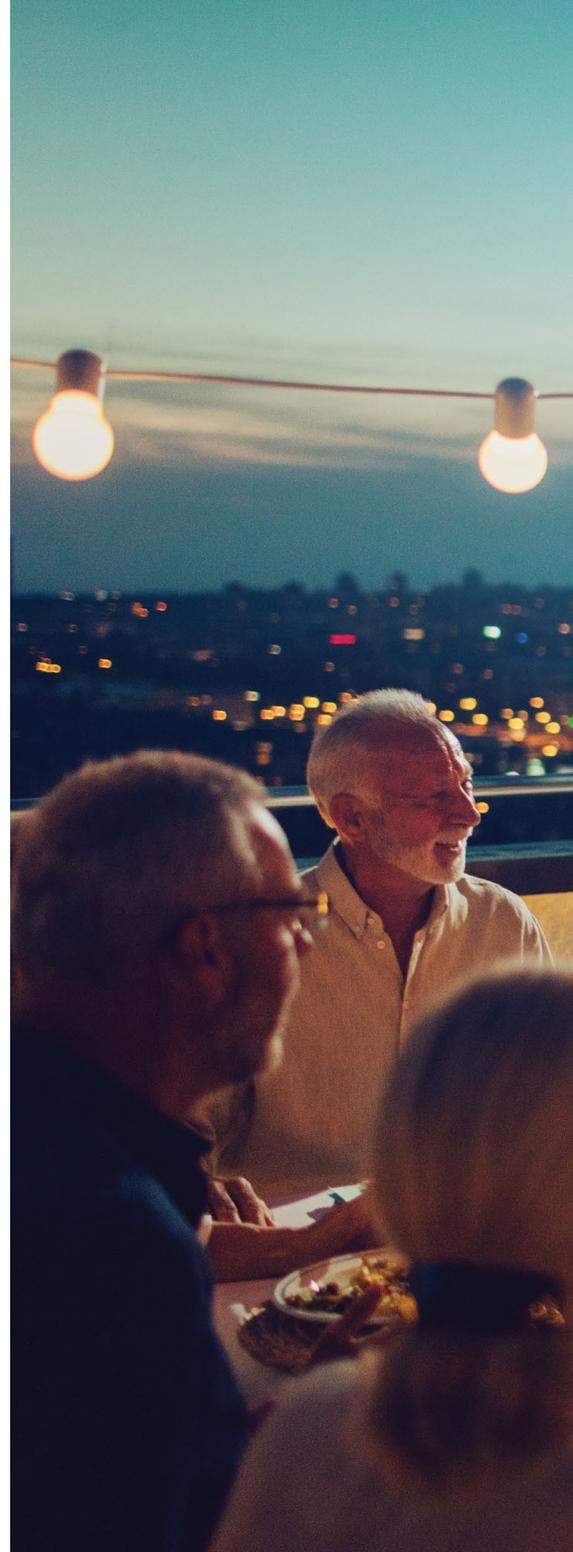
On the positive side, population ageing has opened up new markets, brought more experienced workers, a growing team of custodians of culture, and caregivers of grandchildren.

On the negative side, the ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research (CEPAR) says there are a number of economic and social issues occurring as a result of the country's older population, including:

- Slower economic growth given

fewer people are available to participate in economic activity

- Increases in health costs as a result of higher utilisation of health services as the population ages and higher expectations of health care resulting from technological advances
- Unsustainable pension schemes as the ration of contributors to beneficiaries decreases





- Increasing pressure on aged care systems and on family support structures.

The economic impact

People aged over 55 years reportedly have lower labour force participation rates than younger people.

As more people move into older age groups, overall participation rates are

projected to drop from around 63.5 per cent in 2003-04 to 56.3 per cent by 2044-45.

The impact on housing

There is reportedly a general lack of affordable downsizing options for older Australians. Their living standards become more dependent on the nature and quality of their

accommodation as they age.

The quality and location of their housing influenced their physical and psychological health as well as their social engagement.

A group of researchers and academics suggest the best way to better meet the housing requirements of Australia's ageing population was to give those in this segment greater influence over what is built, and where. 



Super benefits from downsizing

THEY CALL AUSTRALIA ‘THE LUCKY COUNTRY’ AND FOR SO MANY REASONS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE, IT IS.

Statistics show us that Australians are living longer and the quality of life is on the rise, as are living conditions thanks to advancements in vital sectors like health care.

But no matter how good our health system is, the circle of life is inevitable. For couples who lose the love of their life, being the one left behind to cope can be too painful to bear.

This was certainly the case for Mary. In 2017 unfortunately Mary lost her husband of 53 years, Frederick, to chronic illness.

Mary and Fred had lived in their house

together for the past 20 years. The thought of leaving her home was almost as painful as staying in it without Fred, but here she still felt connected to Fred and was comforted surrounded with their memories at home. So she stayed.

Over time Mary became lonely. The big house which held so many memories was now aging, like herself, and was in need of significant maintenance and repairs. The grounds were proving difficult and costly to upkeep and, without her beloved Fred to help her, Mary was starting to resent the home they once shared.

With the cost of home maintenance Mary was starting to struggle making ends meet on her age pension, which didn't seem to go far.

