

18 January 2023

Karen Stiles  
Executive Director  
Owners Corporation Network

Dear Karen

## **OCN 2023 State Election Policy Platform**

I refer to the Owners Corporation Network (OCN) priorities for the 2023 State Election and thank you for all the work you do for apartment owners and residents.

With most of my constituents living in apartments and my electorate having the highest proportion of apartment dwellers in the state, apartment reform is a priority for me. I have a long history of working with OCN to get outcomes for strata owners and occupiers and I welcome the OCN's insights and contributions to policy. Below are responses to the items in your policy review.

I share your concern that successive governments have failed to give strata the priority it deserves or recognise the complexity of the governance model, the potential financial and amenity risks, or the importance of upholding democracy. I regularly raise concerns with ministers about dysfunctional buildings where there are serious allegations of corruption or maladministration, only to receive standard replies that do not acknowledge the challenges with existing options. Strata owners are often being left with few genuine options to deal with problems. It can also feel like there is no true advocate for strata owners and residents in cabinet with decisions often favouring industries attempting to profit from strata such as developers and short term rental platforms. I have repeatedly called for a dedicated strata commissioner to help resolve disputes and advise on continuous reform and agree with OCN's suggestions for a senior minister, specialist strata adjudication and a standing strata law committee.

Poor regulation over the last two decades has made apartment defects commonplace and it is unfair that owners are forced to carry the financial and administrative burden to get them fixed. Following the Opal and Mascot tower exposés, the government has introduced much needed reforms including a Building Commissioner, and a defects bond and insurance, but more is needed until there is confidence that all new buildings are free from defects and all existing buildings have had defects fixed.

The Building Commissioner should be made permanent and tasked to create new measures that ensure all owners corporations dealing with defects are supported, and to advise on the next set of reforms needed following review of the success of recent reforms. The commissioner should also take the lead in industry transformation. Defects from flammable cladding need additional work with concerns that assistance is slow and advice about replacement products unclear. I have moved amendments in Parliament to improve consumer protections through warranties and liabilities and agree new protections are needed to prevent unfair contracts and unfair treatment by insurance companies. Embedded networks which are locking apartment owners and residents into long expensive contracts for dirty energy so that developers can reduce their energy costs during construction are particularly unfair and archaic and must be abolished. I support a review of all laws affecting strata by 2027.



I was the first member of the NSW Parliament to raise concerns that the rise in apartments being converted from residential to short term holiday accommodation was impacting on strata costs and amenity, as well as housing affordability. My amendments to short term rental laws have ensured a mandatory register of participants to help enforcement but much more is needed to prevent the wholesale conversion of homes. I will continue to push for stronger regulations including lower night caps and removal of exemptions from existing caps for bookings over 21 consecutive days.

The future of the planet depends on greening every aspect of civilisation and as the fastest growing form of housing in the state, it is crucial that apartments transition to net zero over the next decade. I welcome the OCN's focus on making apartments efficient and sustainable. I support mandating net zero for all new apartment developments and measures to make homes more resilient against the impacts of climate change. Strong incentives are needed to make existing buildings more efficient, including ending gas connections and installing electric vehicle charging stations in car parks. OCN has the knowledge and expertise to lead the establishment of tools and guidelines for this transition and if I am re-elected, I will ask the government to fund the OCN to establish an expert group for this purpose.

Natural disasters such as flood and pandemic present unique challenges for apartment communities and I support requiring apartment buildings to develop resilience plans based on emergency planning guidelines established by the government. While I agree that these plans should be lodged through the Strata Hub by 2027, any date is provisional on there being adequate support to ensure owners corporations can feasibly achieve this target.

There are varying levels of knowledge about the rights and responsibilities of strata participants, and I share the OCN's call for sector-wide education for owners, committee members, agents and managers of the law.

The OCN has been crucial in advocating for and educating decision makers in Parliament on the needs of apartment owners. Without the support of the OCN, few advances in strata law would have been made over the last decade. I support government funding for the OCN and if re-elected, I will call on whoever is in government to provide \$250,000 a year including for data collection and research. I support continued development of the Strata Hub and making its information available for free for research.

The expansion to apartment living is an essential part of our future if we are to minimise environmental and social impacts and I hope to continue to work with you on reform to make apartment living more sustainable, affordable and fair.

Yours sincerely



Alex Greenwich  
**Member for Sydney**