

Conference Chair's Report Strata and Community Title in Australia for the 21st Century II Gold Coast, 22-24 August 2007

Griffith University's *Centre for Tourism, Sport and Service Innovation* (TSSI) hosted its second biennial *Strata and Community Title in Australia for the 21st Century II* conference on 22-24 August 2007 at the Gold Coast. The event was hosted under TSSI's earlier title, the *Service Industry Research Centre*.

The conference was attended by 260 delegates, a 50% increase over the attendance level of the 2005 conference. The conference was opened by Margaret Keech MP (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women, Queensland Government) and is the largest forum of its type bringing together a broad range of stakeholders associated with the strata and community title sector. These stakeholders include: unit owners, strata title managers, resident managers, property developers, managers of 'strata title hotels', real estate agents, local government planning officers, hotel / resort managers, bankers, tradespeople, quantity and land surveyors, academic researchers as well as federal, state and local government policy makers involved in the sector.

The 2007 conference's aims included seeking to:

- Draw out management and infrastructure issues confronting the sector.
- Update delegates on evolving markets, the sector's development, new strata title applications, trends and direction.
- Highlight stakeholder conflicts, synergies and common interests to enhance moves towards determining industry best practice.
- Highlight distinct frameworks that can be applied in legislating for the sector.
- Examine the merits of different organisational forms used in the delivery of resident manager services.
- Examine challenges ahead for developers of strata title properties.

Aside from seeking relevance for all stakeholders, the conference agenda was formulated with a view to generating discussion that can inform government policy making for the sector. It was notable that the conference attracted 26 government officials from a broad range of Australian states and territories.

Specific issues addressed at the conference included: alternative strata title legislative philosophies; challenges arising in metropolitan and regional urbanisation; housing affordability; social infrastructure required for higher density living; factors associated with unit owners' satisfaction; the challenge of redeveloping old strata title schemes; effectiveness of public consultation; new and emerging strata title applications; building community; planning for non-current expenditures; a critique of the evolution of management rights; alternative organisational forms used to deliver resident manager services; management challenges in large, complex and mixed-use schemes; rate relief for large strata title communities; strata title environmental management; and the capacity of the legislative environment to cope with the changing strata title context and applications. Of the many conference outcomes, it is significant that the event has triggered discussions amongst owner associations directed towards developing a national representative group for owners.

Gold sponsorship support was received from six organisations: Body Corporate Services, Macquarie Bank, National Community Titles Institute, Queensland Development Research Institute, Strata Associates, and StrataMax. In addition, silver sponsorship was provided by: Andreones, the Australian Resident Accommodation Managers Association, Bendigo Bank, CHU Underwriting, Community Titles Institute of Queensland, Institute of Strata Title Management, Lannock Strata Finance, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, Solutions IE, and Strata Unit Underwriters. The organising committee is exceedingly grateful to these sponsors who together contributed in excess of \$160,000 of support to the event. This level of sponsorship support serves as a powerful testimony to the strong reputation that the conference has quickly established in the Australasian strata title community.

The attendees' consensus view was that the event was an overwhelming success, achieving much in terms of high quality debate that will inform future research and policy making. Reports from delegates also indicate that the conference was highly successful in terms of strengthening partnerships across the spectrum of stakeholders involved.

Professor Chris Guilding,
Conference Chair