Seeking help when needed

Not sure which steps to take next, Mary confided in her friend and trusted financial advisor, Sandy, and asked for guidance how to free herself of what was quickly becoming a burden.

Like many seniors, Mary and Fred's house was their only real asset, and deep down she was preparing herself for the inevitable... selling her home. After chatting with Sandy and absorbing

With the cost of home maintenance Mary was starting to struggle making ends meet on her age pension, which didn't seem to go far.

modern two bedroom apartment near the lake, with a large balcony, close to her daughter and family's home.

But it gets better. Mary is now living virtually maintenance free in her new apartment, and the gorgeous grounds are cared for as well. She literally just needs to lock up and go, and says she has never felt more safe and secure by living in an apartment community. She's made new friends with her many neighbours and now happily confesses she's not lonely anymore.

The ultimate lifestyle

After the sale of her house, and purchasing her new apartment, Mary had just over \$200,000 cash left over. What a position to be in!

So she booked herself on her bucket-list dream overseas holiday that she didn't get to fulfil with Fred and, after a little splurge on her daughter and grandchildren, she had spent almost \$20,000.

With the new super regulations, because Mary had lived in her home for more than 10 years, she was able to put the remaining \$180,000 into her superannuation.

Financial freedom without penalty... in a new apartment!

Thanks to the advice from her financial planner, Sandy, Mary still receives her full pension of \$926.20 per fortnight and, in addition, draws a regular

income of a further \$750 per month from her superannuation.

This has increased her income from just over \$24,000pa to over \$33,000pa, plus she's living in a low-maintenance modern apartment close to family!

The added bonus is Mary can draw lump sums from this investment at any time should she need. The additional income, which she could increase if she liked to without impacting her pension, helps her to 'live a better life'.

Mary proclaims this was the best decision she could ever have done. And she's pretty sure Fred is proud of her choices and is there to continue watching over her. 

KEY SUPER DOWNSIZER RULES

- You must be aged 65 or over
- The property must have been your principle residence and you (or your spouse) must have owned it for 10 years or more
- You have 90 days from the settlement of the sale to put the funds into your super and declare as a downsizer contribution
- \$300,000 is the maximum lifetime contribution available per individual (couples can contribute \$300,000 each)

her financial advice Mary become more comfortable with the suggestion of selling her house and downsizing into a comfortable and very maintenance free apartment.

So she did. Mary's house was snatched up in under three weeks and was bought by a young family ready to start their own memories. The thought of this new family enjoying the space of her large home she once shared with Fred cemented the deal.

With the money she received from selling her home Mary bought herself a

Disclaimer: The information provided is general in nature only and does not constitute personal financial advice. The information has been prepared without taking into account your personal objectives, financial situation or needs. Before making any decision you should seek appropriate legal, tax, and other professional advice. Please note: names have been changed for privacy purposes.



Pets – more than companions

Pets are an integral part of our lives with an estimated 80% of Australians having an animal companion at some time of their lives.

Pets play an important role in children's lives as well. They provide enjoyment and help children develop responsibilities transferable to adulthood. Pet relationships have even been ranked higher than certain kinds of human relationships in some cases for comfort, esteem, support and confidence.

Key benefits of pet ownership have been identified in areas of child development, family harmony and health.

Child development

Pets can play a major role in developing significant responsibility, nurturing and communication skills. They can help to teach empathy and how to care for others.

Studies have shown that children with pets have higher self-esteem, improved social skills, are more likely to be physically active and less likely to be overweight or obese.

Family harmony

Pet ownership also has a beneficial effect on family harmony. Research shows that families with a pet:

- Spend a lot more time interacting together
- Have a basis for fun activities and friendly conversation including the important topics of life.

Health

The relaxation and relief from stress provided by animal

companionship also yields health benefits for parents. In comparison with their pet-less counterparts, pet owners:

- Have a decreased risk of cardiovascular disease
- Have fewer minor illnesses and complaints
- Visit the doctor less often.

Whilst owning a pet can be a delightful family experience, parents and children should be aware of the risk of injury from bites and scratches.

It's important to know the warning signs from your pet to keep yourself, your loved ones and even your pet safe. 🦋

Review your by-laws first before considering a pet to check if your scheme allows pets.

Hear it from our customers

“Smarter Communities have provided professional strata management services to us for more than a decade. The challenges we have faced have been numerous, complex and at times fraught with legal, financial and emotional complexities. Including building defect claims, court cases and complex strata disputes.

Our strata manager's ability to provide timely and expert advice has been invaluable.”

“The relationship between our strata manager and the committee is based on mutual trust and respect. They work well together and have also established a good relationship.

I like that I can call the office and when I quote my plan number they instantly know who they are talking to. It's a very personalised service. How it should be.”

“Our Community Manager is an integral part of our Owners Corporation and we value their professionalism greatly. They are a genuine partner.”

Happy customers. Satisfied managers.

The ultimate compliment is to refer a friend
info.smartercommunities.com.au/refer





“We had a damaged roof, damaged stormwater pipes and burst water pipe and some other problems. Obtaining quotes, prioritising our needs, understand the legal implications, being empathetic are just some of the responsibilities and traits of our strata manager.”

Building Smarter Communities

Leave it to us to handle the complexities of strata so you can enjoy your investment.



1800 519 642

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